

A Writer's Recollections

BY MRS. HUMPHRY WARD

PART III



HOW little those who are school-girls of to-day can realize what it was to be a school-girl in the 'fifties or the early 'sixties of the last century! A modern girls' school, equipped as scores are now equipped throughout the country, was of course not to be found in 1858, when I first became a school boarder, or in 1867 when I ceased to be one. The games, the gymnastic, the solid grounding in drawing and music, together with the enormously improved teaching in elementary science, or literature and language, which are at the service of the school-girl of to-day, had not begun to be when I was at school. As far as intellectual training was concerned, my nine years from seven to sixteen were practically wasted. I learned nothing thoroughly or accurately, and the German, French, and Latin, which I soon discovered after my marriage to be essential to the kind of literary work I wanted to do, had all to be re-learned before they could be of any real use to me; nor was it ever possible for me—who married at twenty—to get that firm hold on the structure and literary history of any language, ancient or modern, which my brother William, only fifteen months my junior, got from his six years at Rugby, and his training there in Latin and Greek. What I learned during those years was learned from personalities; from contact with a nature so simple, sincere and strong as that of Miss Clough; from the kindly old German governess, whose affection for me helped me through some rather hard and lonely school years spent at a school in Shropshire; and from a gentle and high-minded woman, an ardent Evangelical, with whom a little later, at the age of fourteen or fifteen, I fell headlong in love, as was the manner of school-

girls then, and is, I understand, frequently the case with school-girls now, in spite of the greatly increased variety of subjects on which they may spend their minds.

English girls' schools to-day, providing the higher education, are so far as my knowledge goes worthily representative of that astonishing rise in the intellectual standards of women, which has taken place in the last half-century. They are almost entirely taught by women, and women with whom, in many cases, education—the shaping of the immature human creature to noble ends—is the sincerest of passions; who find, indeed, in the task that same creative joy which belongs to literature or art, or philanthropic experiment. The school-mistress to whom money is the sole or even the chief motive of her work, is, in my experience, rare to-day, though we have all in our time heard tales of modern "academies" of the Miss Pinkerton type, brought up to date—fashionable, exclusive, and luxurious—where, as in some boys' preparatory schools (before the war!) the more the parents paid, the better they were pleased. But I have not come across them. The leading boarding-schools in England and America, at present, no less than the excellent day-schools for girls of the middle class, with which this country has been covered since 1870, are genuine products of that Women's Movement, as we vaguely call it, in the early educational phases of which I myself was much engaged; whereof the results are now widely apparent, though as yet only half-grown. If one tracks it back to somewhere near its origins, its superficial origins at any rate, one is brought up, I think, as in the case of so much else, against one leading cause—*railways*! With railways and a cheap press, in the second third of the nineteenth century, there came in, as we all know, the break-up of a thousand

mental stagnations, answering to the old physical disabilities and inconveniences. And the break-up has nowhere had more startling results than in the world of women, and the training of women for life. We have only to ask ourselves what the women of Benjamin Constant, or of Beyle, or Balzac, would

have made of the keen school-girl and college girl of the present day, to feel how vast is the change through which some of us have lived. Exceptional women, of course, have led much the same kind of lives in all generations. The woman reformer of our time has gone through a different sort of self - education from that of Harriet Martineau; but she has not thought more widely, and she will hardly influence her world so much as that stanch fighter of the past. It is the rank and file—

the average woman—for whom the world has opened up so astonishingly. The revelation of her wide-spread and various capacities that the present war has brought about, is only the suddenly conspicuous result of the liberating forces set in action by the scientific and mechanical development of the nineteenth century. It rests still with that world "after the war," to which we are all looking forward with mingled hope and fear, to determine the new forms, sociological and political, through which this capacity, this heightened faculty, must some day organically express itself.

In the years when I was at school, however,—1858 to 1867—these good

days were only beginning to dawn. Poor teaching, poor school-books, and, in many cases, indifferent food and much ignorance as to the physical care of girls—these things were common in my school-time. I loved nearly all my teachers; but it was not till I went home to live at Oxford, in 1867, that I awoke

intellectually to a hundred interests and influences that begin much earlier nowadays to affect any clever child. I had few tools and little grounding; and I was much more childish than I need have been. A few vivid impressions stand out from these years: the great and to me mysterious figure of Newman haunting the streets of Edgbaston, where, in 1861, my father became head classical master of the Oratory School; the news of the murder of Lincoln, coming suddenly into a quiet garden in a



BENJAMIN JOWETT

suburb of Birmingham, and an ineffaceable memory of the pale faces and horror-stricken looks of those discussing it; the haunting beauty of certain passages of Ruskin which I copied out and carried about with me, without in the least caring to read as a whole the books from which they came; my first visit to the House of Commons in 1863; the recurrent visits to Fox How, and the winter and summer beauty of the fells; together with an endless story-telling phase in which I told stories to my school-fellows, on condition they told stories to me; coupled with many attempts on my part at poetry and fiction, which make me laugh and blush when

I compare them to-day with similar efforts of my own grandchildren. But on the whole they were starved and rather unhappy years; through no one's fault. My parents were very poor and perpetually in movement. Everybody did the best they could.

