



DICTATING TO TWO SCRIBES AT ONCE. THE BEGINNING OF THE SCRIPTORIUM, ANCIENT EGYPT. EVEN IN THOSE DAYS THEY PRACTISED SOME OF OUR "MODERN" HIGH-SPEED METHODS

THE EVOLUTION OF THE BOOKSTORE

BY H. H. MANCHESTER

PART I. IN ANCIENT TIMES

IN VIEW of the countless histories of literature that have been published, it is surprising that so little has been written on the history of the bookstore. Raids have been made by scholars upon limited periods and certain features in its development, but the subject as a whole has scarcely been attacked. No attempt, for example, seems to have been made hitherto to bring together a collection of the historic pictures illustrating the bookstores of the past, though a number of highly interesting ones are in existence.

Yet an adequate history of the bookstore would be of considerable importance. It would practically answer the question how literature and books have been distributed in past eras, and exemplify how the distribution of the product, even in the

case of literature, has had a tremendous reflex influence upon the nature of the product itself.

EGYPT

The first fact that we come across in the evolution of the bookstore is remarkably significant. It is that the earliest known books were by-products of religion. There is no doubt that the first recognised bookstores were the Egyptian temples, and the first publishers their priests and scribes.

This grew very logically out of the Egyptian faith. When the curtain of history rose in Egypt in the first dynasties, some six thousand years ago, the Egyptians believed that a man's spirit or soul would live as long as his body endured, and during that time would be subject in the hereafter to all the vicissitudes that

would be possible on earth. The first books were written to enable the spirit of the departed to gather itself together after death, to pass safely through all the dangers of the other world, and to go forth by day and return as it pleased to its abode.

The open sesames to these privileges were the incantations and rituals which were embodied in what is now known as the *Book of the Dead*.

At first it was probably customary for a person to learn the chapters during his lifetime, and to repeat them in his private devotions, but it was also the rule for the priests to recite the various sections over the mummy during the funeral ceremonies. The next step was to inscribe the magical verses upon the tomb or coffin, and finally it came to be considered a great assistance to the soul, to copy the ritual upon papyrus and entomb it with the mummy.

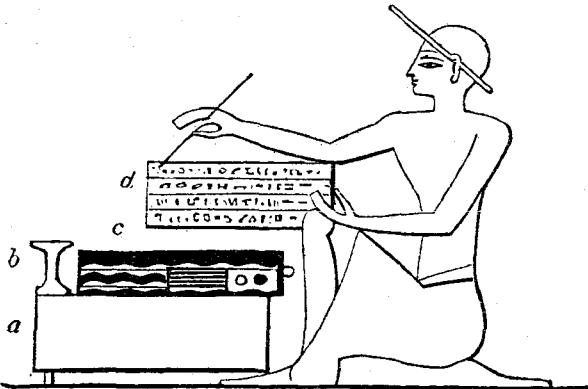
All of these steps may be seen in the rubrics which accompany the *Book of the Dead*. The rubric with the first chapter, for example, runs, "If this text be known by the deceased upon earth, or if he causeth it to be done in writing upon his coffin, then will he be able to come forth on any day he pleaseth, and to enter

his habitation unrepulsed." The rubric of Chapter CXXV, which contains the famous negative confession, is in part, "This chapter shall be said by the deceased when he is cleansed and purified : . . and if this book be done in writing, the deceased shall flourish, as shall also his children, and never fall into oblivion."

It requires but a moment's analysis to discover that we have here all the elements of a publication and book-selling system.

Access to the magical lines by the living individual or by his spirit was necessary for any satisfactory life in the other world. It is no wonder that the copies were in demand and that anyone who could afford to ensure his existence hereafter by having his body mummified would want as many of the most important chapters of the book as he felt able to purchase. The only place where these could be obtained was, of course, the temples. The original litanies were the production of prehistoric priests, and the copyists seem to have been in every case the temple scribes.

