

## KEIDRYCH RHYS

# WEEK END IN GOWER

Tin plate rust slips by. Streamers of smoke, pale blue,  
Puffed out, flee our course, making slow muscular turns  
In sky's sham light. Soon down by level and deep shades  
Powerful sea birds arch over; out, a gale bellies;

Thrives on sleep, for the house is perched on a cliff,  
A summer sun-trap steep to a pencilled bay and  
Far away fawn sand chop; a jackdaw is clenched  
In a nerve window—not real any more but, no fake.

After breakfast a trawler stops opposite, while we,  
My host in foreign shorts, explore broad-in-chest caves,  
Pwllldû, the hidden river; this winter's ring on stone  
Wooing the echo beside wet and wood, and soil more loose.

Now the stiff climb some duck-necked oyster catchers.  
Recall a poet's hæmorrhage at base; talk bosh.  
Watch specs move up towards sight-seers' crags, so we, late  
Just before tea time dare go, and I wind-in-jawbone man.

Like madmen, busy, pass over our mutual heath grass,  
Mark rock on trees, small ponies at their toilet,  
The housetops round Pennard Castle, that single sentinel,  
Appetites for evening palate, when croquet is played.

How easy drown all riveting here and one's own fluid iron side;  
Fowls, wired, flat; the rusty rivers of descendant worlds  
Over buttered toast! A miserable enough bus ride back.  
Yet my happy ghost-in-hell would haunt no coast. A sad thing.

## SELECTED NOTICES

*The Long Week-End.* By Robert Graves and Alan Hodge. Faber & Faber. 12s. 6d.

This is a poorish book, though, as one would expect from its distinguished part-authorship, there are interesting things in it. The trouble is to know what its authors intended it to be and for

what public they meant it. They describe the book in their subtitle as 'A Social History of Great Britain, 1918-1939'. But, of course, it is not that; nor, on the other hand, is it good entertainment. It is really a variegated scrapbook made up out of the Press over the last twenty years. As such it has a sort of unity, more particularly of tone: a flippant indifferentism, masquerading as impartiality, which it applies equally to all subjects, whether the affairs of an Horatio Bottomley or of Europe, the matrimonial difficulties of Edward VIII or the literature and art of the period, the drift of the Continent towards war, or the discarding of whale-bone corsets. The effect is wholly deplorable. There are subjects where such treatment is in place and is mildly effective as irony—though rather weak at that: the Jubilee, the Coronation, Godfrey Winn, the Archbishop of Canterbury, sport, the churches. But to treat that kind of subject on the same level and all in the same breath as the disgraceful record of the English governing class in the last twenty years,—the trickery with which they have run the country at home, the fraudulent and panicked elections (all in the name of democracy) of 1918, 1924, 1931, 1935, the treachery of their conduct of the country's affairs abroad, over China, Abyssinia, Spain, in their attitude towards Mussolini, Hitler, and Soviet Russia, all the mingled incompetence and sabotage of the country's interests which have landed us in the tragedy we so richly deserve,—well, it shows something wrong with the whole conception of this book to treat everything in the same tone of flippancy and *dénigrement*. I suppose it comes from the initial mistake of viewing the period as a long week-end, whereas it would be more in keeping to regard it as a disgraceful nightmare. The last twenty years in our history would need a Swift to do it justice, a Goya to comment on it.

The most shocking sections of the book are those which deal with literature and art: they read like a deliberate pandering to, as certainly they are an encouragement of, the worst prejudices of low-brow readers of the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express*, etc. Of the greatest poet of the time, all that Messrs. Graves and Hodge have to say is that Yeats in his old age turned to the East for inspiration, 'collaborating with an Indian pundit in a translation of the Upanishads—after first abandoning his Celtic Twilight for a brushed-up neo-American style, and then dabbling in spiritualism. The account of Eliot and Mrs. Woolf is no better; while 'Auden