With Oxford, however, and my seventeenth year, came a radical change.

It was in July, 1865, while I was still a school-girl, that in the very middle of the Long Vacation, I first saw Oxford. My father, after some five years as Doctor Newman's colleague at the Oratory School, had then become the subject of a strong temporary reaction against Catholicism. He left the Roman Church in '65, to return to it again, for good, eleven years later. During the interval he took pupils at Oxford, produced a very successful *Manual of English Literature*, edited the works of Wycliffe for the Clarendon Press, made himself an Anglo-Saxon scholar, and became one of the most learned editors of the great Rolls Series. To look at the endless piles of his note-books is to realize how hard, how incessantly he worked. Historical scholarship was his destined field; he found his happiness in it through all the troubles of life. And the return to Oxford, to its memories, its libraries, its stately imperishable beauty, was delightful to him. So also, I think, for some years, was the sense of intellectual freedom. Then began a kind of nostalgia, which grew and grew till it took him back to the Catholic haven in 1876, never to wander more.

But when he first showed me Oxford he was in the ardor of what seemed a permanent severance from an admitted mistake. I see a deserted Oxford street, and a hansom coming up it—myself and my father inside it. I was returning from school, for the holidays. When I had last seen my people, they were living near Birmingham. I now found them at Oxford, and I remember the thrill of excitement with which I looked from side to side as we neared the colleges. For I knew well, even at fourteen, that this was "no mean city." As we drove up Beaumont Street we saw what was then "new Balliol" in front of us, and a jutting window. "There lives the arch-

heretic!" said my father. It was a window in Jowett's rooms. He was not yet Master of the famous College, but his name was a rallying-cry, and his personal influence almost at its zenith. At the same time, he was then rigorously excluded from the University pulpit; it was not till a year later that even his close friend Dean Stanley ventured to ask him to preach in Westminster Abbey; and his salary as Greek Professor, due to him from the revenues of Christ Church, and withheld from him on theological grounds for years, had only just been wrung—at last—from the reluctant hands of a governing body which contained Doctor Pusey.

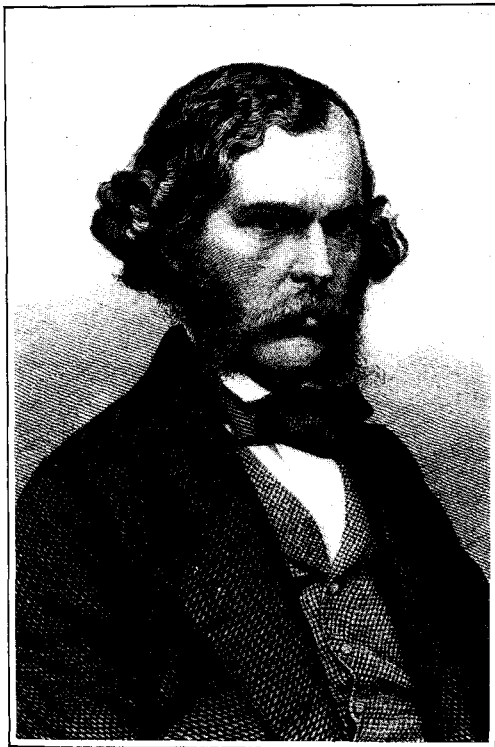
It was not, however, till two years later that I left school, and slipped into the Oxford life as a fish into water. I was sixteen, beginning to be conscious of all sorts of rising needs and ambitions, keenly alive to the spell of Oxford, and to the good fortune which had brought me to live in her streets. There was in me, I think, a real hunger to learn, and a very quick sense of romance in things or people. But after sixteen, except in music, I had no definite teaching, and everything I learned came to me from persons—and books—sporadically, without any general guidance or plan. It was all a great voyage of discovery, organized mainly by myself, on the advice of a few men and women very much older, who took an interest in me, and were endlessly kind to the shy and shapeless creature I must have been.