The reputed author of all religious books was the deity Thoth, the



AN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN SCRIBE WITH HIS PALETTE, BRUSH-HOLDER, INK-WELL AND WRITING-DESK.

scribe of the gods. It was declared that there were thirty-six thousand five hundred and twenty-five different religious books or incantations in existence. Only a few of these, however, were important enough to be buried in the tombs and thus stand a chance of being preserved.

The temples seem to have made a regular business of book production. The copies were not always made to order, but were prepared beforehand and the name filled in afterward. In fact this was done in places in one of the most important copies of the *Book of the Dead* which have come down to us,—the Papyrus of Ani.

There is no doubt that the temples received payment for all copies of the ritual, but what the prices were we can only conjecture.

It may be worth while recalling the materials with which these ancient priests, who were both publishers and booksellers, worked. The papyrus rolls were made of criss-crossed layers from the pith of the papyrus reed. In the Papyrus of Ani there are three widths of pith laid side by side, making a total width of one foot and three inches, and six lengths fastened end to end, with a total of seventy-eight feet. Parchment was known as early as 1400 B. C., but was seldom employed. The reed used to write with was only from one-sixteenth to one-eighth of an inch in diameter, and was bruised on the end, so that the hieroglyphics were rather painted than written. In fact the scribe employed a palette to work with. Illumination and illustrations were common, and various coloured inks were used for the purpose. The rolls of papyrus were often tied with a papyrus cord, and sometimes protected with a clay seal. Important rolls were kept in wooden

cases, which were themselves guarded in the "house of books."

We reproduce several ancient Egyptian pictures, illustrating scribes at work on papyrus, as well as the racks in which the rolls were kept.

The temples gave instruction in writing, and the occupation of scribe probably offered the best chance for a boy to rise. In the Third Dynasty, for example, Amten tells how he rose from a scribe to be the guardian of the western frontier. And princes and nobles often retained the title of scribe among their many honours.

There is little doubt that all the copies of the religious works were made at the temples, but the official biographies, records, and annals of the kings and nobility were probably produced at the palaces.

Whether the tales of adventure, like that of Sanehat in the Twelfth Dynasty, were originated in the temples or palaces, or by some independent scribe is uncertain, but the mere existence of a non-religious literature suggests the possibility of secular publishers and bookstores.

BABYLON

In Babylonia as well as in Egypt the first bookstores seem to have been the temples. Babylonian books apparently originated there, and the ancient scribes were regularly priests. The kings, however, early learned to make use of the new art, and even more than in Egypt, the palace became a second centre of documentary activity.

Writings in Babylonia included magical incantations, hymns, religious epics, the annals of the king, and a tremendous mass of legal documents. Most of them were written upon slabs or cylinders of fine clay, but papyrus was known and em-



AN EGYPTIAN SCRIPTORIUM OF THE OLD EMPIRE, ILLUSTRATING RACKS, ROLLS AND SEALS FOR PAPPYRI

ployed in communications as early as 1400 B. C.

Only a few ancient Babylonian or Assyrian bas-reliefs showing scribes at work are extant, and these illustrate chiefly scribes making records of the captives and spoils of war. Curiously but logically enough, they depict scribes working in pairs, one writing on a tablet, and the other on papyrus or some flexible material.

Clay tablets were not easily passed from hand to hand, and partly in consequence of this fact, the principal collections were to be found in the temple or palace archives. Some sixty thousand tablets, for example, have been uncovered in the temple area near Abn Habba, and more than half that many in the royal archives of Ashurbanipal.

There is no question, nevertheless,



A SCRIPTORIUM OF THE MEMPHITE ERA, ILLUSTRATING WRITING ARRANGEMENTS, PAPPYRI AND RACKS FOR ROLLS



THE IBIS-HEADED DEITY, THOTH, REPUTED BY THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS TO BE THE INVENTOR OF WRITING, THE SCRIBE OF THE GODS AND THE AUTHOR OF ALL THE RELIGIOUS BOOKS

that a limited distribution of documents and literature among private families did take place. The tablets of Tell-Sifr, for instance, form part of the private records of the families of Sininana and Amililani, but deal chiefly with their own affairs.

