

that instinct must give way to reflection and inspiration to intelligence. The fusion of the different elements brought into play by the painter-poet will take place with the flashing rapidity of light. The unconscious and the conscious, intuition and understanding must operate their transmutation on the subconscious mind in radiant unity.

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PHILIP TOYNBEE

## INTERMENT OF A LITERARY MAN

THE whole conduct of the interment was to be as secular as possible. Lucy Davenport had insisted that even the word 'funeral' should be avoided, for the mystical and ceremonious sound of it. From her veranda chair she had appealed to Mark Wade, who was standing gloomily beside her, staring down the green slope of the garden, over the river, up to the horizon of downs and cloud. He had told her that a service could be avoided altogether, but that this precluded the use of consecrated ground.

'Then we'll bury him on the Portsmouth by-pass.' Lucy Davenport's voice vibrated with the nervous shuddering which always assailed her when she was excited. 'You know Charles would have preferred a sewer to a churchyard.'

'He left no instructions in his will.' Wade spoke drily, without looking at her. 'I don't think Charles cared one way or the other. As for the by-pass, there would be legal difficulties to that. Of course, if you won't have a service, you can bury him in a municipal cemetery.'

'Ah no, Mark. That would be worst of all.'

So he turned to her at last, the irritation on his face deliberately preserved there.

'You know what I feel, Lucy. A freak funeral would embarrass

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everyone, and the only point of the celebration is to allow the living to contemplate the dead with as little distraction as possible.'

'Isn't mumbo-jumbo a distraction?'

'It's accepted: it doesn't distract.'

'Mark, it would be a mockery.' She sat up and threw off the rug which had covered her legs, revealing a thin, old woman's body, a blue cotton dress, woollen stockings, broad-toed garden-ging shoes.

Wade knew that he must compromise, that he couldn't even threaten to wash his hands of it. He respected death and he was determined that his old friend should be treated properly.

'I know a parson,' he said, 'who has virtually lost his faith. He would be willing . . . I can vouch for his being willing to conduct the sort of service which wouldn't offend you.'

Lucy's vague stupid eyes were fixed on him. 'You're sure, Mark? No God or heaven?'

'I doubt if he believes in either.'

But though this was at last conceded, it proved to be only the first of Wade's trials. Next he visited the Stonebourne undertaker, and arranged with him every detail of price and procedure. Not that Charles Davenport had left his wife in difficult circumstances; but Wade had worked his way from poverty, and he resented the monstrous exploitation of death which undertakers too often practise.

After this he called at the vicarage. He was shown into a sunny drawing-room by a parlour-maid whose starch crackled as she walked.

The vicar was a huge old man with a red face and a red scalp. He stood a foot from Wade and stared at him.

'I'm a friend of Charles Davenport's. I've come about the funeral.' He felt, at these words, as intrusive as a commercial traveller.

'I mean that I've come to ask your advice about it. My name's Wade.'

'Yes, yes. I know your name. I've read some of your things with great interest, Mr. Wade.'

'That's most kind,' said Wade.

'I've read Davenport's things, too.'

These 'things' oppressed Wade—as though they were too indecent to be more closely described. He began to explain

why he had come, his manner persuasive and gently condescending. He was not accustomed to clergymen, and he humoured him as he would have humoured an intelligent lunatic. When he had done, the vicar motioned him to a chair, and sat down himself on the far side of the hearth.

'I confess, Mr. Wade, that this is an unusual request. I am accustomed to conduct the funerals of this parish myself.'

'Of course, Mr. Townsend, It's most natural that you should feel that. But Canon Lister was a very old friend of Charles Davenport, and Davenport expressed a strong wish to be buried by him.'

He lied blandly, hardly aware that he was lying, so different were his beliefs from the vicar's, so different the meaning of the words they used. The vicar stroked his jaw.

'If I was assured that no other reason prompted the request, I would readily grant it. But neither Mr. nor Mrs. Davenport, during their twenty years' residence in the parish, has once attended divine service in Saint Luke's. I need hardly add that my acquaintance with Mr. Davenport's literary works has given me some insight into his religious views.'

'Really, Mr. Townsend . . .' Wade spoke pompously now, 'Really, Mr. Townsend, I have never understood that it was customary to investigate a man's religious views before permitting his burial in consecrated ground.'

He was amused, and yet irritated too. It had taken two hours to persuade Lucy that Christian burial was preferable to a gesture of old-fashioned atheism; and now he was a suppliant for the six feet of consecrated ground which she despised.

'Naturally not.' The vicar lit a pipe and crossed his long black legs. 'But I am the custodian of St. Luke's Churchyard, and I'm sure you must understand my responsibilities. Am I to allow Christian burial to become meaningless, a mere empty formula preceding the sanitary disposal of a body?'