It was in '68 or '69—I think I was seventeen—that I remember my first sight of a college garden lying cool and shaded between gray college walls, and on the grass a figure that held me fascinated—a lady in a green brocade dress, with a belt and chatelaine of Russian silver, who was playing croquet, then a novelty in Oxford, and seemed to me, as I watched her, a perfect model of grace and vivacity. A man nearly thirty years older than herself whom I knew to be her husband was standing near her, and a handful of undergraduates made an amused and admiring court round the lady. The elderly man—he was then fifty-three—was Mark Pattison, Rector of Lincoln College, and the croquet-

player had been his wife about seven years. After the Rector's death in 1884, Mrs. Pattison married Sir Charles Dilke in the very midst of the divorce proceedings which were to wreck in full stream a brilliant political career; and she showed him a proud devotion till her death. None of her early friends who remember her later history can ever think of the "Frances Pattison" of Oxford days without a strange stirring of heart. I was much at Lincoln in the years before I married, and derived an impression from the life lived there that has never left me. Afterwards I saw much less of Mrs. Pattison, who was generally on the Riviera in the winter; but from 1868 to 1872, the Rector, learned, critical, bitter, fastidious, and "Mrs. Pat," with her gaiety, her picturesqueness, her impatience of the Oxford solemnities and decorums, her sharp restless wit, her determination *not* to be academic, to hold on to the greater world of affairs outside—mattered more to me perhaps than anybody else. They were very kind to me, and I was never tired of going there: though I was much puzzled by their ways, and—while my Evangelical phase lasted—much scandalized often by the speculative freedom of the talk I heard. Sometimes my rather uneasy conscience protested in ways which I think must have amused my hosts, though they never said a word. They were fond of asking me to come to supper at Lincoln on Sundays. It was a gay, unceremonious meal, at

which Mrs. Pattison appeared in the kind of gown which at a much later date began to be called a tea-gown. It was generally white or gray, with various ornaments and accessories which always seemed to me, accustomed for so long to the rough-and-tumble of school life, marvels of delicacy and prettiness; so

that I was sharply conscious, on these occasions, of the graceful figure made by the young mistress of the old house. But some last stubborn trace in me of the Evangelical view of Sunday declared that while one might talk—and one *must* eat!—on Sunday, one mustn't put on evening dress, or behave as though it were just like a weekday. So, while every one else was in evening dress, I more than once—at seventeen—came to these Sunday gatherings on a winter evening, pur-



GEORGE HENRY LEWES

posely, in a high woolen frock, sternly but uncomfortably conscious of being sublime—if only one were not ridiculous! The Rector, "Mrs. Pat," Mr. Bywater, myself, and perhaps a couple of undergraduates—often a bewildered and silent couple—I see that little vanished company in the far past, so plainly! Three of them are dead—and for me, the gray walls of Lincoln must always be haunted by their ghosts.

The Rector himself was an endless study to me—he and his frequent companion, Ingram Bywater, afterwards the distinguished Greek Professor. To listen to these two friends as they talked of foreign scholars in Paris, or Germany,

of Renan, or Ranke, or Curtius; as they poured scorn on Oxford scholarship, or the lack of it, and on the ideals of Balliol, which aimed at turning out public officials, as compared with the researching ideals of the German universities, which seemed to the Rector the only ideals worth calling academic; or as they flung gibes at Christ Church whence Pusey and Liddon still directed the powerful Church party of the University:—was to watch the doors of new worlds gradually opening before a girl's questioning intelligence. To me the Rector was from the beginning the kindest friend. He saw that I came of a literary stock and had literary ambitions; and he tried to direct me. "Get to the bottom of something"—he would say—"Choose a subject, and know *everything* about it!" I eagerly followed his advice, and began to work at early Spanish in the Bodleian. But I think he was wrong—I venture to think so!—though as his half-melancholy, half-satirical look comes back to me, I realize how easily he would defend himself, if one could tell him so now! I think I ought to have been told to take a history examination and learn Latin properly. But if I had, half the exploring joy of those early years would no doubt have been cut away.

One of my clearest memories connected with the Pattisons and Lincoln is that of meeting George Eliot and Mr. Lewes there, in the spring of 1870, when I was eighteen. It was at one of the Sunday suppers. George Eliot sat at the Rector's right hand. I was opposite her; on my left was George Henry Lewes, to whom I took a prompt and active dislike. He and Mrs. Pattison kept up a lively conversation in which Mr. Bywater, on the other side of the table, took full share. George Eliot talked very little, and I not at all. The Rector was shy or tired, and George Eliot was in truth entirely occupied in watching or listening to Mr. Lewes. I was disappointed that she was so silent, and perhaps her quick eye may have divined it, for after supper, as we were going up the interesting old staircase, made in the thickness of the wall, which led direct from the dining-room to the drawing-room above, she said to me:

"The rector tells me that you have been reading a good deal about Spain. Would you care to hear something of our Spanish journey?"—the journey which had preceded the appearance of "The Spanish Gypsy," then newly published. My reply is easily imagined. The rest of the party passed through the dimly lit drawing-room to talk and smoke in the gallery beyond. George Eliot sat down in the darkness and I beside her. Then she talked for about twenty minutes, with perfect ease and finish, without misplacing a word or dropping a sentence, and I realized at last that I was in the presence of a great writer. Not a great *talker*. It is clear that George Eliot never was that. Impossible for her to "talk" her books, or evolve her books from conversation, like Madame de Staël. She was too self-conscious, too desperately reflective, too rich in second-thoughts for that. But in tête-à-tête, and with time to choose her words, she could—in monologue, with just enough stimulus from a companion to keep it going—produce on a listener exactly the impression of some of her best work. As the low clear voice flowed on, in Mrs. Pattison's drawing-room, I *saw* Saragossa, Granada, the Escorial, and that survival of the old Europe in the new, which one must go to Spain to find. Not that the description was particularly vivid—in talking of famous places John Richard Green could make words tell and paint with far greater success; but it was singularly complete and accomplished. When it was done the effect was there—the effect she had meant to produce. I shut my eyes, and it all comes back:—the darkened room, the long, pallid face, the evident wish to be kind to a young girl.

Two more impressions of her let me record. The following day, the Pattisons took their guests to see the "eights" races from Christ Church meadow. A young Fellow of Merton, Mandell Creighton, afterwards the beloved and famous Bishop of London, was among those entertaining her on the barge, and on the way home he took her and Mr. Lewes through Merton garden. I was of the party, and I remember what a carnival of early summer it was in that enchanting place. The chestnuts were

all out, one splendor from top to toe; the laburnums, the lilacs, the hawthorns red and white, the new-mown grass spreading its smooth and silky carpet round the college walls—a May sky overhead, and through the trees glimpses of towers and spires, silver gray, in the sparkling summer air—the picture was one of those that Oxford throws before the spectator, at every turn, like the careless beauty that knows she has only to show herself, to move, to breathe, to give delight. George Eliot stood on the grass, in the bright sun, looking at the flower-laden chestnuts, at the distant glimpses on all sides, of the surrounding city, saying little—that she left to Mr. Lewes!—but drinking it in, storing it in that rich, absorbent mind of hers. And afterwards when Mr. Lewes, Mr. Creighton, she and I walked



ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

back to Lincoln, I remember another little incident throwing light on the ever-ready instinct of the novelist. As we turned into the quadrangle of Lincoln—suddenly, at one of the upper windows of the Rector's lodgings, which occupied the far right-hand corner of the quad, there appeared the head and shoulders of Mrs. Pattison, as she looked out and beckoned smiling to Mrs. Lewes. It was a brilliant apparition, as though a French portrait by Greuze or Perronneau had suddenly slipped into a vacant space in the old college wall. The pale, pretty head, *blond-cendrée*—the delicate smiling features and white throat, a touch of black, a touch of blue; a white

dress; a general eighteenth-century impression as though of powder and patches—Mrs. Lewes perceived it in a flash, and I saw her run eagerly to Mr. Lewes and draw his attention to the window and its occupant. She took his arm, while she looked and waved. If she had lived longer, some day, and some-

where in her books, that vision at the window, and that flower-laden garden would have reappeared. I seemed to see her consciously and deliberately committing them both to memory.

But I do not believe that she ever meant to describe the Rector in "Mr. Casaubon." She was far too good a scholar herself to have perpetrated a caricature so flagrantly untrue. She knew Mark Pattison's quality, and could never have meant to draw the writer of some of the most fruitful and

illuminating of English essays, and one of the most brilliant pieces of English biography, in the dreary and foolish pedant who overshadows *Middlemarch*. But the fact that Mark Pattison was an elderly scholar with a young wife, and that George Eliot knew him, led later on to a legend which was I am sure unwelcome to the writer of *Middlemarch*, while her supposed victim passed it by with amused indifference.

As to the relation between the Rector and the Squire of *Robert Elsmere* which has been often assumed, it was confined, as I have already said (in the introduction to the library edition of *Robert Elsmere* published in 1909) to a likeness

in outward aspect—"a few personal traits, and the two main facts of great learning and a general impatience of fools." If one could imagine Mark Pattison a landowner, he would certainly never have neglected his estates, or tolerated an inefficient agent.

Only three years intervened between my leaving school and my engagement to Mr. T. Humphry Ward, Fellow and Tutor of Brasenose College, Oxford. But those three years seem to me now to have been extraordinarily full. Lincoln and the Pattisons, Balliol and Mr. Jowett, and the Bodleian Library, outside the influences and affections of my own home, stand in the forefront of what memory looks back on as a broad and animated scene. The great Library, in particular, became to me a living and inspiring presence. When I think of it, as it then was, I am aware of a medley of beautiful things—pale sunlight on book-lined walls, or streaming through old armorial bearings on Tudor windows; spaces and distances, all books, beneath a painted roof from which gleamed the motto of the University—*Dominus illuminatio mea*; gowned figures moving silently about the spaces; the faint scents of old leather and polished wood; and fusing it all, a stately dignity and benignant charm, through which the voices of the bells outside, as they struck each successive quarter from Oxford's many towers, seemed to breathe a certain eternal reminder of the past and the dead. It was in these noble surroundings that, with far too little, I fear, of positive reading, and with much undisciplined wandering from shelf to shelf and subject to subject, there yet sank deep into me the sense of history, and of that vast ocean of the recorded past, from which the generations rise, and into which they fall back. And that in itself was a great boon—almost, one might say, a training, of a kind.