No doubt legal documents were distributed far more widely than literature, and it is probable that in many cases both parties to a contract had copies of it. On the other hand a copy, often with a duplicate clay envelope, was regularly deposited among the official records of the locality.

In almost every instance the writing of the document was evidently done by a temple priest or scribe, and it is only in later centuries that we occasionally happen upon a scribe who does not make himself known to be a temple official.

Some of these documents seem to have been produced beforehand and the names merely filled in on occasion. In duplicating copies, there was even developed a close approach to printing. A cast of a piece of writing was made by pressing the baked tablet into fine wet clay. The relief thus formed was then baked, after which it could be used for impressing duplicate copies as long as it would last.

There is no doubt that the temple received pay for all documents copied and distributed, but just what arrangements existed among temple, scribes, and customers are still uncertain.

Most of the other early literatures were originated in a similar way by the priests. The Sanscrit Vedas, as is well known, were composed by the priests, but were given only a very narrow circulation, as for many centuries they were transmitted orally, and only to the initiates. The Hebrew books, although put in writing by the priests, seem to have been distributed only among the temples, which is perhaps one reason why the separate "Jahvist" and "Elohists" documents have never been discovered.

GREECE

When we come to the early Greek literature, however, we get into an entirely different atmosphere. The *Iliad* and other Greek epics were composed not by priests but by laymen, and the knowledge of them spread through minstrels. The influ-

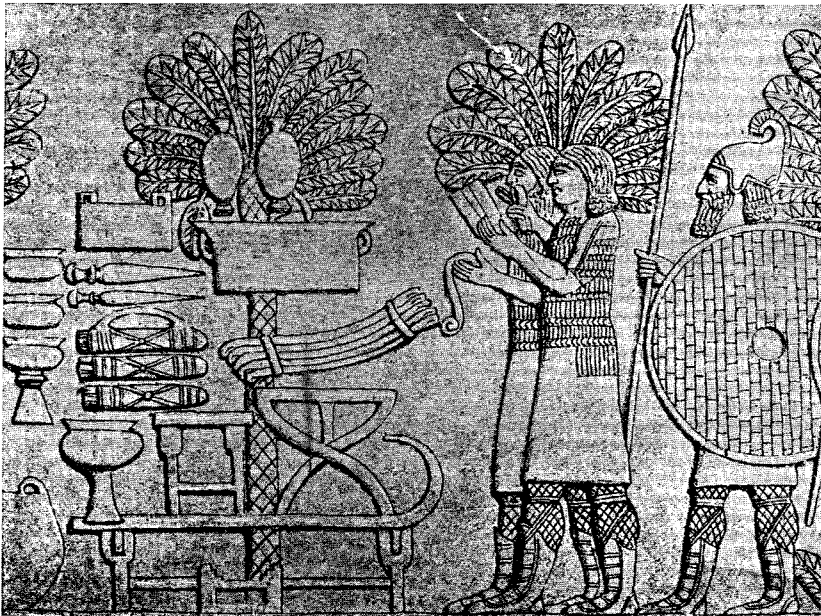
ence of this new method of distribution can hardly be exaggerated. The minstrel depended for the reception he was given, and in fact for his very livelihood, upon the interest and emotional power of his story. To hold his hearers spellbound, required a thrilling narrative well told, and just for this very reason, the best of the minstrel epics, not only of Greece but of other lands, are fascinating even to-day.

When we ask how soon Greek epics and lyrics were put into writing, we are in danger of running headlong into the battle over the Homeric question and various other unsolved problems in early Greek literature.