'Indeed I do understand.' Wade paused, as though in perplexity. 'But the alternative is unpleasant to contemplate. Secular funerals lack the solemnity and beauty of a church service. I wouldn't wish one for my friend. Surely, too, there is hope for the redemption of unbelievers even after death.'

'A question, Mr. Wade, which has exercised and divided theologians for many centuries.'

It shocked Wade to realize how closely the vicar's manner resembled his own. 'Then I am to take it that we must look elsewhere'.

He stood up and stared angrily down at the comfortable expanse of the vicar.

'No, Mr. Wade, that's too heavy a responsibility. I see that I must grant your request.'

Wade thanked him quickly, and quickly left.

After this his interview with Lister was as easy as it was depressing. At Oxford Lister had been a sallow fanatic, hovering on the brink of Rome, a Puseyite troubled by Newman, years after both were dead. Now he was a tormented, elderly invalid in the throes of spiritual agonies which were mustier still—musty now with the odour of Clough and Matthew Arnold.

'Ah, Wade . . .' he looked like a bent white mole as he stood at his study door. 'I got your letter. Come in, won't you, and take a chair.'

The room was very different in every detail from the vicar's. Old books were scattered on the floor, and typescripts on table and chairs. The narrow city street blocked the sun from the window.

'Rather a pigstye, I'm afraid. I've been working like a beaver, you know, trying to get the book finished.'

Wade felt a sudden strong disgust for his mission. He hated his overbearing role, the successful modern man browbeating this poor ghost of a forgotten battle. So he spoke humbly.

'Lister, I have a feeling that I shouldn't have come to you.'

'It's a difficult question.' Lister's hand trembled as he held out a battered carton of miniature cigars. 'Do smoke, won't you: they're not so bad as they look.' Wade accepted one, and held it to the trembling flame. 'I gather Davenport was a thorough-going disbeliever.'

'That's so. In some senses he was a violent enemy to religion.'

'So you chose me to bury him.' The sick head was bowed, but Wade could see a crease of perplexity on the forehead. He began to feel exasperated by Lister's uncertainty.

'The last time we met I gathered that you had arrived at a more or less Unitarian position, a sort of deism.'

'Ah, the divinity of Christ. I'm dealing with that now.' Lister

looked eagerly round at the typescripts on the table. 'What I feel, Wade, is that the divinity of Christ is simply a high and splendid token of the divinity of man.'

'Well, that's probably another way of saying what many of us believe—that man's desires and aspirations aren't all on a level.'

'But there's a true dichotomy.' Lister pushed himself out of his chair, and stood with his back to the fireplace. 'Indeed I see no rising scale of human aspiration, but a sharp distinction between the divine and the human.'

'I feel sure,' said Wade, 'that your beliefs need not prevent you from performing Davenport's funeral service.'

'I wouldn't wish to be hypocritical, Wade, not in either direction. I owe you many debts of gratitude: I don't know what to say.'

'My dear Lister, I don't want you to consider this the fulfilment of your quite imaginary debts. You must allow your conscience to decide.'

And yet Wade knew that gratitude would weigh heavily on the tortuous scales of Lister's conscience.

'You know that I've given up holding services. The Bishop has allowed me to retire to my researches.'

'Yes, I knew that.'

'The only service I could hold would perhaps shock by its bleakness. Even the immortality of the soul is by no means a clear issue to me.'

'Nor to any of us, I assure you. What the widow would wish is a brief, non-doctrinal affair—dignified but unelaborate. I felt sure that you would find a successful solution.'

Now Wade's personality had escaped the checks he had put on it; he was frankly overpowering, and Lister seemed to shrink from the blast of this determination.

'Very well, Wade; I'll hold the service. I think I understand what's required.'

'I'm most grateful.' Wade stood up and shook Lister's feeble hand. He stopped at the door and said: 'One small point. Mrs. Davenport wishes me to give a short address after the service. I imagine you won't mind.'

'No, indeed. I never knew him myself. I should be totally unsuited to the task. Besides it's quite a common practice nowadays to invite lay preachers. Oh, no objection at all.'

Wade strongly felt the futility of his achievement. His interview with Lister made him suspect how grotesque the compromise could be, perhaps even more grotesque than Lucy's burial by the roadside. Also he was still oppressed by the after-taste of his bullying. 'Why, why,' said Wade, 'should I take such disreputable pains?' It was certainly not for Lucy; nor, he now saw, was it for Charles, since Charles was dead and Wade believed that he owed no obligations to the dead. He thought that his only motive could be respect for death itself, for he was himself a death-fearing man.