But a girl of seventeen is not always thinking of books, especially in the Oxford summer term.

In *Miss Bretherton*, my earliest novel, and in *Lady Connie*, one of my latest, will be found by those who care to look for it, the reflection of that other life of Oxford, the life which takes its

shape not from age, but from youth, not from the past which created Oxford, but from the lively laughing present which every day renews it. For six months of the year Oxford is a city of young men, for the most part between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two. In my maiden days it was not also a city of young women, as it is to-day. Women—girls especially—were comparatively on sufferance. The Heads of Houses were married; the Professors were mostly married; but married tutors had scarcely begun to be. Only at two seasons of the year was Oxford invaded by women—by bevvies of maidens who came, in early May and middle June, to be made much of by their brothers and their brothers' friends, to be danced with and flirted with, to know the joys of coming back on a summer night from Nuneham up the long fragrant reaches of the lower river, or of "sitting out" in historic gardens where Philip Sidney or Charles I., or Gibbon had passed.

At the Eights and "Commem," the old, old place became a mere background for pretty dresses, and college luncheons, and river picnics. The seniors groaned often, as well they might; for there was little work done in my day in the summer term. But it is perhaps worth while for any nation to possess such harmless festivals in so beautiful a setting as these Oxford gatherings. How many of our national festivals are spoiled by ugly and sordid things—betting and drink, greed and display! Here, all there is to see is a competition of boats, manned by England's best youth, upon a noble river, flowing, in Virgilian phrase, "under ancient walls"; a city of romance, given up for a few days to the pleasure of the young, and breathing into that pleasure her own refining, exalting note; a stately ceremony—the Eucænia—going back to the infancy of English learning; and the dancing of young men and maidens in Gothic or classical halls built long ago by the "fathers who begat us." My own recollection of the Oxford summer, the Oxford river and hay-fields, the dawn on Oxford streets, as one came out from a Commemoration ball, or the evening under Nuneham woods where the swans on that still water, now, as always, "float double, swan and

shadow"—these things I hope will be with me to the end. To have lived through them is to have tasted youth and pleasure from a cup as pure, as little alloyed with baser things, as the high gods allow to mortals.

Let me recall one more experience before I come to the married life which began in 1872;—my first sight of Taine, the great French historian, in the spring of 1871. He had come over at the invitation of the Curators of the Taylorian Institution to give a series of lectures on Corneille and Racine. The lectures were arranged immediately after the surrender of Paris to the German troops, when it might have been hoped that the worst calamities of France were over. But before M. Taine crossed to England the insurrection of the Commune had broken out, and while he was actually in Oxford delivering his six lectures, the terrible news of the last days of May, the burning of the Tuileries, the Hôtel de Ville and the Cour des Comptes, all the savagery of the beaten revolution let loose on Paris itself, came crashing, day by day and hour by hour, like so many horrible explosions in the heavy air of Europe, still tremulous with the memories and agonies of recent war.

How well I remember the effect in Oxford!—the newspaper cries in the streets, the fear each morning as to what new calamities might have fallen on civilization, the intense fellow-feeling in a community of students and scholars for the students and scholars of France!

When M. Taine arrived, he himself writes home (see his published *Correspondence*, Vol. II) that Oxford could not do enough to show her sympathy with a distinguished Frenchman. He writes from Oxford on May 25:—

I have no courage for a letter to-day. I have just heard of the horrors of Paris, the burning of the Louvre, the Tuileries, the Hôtel de Ville, etc. My heart is wrung. I have energy for nothing. I cannot go out and see people. I was in the Bodleian when the Librarian told me this and showed me the newspapers. In presence of such madness and such disasters, they treat a Frenchman here with a kind of pitying sympathy.