In spite of the fact that the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and even Cretans employed writing some six thousand years ago, it is questionable whether it was in use by the Greeks in the Homeric age. The only reference to what might be considered writing in

the *Iliad* is where Proteus sends Belerophon to the king of Lycia with "baneful tokens," "scratching on a folded tablet many spirit-destroying things." The oldest known Attic inscription hardly goes back before 800 B. C., although Herodotus mentions that he saw an ancient inscription of uncertain date at Thebes. Ephorus and Plutarch record the legend that Lycurgus brought a copy of the *Iliad* to Sparta about 776 B. C., but this is not to be depended upon.

Probably the epics and lyrics were written down by individual bards for personal use centuries before they were distributed as books. In 550 B. C., however, Theognis, the lyric poet, said that he would add his seal to his verses to keep them from being appropriated by anyone else. At this date also, Pisistratus, according to tradition, collected and wrote down the different episodes



ASSYRIAN SCRIBES RECORDING ON A TABLET AND ON FLEXIBLE MATERIAL THE SPOILS OF WAR

that make up the *Iliad*. Boys' schools for writing are mentioned as existing in 500 B. C., and Herodotus about 450 B. C. wrote that papyrus had been used by the Ionians of old.

The first out and out references to a Greek book market are by Pollux and Eupolis about 430 B. C. Xenophon about 400 B. C. wrote that many books were recovered from a ship that was wrecked at Salmydessus, and in his *Memorabilia* describes the dialogue between Socrates and Euthedemus, who was devoting himself to collecting the works of the poets and Sophists. We note that even at that date autograph copies were esteemed of great value.

Zeno, the stoic, was reported to have owed his entrance into philosophy to a bookstore. According to Diogenes Laertius "Zeno sat down at a bookseller's stall, and as he took up the second book of Xenophon's *Memorabilia* and began to read it, he was delighted with it, and asked

where such men as described there lived." When he was informed that they were there in Athens, he resolved to become their follower. It is interesting to note in this account that he was apparently permitted to sample the bookseller's wares before he was required to purchase.

Side by side with literary production in written form, continued the custom of reciting or reading before an audience. Thus Herodotus read from his works in Athens, Corinth, Argus, and Sparta, and later Plato and Zeno spoke or read their philosophy to their followers. Such readings are illustrated in several paintings of the Græco-Roman period.

The advantage to an author of publishing was far less then than now, largely because there was no copyright law. There was nothing, for example, to prevent Hermodorus, who attended Plato's lectures, from taking down his discourses, carrying them to Sicily, and selling them. An author could sell the first copy to



ASSYRIAN SCRIBES KEEPING A RECORD OF CAPTIVES ON A TABLET AND SOME FLEXIBLE MATERIAL



A GREEK AUTHOR READING HIS MANUSCRIPT TO AN AUDIENCE

a publisher for as much as possible, but neither he nor the publisher had any check on subsequent copies.

Ordinary books were comparatively cheap. In 407 B. C., a roll of papyrus, which was the amount required for a book of the usual size, cost one drachma and two obols (about twenty-six cents), while many a book could be purchased for fifty cents, and the author got little if anything of this amount.

In the face of these undoubted discouragements to writers, the question naturally arises, why, if authorship did not pay at Athens, did Athens lead the ancient world in literature? The answer simply is, that literature did pay tremendously there in both pecuniary and other ways.

Since indiscriminate copying led to careless reproduction, an exaggerated value was given to autograph copies, and authors received costly presents for their autographs. In this connection Gellius records a tradition that Aristotle gave three talents, or three thousand six hundred dollars, for an old autographed manuscript of Speusippus, and Plato nearly two talents for three rare books of Philolaus.

But the indirect rewards were far greater. Oratory was the opening key to politics, and politics paid both in honour and money. A successful composer of addresses to be delivered before juries received large amounts from his clients, who themselves delivered the speeches. The dramatist was loaded with honours.