With her hysteria Lucy Davenport combined a helpless incompetence which seemed to grow hourly during the days before the funeral. She seldom moved from her wicker chair in the veranda, and sitting there she moaned at Wade all through that afternoon.

'I don't want Charles's mother, Mark. She hated both of us and it would be sheer hypocrisy for her to come.'

'But, my dear, we're not issuing invitations to the funeral. Anyone can come who's prepared for a forty minute journey from London. We can't discriminate.'

'She'll come, if only to make trouble.'

'Yes, I dare say she will come; we must put up with it.'

Lucy turned her sad face back to the garden, and a strand of grey hair fell across her cheek. 'Another thing, Mark. I'm not happy about your clergyman. I'm sure he'll say something impossible. Didn't you tell me he believes in God?'

'Lucy, aren't you being too much of a purist? The service will be very short and I'm quite sure Lister won't embarrass you.'

'How Charles would have loathed it all!'

'I doubt it. He'd have been amused. We'd all be amused by our own funerals.'

She pulled at the loose strand of hair, and spoke now with a dull intensity. 'Charles's works will live, Mark. I know they will.'

'He had great ability,' said Wade.

'Then his works will live.'

Wade looked down at her. 'My dear, that's a most impossible prophecy to make. To my mind Charles was quite the best biographer of his time, but whether he'll be read in a hundred years nobody can tell. We tend, you know, to overestimate our contemporaries.'

'But what do you think?'

'Oh, yes,' he said stiffly, 'I think Charles's works will live.'

The editor of a Sunday newspaper had written to Wade asking for an appreciation of Charles Davenport. By the evening post came a more urgent letter.

'My dear Mark,

I really cannot allow your refusal. You were Davenport's intimate friend, everyone knows it, and you have consistently praised him in the past. Don't you see how strange it would look if anyone else did the appreciation? Your silence would certainly be taken as condemnation. . . .

How could he explain that he had praised Charles's books only in the context of the living! Just as the head boy of a school becomes insignificant when he moves out into the world, so Davenport had become insignificant the moment he had graduated into the gigantic company of the dead.

'Charles Davenport. An appreciation.'

He wrote the heading, and then sat for many minutes with his eyes on the paper. 'Outstanding biographer of his time . . . his humorous, deeply sceptical personality . . . astringent and perceptive study. . . .'

There wasn't a phrase which he hadn't written, perhaps written many times in the last twenty years. Wade suddenly shivered at his writing table. He looked out at the woods where he had walked with Davenport only a week before, now enchanted by the late September sun. 'I'll show', Charles had said, 'the desperate meanness of old Brahms, the utterly drab, unlovely character'. At that moment under the beeches Davenport had held Brahms in the palm of his hand, the tiny privilege of the living. How he had exploited his privilege. And so Wade thought of the insignificance of talent. He himself . . .

'Mark Wade', he wrote, 'An appreciation'.

He wrote bitterly and fluently. 'Today he is a literary pundit, feared even by his arrogant juniors: tomorrow his only hope of resurrection lies in the casual interest of some amused collector of bric-à-brac. The literary critic is the Ozymandias of our times.'

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On the next morning Wade inspected with the vicar the selected site of Davenport's grave. It was in a bleak extension of

the churchyard, a morsel of open field fenced off for the invading dead. Up to now only two small mounds had appeared there, each capped by a glass dome of artificial flowers.

'Mrs. Davenport wishes a simple stone', said Wade. 'The inscription will be purely factual.'

'I'm surprised', said the vicar, 'that you didn't think a cremation more suitable. Wouldn't he have wished it?'

'He had no preference, Mr. Townsend.'

The vicar sighed, and dug his heel into the clay. 'It's a fine view, you know.' His old weather-beaten face was lifted to the wind. Wade looked over a trellis of poplars to the white chalk gashes of the downs.

'You'd wish for a view?'

'Yes', said the vicar, 'I confess I'd prefer to be buried with a view.'

After this Wade visited the undertaker again, and the local caterer. For the guests would be entitled to refreshment after their little pilgrimage of affection.

The morning of the funeral was as fine as all the five days had been since Davenport's death. Wade took Lucy to the church at eleven o'clock, her arm pressing heavily on his.

Lister had gone there earlier, and he met them in the churchyard. He showed now an embarrassing enthusiasm for his task, his grey face merry in the sun, his tired eyes wide open, his whole stance as confident as a priest's who had never known a doubt.

'It's really an opportunity', he said. 'I mean to show that a funeral service can be every bit as dignified and impressive without the aid of dogma. I do trust, Mrs. Davenport, that you will find my arrangement satisfactory.'