Oxford residents indeed, inside and outside the colleges, crowded the first

lecture to show their feeling not only for M. Taine, but for a France wounded and trampled on by her own children. The few dignified and touching words with which he opened his course, his fine dark head, the attractiveness of his subject, the lucidity of his handling of it, made the lecture a great success; and a few nights afterwards at dinner at Balliol, I found myself sitting next the great man. In his published correspondence there is a letter describing this dinner which shows that I must have confided in him not a little!—as to my Bodleian reading, and the article on the "Poema del Cid" that I was writing. He confesses, however, that he did his best to draw me—examining the English girl as a new specimen for his psychological collection. As for me, I remember that he summed up his criticisms of English life in the remark that there was too much magenta in the women's dresses, and too much pepper in the kitchen! From English cooking—which showed ill in the Oxford of those days—he suffered a good deal. Nor, in spite of his great literary knowledge of England and English, was his spoken English clear enough to enable him to grapple with the lodging-house cook. Professor Max Müller, who had induced him to give the lectures, and watched over him during his stay, told me that on his first visit to the historian in his Beaumont Street rooms, he found him sitting bewildered before the strangest of meals. It consisted entirely of a huge beef-steak, served in the unappetizing, slovenly English way, and—a large plate of buttered toast. Nothing else. "But I ordered bif-tek and pott-a-toes!" cried the puzzled historian, to his visitor!

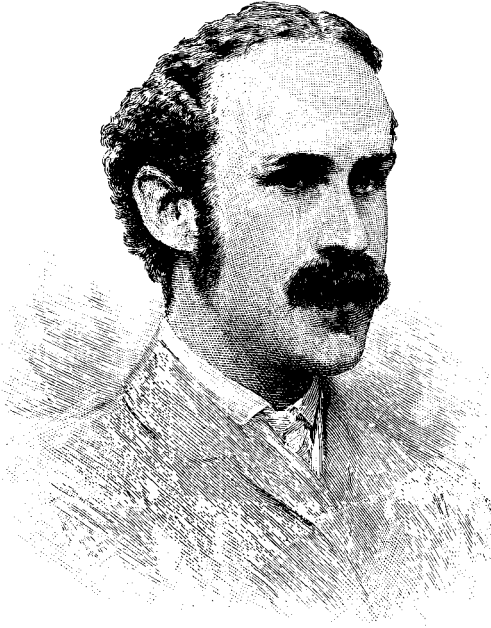
Another guest of the Master's on that night was Mr. Swinburne, and of him too I have a vivid recollection as he sat opposite to me on the side next the fire, his small lower features and slender neck overweighted by his thick reddish hair and capacious brow. I could not think why he seemed so cross and uncomfortable. He was perpetually beckoning to the waiters, then, when they came, holding peremptory conversation with them; while I from my side of the table could see them going away, with a whisper or a shrug to each other, like

men asked for the impossible. At last with a kind of bound, Swinburne leaped from his chair and seized a copy of the *Times*, which he seemed to have persuaded one of the men to bring him. As he got up I saw that the fire behind him, and very close to him, must indeed have been burning the very marrow out of a long-suffering poet. And alack, in that house without a mistress, the small conveniences of life, such as fire-screens, were often overlooked. The Master did not possess any. In a pale exasperation Swinburne folded the *Times* over the back of his chair, and sat down again. Vain was the effort! The room was narrow, the party large, and the servants pushing by, had soon dislodged the *Times*. Again and again did Swinburne in a fury replace it; and was soon reduced to sitting silent and wild-eyed, his back firmly pressed against the chair and the newspaper, in a concentrated struggle with fate.

Matthew Arnold was another of the party, and I have a vision of my uncle standing talking with M. Taine, with whom he then and there made a lasting friendship. The Frenchman was not, I trust, aware at that moment of the heresies of the English critic who had ventured only a few years before to speak of "the exaggerated French estimate of Racine," and even to indorse the judgment of Joubert—"Racine est le Virgile des ignorants!" Otherwise M. Taine might have given an even sharper edge than he actually did to his remarks, in his letters home, on the critical faculty of the English. "In all that I read and

hear"—he says to Madame Taine—"I see nowhere the fine literary sense which means the gift—or the art—of understanding the souls and passions of the past." And again, "I have had infinite trouble to-day to make my audience appreciate some *finesses* of Racine." There is a note of resigned exasperation in these

comments which reminds me of the attitude of another French critic—Edmond Scherer, Sainte-Beuve's best successor—ten years later. Apropos of some judgment of Matthew Arnold—whom Scherer delighted in—on Racine, of the same kind as those I have already quoted, the Frenchman of letters broke out to me, almost with fury, as we walked together at Versailles. But after all, was the Oxford which contained Pater, Pattison, and By-



WALTER PATER

water, which had nurtured Matthew Arnold and Swinburne—Swinburne with his wonderful knowledge of the intricacies and subtleties of the French tongue, and the French literature—merely "solide and positif," as Taine declares? The judgment is, I think, a characteristic judgment of that man of formulas—often so brilliant, and often so mistaken—who in the famous *History of English Literature*, taught his English readers as much by his blunders as by his merits. He provoked us into thinking. And what critic does more? Is not the whole fraternity like so many successive Penelopes, each unraveling the web of the one before? The point is that the web should be eternally remade and eternally unraveled.