ROMAN BOOKCASE AND ROLLS

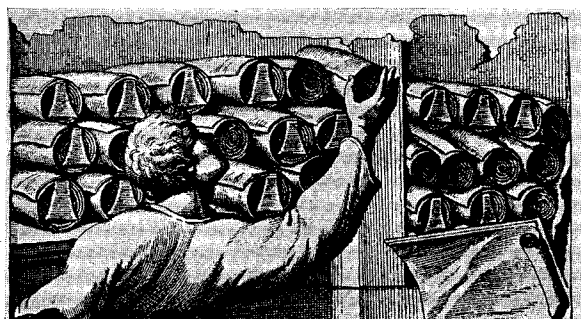
Rewards were given for the three best plays submitted for the festival of Dionysus. These were enacted, and the author of the best was awarded a highly coveted crown. Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides all received many such prizes, and later the comedians were given similar honours. The philosophers, or at least many of them, were venerated as the greatest of men, and the Sophists even received direct pay for their teaching.

The large number of books published by the end of the Greek period is suggested by the great library founded by Ptolemy Soter at Alex-

andria about 300 B. C., and by its rival established by Eumenes II at Pergamum in the first half of the second century B. C. In this connection it is worth noting that Eumenes, failing to get papyrus from a jealous Ptolemy, so improved skin as writing material that thus prepared it received a new name, *membrana pergamena*, which has descended to us as parchment. It was this use of parchment which introduced the flat codex in the form of our present book, as distinct from the roll, which, it will be remembered, was the ordinary form of all ancient papyrus books.

ROME

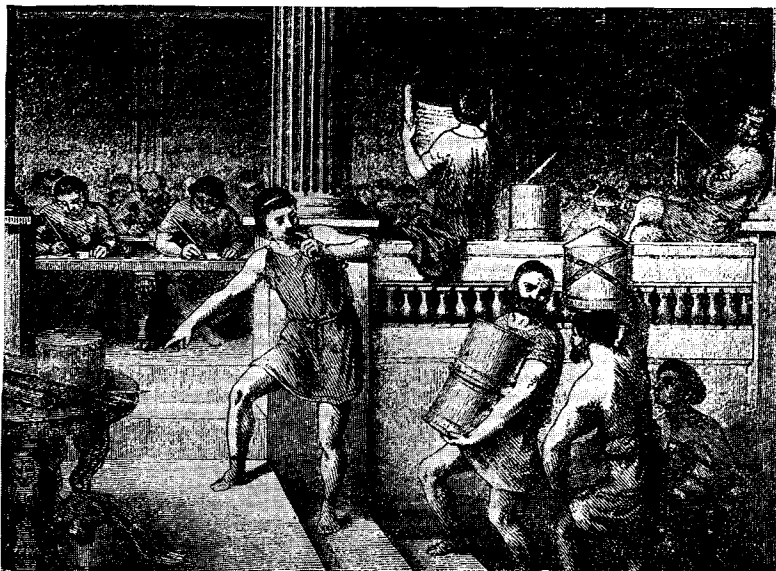
Considering the little attention paid by the Romans to literature until after they had conquered the Mediterranean world, it is not surprising that for several centuries they imported their books, as they did their art and religion, from Greece and Alexandria. In fact the first bookseller at Rome whom we hear of by name, was T. Pomponius Atticus, the friend and publisher of Cicero. Atticus was himself an author of annals and a critic of considerable judgment, as well as very wealthy and a man of high character. In addition to being a man of affairs, he is thought to have been the first



SHELVES WHERE THE BOOKS WERE KEPT IN A GRECO-ROMAN BOOKSTORE

to develop an important publishing house in Rome. He kept a large number of slaves busy in his scriptorium, copying old manuscripts and issuing new editions which he sold at a profit. He was a friend and adviser of authors, and appears to

cus, the book borrower. "You frequently go down to the Argeletum: opposite Cæsar's forum is a shop with pillars on each side covered over with titles of books, so that you may quickly run over the names of all the poets. Procure me there; you will



A ROMAN SCRIPTORIUM OR PUBLISHING AND BOOK-SELLING HOUSE (RECONSTRUCTED)

have paid fairly well for their manuscripts.