I married Mr. Thomas Humphry

Ward, Fellow and Tutor of Brasenose College, on April 6, 1872, the knot being tied by my father's friend, my grandfather's pupil and biographer, Dean Stanley. For nine years, till the spring of 1881, we lived in Oxford, in a little house, north of the Parks, in what was then the newest quarter of the University town. They were years, for both of us, of great happiness and incessant activity. Our children, two daughters and a son, were born in 1874, 1876 and 1879. We had many friends, all pursuing the same kind of life as ourselves, and interested in the same kind of things. Nobody under the rank of a Head of a College, except a very few privileged Professors, possessed as much as a thousand pounds a year. The average income of the new race of married tutors was not much more than half that sum. Yet we all gave dinner-parties and furnished our houses with Morris papers, old chests and cabinets, and blue pots. The dinner-parties were simple and short. At our own early efforts of the kind, there certainly was not enough to eat. But we all improved with time; and on the whole I think we were very fair housekeepers and competent mothers. Most of us were very anxious to be up-to-date, and in the fashion, whether in esthetics, in housekeeping, or education. But our fashion was not that of Belgravia or Mayfair, which indeed we scorned! It was the fashion of the movement which sprang from Morris and Burne-Jones. Liberty stuffs very plain in line, but elaborately "smocked," were greatly in vogue, and evening dresses, "cut square," or with "Watteau pleats," were generally worn, and often in conscious protest against the London "low dress" of the moment, which Oxford—young married Oxford, thought both ugly and fast. I first succumbed to a "dressmaker's" evening dress, in the ordinary fashion, about 1882, ten years after my marriage, and immediately after our settlement in London.

Almost immediately opposite to us in the Bradmore Road, lived Walter Pater and his sisters. The exquisiteness of their small house, and the charm of the three people who lived in it will never be forgotten by those who knew them well in those days when by the publication

of the *Studies in the Renaissance* (1873) their author had just become famous. I recall very clearly the effect of that book—of the strange and poignant sense of beauty expressed in it—of its entire aloofness from the Christian tradition of Oxford—its glorification of the higher and intenser forms of esthetic pleasure—of "passion" in the intellectual sense—as against the Christian doctrine of self-denial and renunciation. It was a gospel that both stirred and scandalized Oxford. The bishop of the diocese thought it worth while to protest. There was a cry of "Neo-paganism"—and various attempts at persecution. The author of the book was quite unmoved. In those days Walter Pater's mind was still full of revolutionary ferments which were just as sincere, just as much himself as that later hesitating and wistful return towards Christianity, and Christianity of the Catholic type, which is embodied in *Marius the Epicurean*, the most beautiful of the spiritual romances of Europe since the *Confessions*. I can remember a dinner-party at his house, where a great tumult arose over some abrupt statement of his made to the High Church wife of a well-known professor. Pater had been in some way pressed controversially beyond the point of wisdom, and had said suddenly that no reasonable person could govern his life by the opinions or actions of a man who died eighteen centuries ago. The Professor and his wife—I look back to them both with the warmest affection—departed hurriedly, in agitation; and the rest of us only gradually found out what had happened.

But before we left Oxford in 1881, this attitude of mind had I think greatly changed. Mr. Gosse in the memoir of Walter Pater contributed to the *Dictionary of National Biography* says that before 1870, he had gradually relinquished all belief in the Christian religion—and leaves it there. But the interesting and touching thing to watch was the gentle and almost imperceptible flowing back of the tide over the sands it had left bare. It may be said, I think, that he never returned to Christianity in the orthodox, or intellectual sense. But his heart returned to it. He became once more endlessly interested in it, and

haunted by the "something" in it, which he thought inexplicable. A remembrance of my own shows this. In my ardent years of exploration and revolt, conditioned by the historical work that occupied me during the later seventies, I once said to him in tête-à-tête, reckoning confidently on his sympathy, and with the intolerance and certainty of youth, that orthodoxy could not possibly maintain itself long against its assailants, especially from the historical and literary camps, and that we should live to see it break down. He shook his head and looked rather troubled. "I don't think so—" he said. Then, with hesitation—"and we don't altogether agree. You think it's all plain. But I can't. There are such mysterious things. Take that saying, 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden.' How can you explain that? There is a mystery in it—something supernatural."

I might have replied—I cannot remember whether I did—that the answer of the modern critic would be: "The words you quote are in all probability from a lost Wisdom book—there are very close analogies in Proverbs and in the Apocrypha. They are a fragment without a context, and may represent on the Lord's lips, either a quotation, or the text of a discourse. Wisdom is speaking—the Wisdom 'which is justified of her children.'" But if any one had made such a reply, it would not have affected the mood in Pater of which this conversation gave me my first glimpse—and which is expressed again and again in the most exquisite passages of *Marius*. Turn to the first time when Marius—under Marcus Aurelius—is present at a Christian ceremony, and sees, for the first time, the "wonderful spectacle of those who believed."

The people here collected might have figured as the earliest handsel or pattern of a new world, from the very face of which discontent had passed away. . . . They had faced life and were glad, by some science or light of knowledge they had, to which there was certainly no parallel in the older world. Was some credible message from beyond "the flaming rampart of the world"—a message of hope . . . already molding their very bodies and looks and voices, now and here?

Or again, to the thoughts of Marius at the approach of death:—

At this moment, his unclouded receptivity of soul, grown so steadily through all those years, from experience to experience, was at its height; the house was ready for the possible guest, the tablet of the mind white and smooth, for whatever divine fingers might choose to write there.

Marius was published twelve years after the *Studies in the Renaissance*, and there is a world between the two books. I may perhaps be allowed to return to the later phases of Pater's thought, when I come to his review of *Robert Elsmere*, and his precious letter about that book to myself. Here it is rather the middle days of his life that concern me, and the years of happy friendship with him and his sisters, when we were all young together. Mr. Pater and my husband were both fellows and tutors of Brasenose, though my husband was much the younger; a fact which naturally brought us into frequent contact. And the beautiful little house across the road, with its two dear mistresses drew me perpetually, both before and after my marriage. The drawing-room which runs the whole breadth of the house from the road to the garden behind was "Paterian" in every line and ornament. There was a Morris paper; spindle-legged tables and chairs; a sparing allowance of blue plates and pots, bought, I think, in Holland, where Oxford residents in my day were always foraging, to return often with treasures, of which the very memory now stirs a half-amused envy of one's own past self, that had such chance and lost it; framed embroidery of the most delicate design and color, the work of Mr. Pater's elder sister; engravings, if I remember right, from Botticelli or Luini, or Mantegna; a few mirrors, and a very few flowers, chosen and arranged with a simple yet conscious art. I see that room always with the sun in it, touching the polished surfaces of wood and brass and china, and bringing out its pure, bright color. I see it too pervaded by the presence of the younger sister Clara,—a personality never to be forgotten by those who loved her. Clara Pater, whose grave and noble beauty in youth has been preserved in a drawing by Mr. Wirgman, was indeed

a "rare and dedicated spirit." When I first knew her, she was four or five and twenty, intelligent, alive, sympathetic, with a delightful humor, and a strong judgment, but without much positive acquirement. Then after some years, she began to learn Latin and Greek with a view to teaching; and after we left Oxford she became Vice-President of the new Somerville College for Women. Several generations of girl-students must still preserve the tenderest and most grateful memories of all that she was there, as woman, teacher, and friend. Her point of view, her opinion had always the crispness, the savor that goes with perfect sincerity. She feared no one, and she loved many, as they loved her. She loved animals too, as all the household did. How well I remember the devoted nursing given by the brother and sisters to a poor little

paralytic cat, whose life they tried to save—in vain! When, later, I came across in *Marius* the account of Marcus Aurelius carrying away the dead child Annius Verus,—“pressed closely to his bosom, as if yearning just then for one thing only, to be united, to be absolutely one with it, in its obscure distress”—I remembered the absorption of the writer of those lines, and of his sisters, in the suffering of that poor little creature, long years before. I feel tolerably certain that in writing the words Walter Pater had that past experience in mind.

After Walter Pater's death Clara, with her elder sister, became the vigilant and joint guardian of her brother's books and fame, till, four years ago, a terrible illness cut short her life, and set free, in her brother's words, the “unclouded and receptive soul.”

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Confession

BY DANA BURNET

IN my most solemn ignorance I said:
 “Life is a chance estate; the world, a ball
 Tossed by some God with gaming in his head
 Against the Infinite of heaven's wall—”
 And I made cause with Cynics, till there came
 Black-browed Catastrophe, from the deep ground,
 And broke the firmament with hands of flame!
 Then saw I Him whom the old creeds had crowned,
 A monstrous image sprawled upon the skies;
 An effigy, a Thing pricked out of space
 By the long up-burning of uncounted eyes—
 A statue, with a dim, chaotic face
 On which a thousand Versions struggled each for place.

Him no vast wit could move to shape a world!
 Marble He sat, upon a marble throne,
 Nor played with holy purposes, nor hurled
 For His amusement—(being much alone)—
 One least small star into the nebulous Unknown!

Him I beheld in Catastrophic light—
 And straightway felt myself a nobler thing
 Than the mere slave of such an idol-King!
 My heart leaped up to cast Him from His height;
 My soul stood forth responsible! I saw
 Traced in the dust, by grim Destruction's rod,
 A new and splendid Writing of the Law:
Man the high-priest; Humanity the God!