Several other Roman booksellers are mentioned by name. Horace speaks of his book being "published by the Sosii, neatly polished by their pumice-stone." Seneca writes of Dorus as a dealer in the manuscripts of Cicero and Livy. In the time of Domitian, Tryphon was the publisher of Quintillian, while Martial mentions as booksellers Atrectus, Priscus, Secundus the freedman, and Q. Polius Valerionus.

Probably the most illuminating details concerning the Roman bookstores are to be found in Martial. The location and arrangement of one are described in his verses to Luper-

no sooner ask Atrectus,—for such is the name of the owner of the shop,—than he will give you from the first or second shelf, a Martial, well smoothed with pumice-stone and adorned with purple for five denarii."

Parchment was often employed in small books, as Martial writes, "Buy a copy of which the parchment leaves are pressed into small compass."

Pictures of the classical period illustrate the various forms which books assumed, as well as the development of the book chest and bookcase.

One of Martial's epigrams proves that the booksellers, like many physicians and tradesmen, were freedmen or even slaves: "Seek Se-



VARIOUS FORMS OF GRÆCO-ROMAN BOOKS

cundus, the freedman, of the learned Lucensis for me, behind the Temple of Peace and the Forum of Palas."

Of the short length of the average Roman book Martial wrote, "Enough, little book! we have already reached the end of the parchment." And of his second book, states, "a copyist finishes it in an hour," though this is probably poetic exaggeration.

The fate of neglected books seems to have been to teach boys to scribble, or, still more base, to serve for wrappers for packages. Horace writes that one of his books may "instruct boys in the rudiments of their learning, in the streets of the suburbs." And Martial writes of his fourth book, "If Apollinaris condemn thee, thou mayst as well run to

the stalls of the meat sellers to have thy back scribbled upon by their boys." In lines to his third book, Martial contrasts the fate of a successful and unsuccessful work: "Make haste to choose a patron, lest being hurried off into a murky kitchen, you cover tunny fish with your wet leaves, or become a wrapper for incense and pepper. Is it into Faustinus's bosom that you flee? A wise choice: you may now be perfumed with oil of cedar and decorated with ornaments at both ends, in all the glory of painted bosses. Tyrian purple may cover you, and your title may proudly blaze in scarlet."

Under the Empire, there was a class of book collectors who cared more for the names and appearance of their volumes than they did for

the contents. Lucian wrote quite a tirade against one of them, in which he makes the charge, "you trust to those who cry books up to you, though they know nothing of the matter. You are only a mark for those brokers of books, who tell you a pack of lies about them." This indicates that even in those days indiscriminate buyers produced irresponsible dealers. In the same indictment we find that collectors even then attached special value to the complete works of an author, and paid enormous prices for rare autographed volumes.

Although Lucian speaks of books as "the happy lot of rich men only," the ordinary book was fairly cheap. Martial says one of his books could be bought at Atrectus's shop for five denarii, or at Tryphon's for two denarii, or forty cents. This was due in part to the cheapness of slaves and slave labour, and in part to the fact that the ordinary volume was short, and required comparatively no binding.

As in Greece, there was no copyright law in Rome, and no way for author or publisher to prevent either plagiarism or piracy. There are instances where someone in an audience, before which an author gave a reading, memorised part of the production, and rushing out, had it published as his own. Sometimes, on the other hand, a scribbler wrote verses himself, and tried to sell them as the work of a more distinguished author. Thus Martial ridicules Fidentinus as a plagiarist, and rails against an anonymous poet who is circulating "filthy turpitudes" which "he attempts to pass off as mine."

Piracy was made more easy by the fact that no typesetting, platemaking, or binding was required.

Under such conditions, there was in Rome, as in Greece, no system of book selling that could completely fill the market, and at the same time protect both author and publisher. In Greece this deficiency was overcome by very important public contests, rewards, and honours, but Rome had no competition of this sort, and the book trade remained inequitable and inefficient. As a result, the lot of the author who depended entirely upon literature, was decidedly precarious. Although Martial wrote to Priscus, his publisher and bookseller, "You give me the means of enjoying a not ignoble indolence," it is notorious that Martial was one of the most abject flatterers of the tyrant Domitian, and received more from that source than he did from his books.

Under the Republic, oratory paid both in politics and law, but otherwise Roman authors were necessarily either men of wealth, or were driven to seek the patronage of some man of opulence. While Cicero was made by his eloquence, Lucretius, Catullus, Ovid, Livy, Seneca, Pliny, and Tacitus all came from families of affluence. On the other hand Virgil's father was a poor peasant, while Horace's was a freedman, but both of these authors first found prosperity under the patronage of Mæcenas.

When the patron was such a man as Mæcenas, such a system might work out very well, but there was only one Mæcenas, and there were no more Horaces or Virgils.

Mr. Manchester's second article will discuss the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period, up to about 1650. The third article will take up the Modern Period. The articles will be profusely illustrated.

CONCERNING REALISTS IN GENERAL AND MR. SWINNERTON IN PARTICULAR*

BY H. G. WELLS

"But do I see afore me, him as I ever sported with in his time of happy infancy? And may I—*may I?*"

This May I, meant might he shake hands?
—Dickens, *Great Expectations*.

I do not know why I should be so overpoweringly reminded of the immortal, if at times impossible, Uncle Pumblechook, when I sit down to write a short preface to Mr. Swinnerton's *Nocturne*. Jests come at times out of the backwoods of a writer's mind. It is part of the literary quality that behind the writer there is a sub-writer, making a commentary. This is a comment against which I may reasonably expostulate, but which, nevertheless, I am indisposed to ignore.

The task of introducing a dissimilar writer to a new public has its own peculiar difficulties for the elder hand. I suppose logically a writer should have good words only for his own imitators. For surely he has chosen what he considers to be the best ways. What justification has he for praising attitudes he never

adopted and commending methods of treatment from which he has abstained? The reader naturally receives his commendations with suspicion. Is this man, he asks, stricken with penitence in the flower of his middle-age? Has he but just discovered how good are the results that the other game, the game he has never played, can give? Or has he been disconcerted by the criticism of the Young? The fear of the Young is the beginning of his wisdom. Is he taking this alien-spirited work by the hand simply to say defensively and vainly: "I assure you, indeed, I am *not* an old foggy; I quite understand it." (There it is, I fancy, that the Pumblechook quotation creeps in.) To all of which suspicions, enquiries and objections, I will quote, tritely but conclusively; "In my Father's house are many mansions," or in the words of Mr. Kipling:

There are five and forty ways
Of composing tribal lays,
And every blessed one of them is right.

Indeed now that I come to think it over, I have never in all my life read a writer of closely kindred method to my own that I have greatly admired; the confessed imitators give me all the discomfort without the relieving admission of caricature; the parallel instances I have always wanted to rewrite; while on the other hand for many totally dissimilar workers I have had quite involuntary admirations. It is not merely that I do not so clearly see

*This article is an introduction which Mr. Wells has written for Swinnerton's novel, *Nocturne*, shortly to be published by George H. Doran Company. Brilliant glimpses of Wells's attitude toward his own work and toward the school of realist writers of which Swinnerton is an example of growing importance, are most interestingly revealed. Readers in this country who have come to admire Swinnerton's writing will find in Mr. Wells's judgment a striking confirmation of their belief in the young English writer. Mr. Wells's admiration for Swinnerton, whose work he explains in this article as so totally dissimilar to his own, is one of the peculiar brilliances of Wells's comprehensive genius.—EDITOR'S NOTE.