'Not long, you understand,' said Wade.

'Twenty minutes. I've timed it.' He looked at his watch. 'I must run,' and he bounced away round the corner of the church.

The London train arrived at eleven five, and at ten past the hour all the guests came in together. As he was sitting in the front pew, close beside the bleak unflowered coffin, Wade couldn't tell who had come, or, which interested him more, who had stayed away. After a few minutes the shuffling ceased and a church-silence descended on the congregation, punctuated by coughs. No organ heralded the appearance of Canon Lister. He came quietly into the nave from the vestry door, and walked to the lectern.

He was wearing no vestments, only a black tweed suit and a clerical collar. His whole appearance was unspeakably drab and depressing, suggesting, not enlightened deism or rational Christianity, but the Nonconformist aridity of provincial towns. Under the round grey transept it seemed to Wade a shocking gesture of ugliness, and he clenched his hands in miserable anticipation.

'My friends.' Lister's tone was clearly intended to be conversational, but it cracked uneasily, for Lister wasn't used to conversation. 'My friends, we have come together to pay, each of us in his own way, our respects to the eternal mystery of death. . . .'

This little opening comment was so tangled with qualifications, with deference to wide variety of belief, that it became quite unintelligible. The prayer which followed was all in the same language. 'Oh, divine spirit manifested in men. . . .' It was clear that Lister was delighted with this solution, for it reappeared constantly throughout the service. There were no hymns: these obscure prayers were punctuated by obscure readings from the Revelation. Lucy Davenport, who had leaned forward in eager anticipation of shocks to her susceptibilities, soon sat back again and paid no further attention. Wade, on the other hand, was deeply shocked, and deeply ashamed that the responsibility was inescapably his.

'Mr. Mark Wade,' said Lister, 'will now give a short address.'

He was startled to find that he could hardly move. For thirty years he had treated public speaking with the easy indifference of habit. He knew that he spoke fluently, and that he was appreciated. But now he was unnerved, paralysed on his seat. He pushed himself off the pew and groped his way like a robot to the lectern. Turning there, he saw them for the first time, some forty or fifty men and women scattered in groups about the church. In that first glance, standing with his arms splayed across the wings of the eagle, Wade recognized one familiar face after another. The Law, the Arts, the Civil Service, country house life . . . to each upturned face he could attach an instantaneous label, and each face appeared to accept, gravely and a little pompously, the label he had given it. Collectively they were Charles Davenport's friends and relations—but united by far more than that. They were a strong little wedge of English life. They lived

in drawing-rooms and studies, they travelled in Italy, they bought pictures and read foreign books.

Wade felt helpless when he looked at them, when he looked at his friends: they were as inadequate as the service had been.

'My task,' he said, 'should not be a difficult one. We have met here to think of our dead friend, to estimate the great loss that we have suffered. In our hearts we all bear fragments of Charles Davenport; and we must all feel ourselves enriched by these private legacies. It would be impudent of me to pretend that I can paint his picture. All I may do is to suggest some of these qualities which we shall most severely miss. I believe it is right that we view Charles's death as our bereavement, rather than as an occasion of sympathy or pity. He would have wished neither sympathy nor pity for himself. He had lived a full and happy life, accomplishing enough in his sixty years to have satisfied a far more ambitious man. It is certain that we shall think in these days of acute sorrow more of Charles than of Davenport, more of the friend we knew than of the biographer we admired. We shall remember the delight we felt in his conversation, the fine flights of his imagination, the dry self-depreciation with which he was for ever pricking his own bubbles.'

Wade paused. His notes were concise and lucid, yet he paused in sudden confusion as though he had suffered some monstrous interruption. He looked up from the eagle and saw that the attention of his audience was exemplary. From every angle serious white discs faced full towards him; nobody had coughed or shuffled or interrupted in any way the fine swell of his oration. He looked again at his notes, 'C's special humour . . . the unique in C . . . the War. . . .' Wade picked up the neat squares of paper and pushed them back into his breast pocket. He leant heavily forward across the eagle.

'Let's do him the courtesy of seeing him whole.' His voice had changed; it had become harsh and loud. 'The best legacy Charles left us was his hatred of humbug. What did we say of him a week ago? How did we discuss him when he wasn't with us? We agreed that Charles's last book had settled a question which we had debated for years: it settled that he was a failure. From here I can see many of you with whom I myself discussed his failure, and the reasons for it. You will remember the conclusion we came to, a conclusion which many of us had first suspected many years ago.'

Charles's books had shown no development: they had shown, for that matter, no deterioration. His last book was no worse than his first, but neither was it any better. From this, our judgment of Davenport, we went on to a judgment of our friend, of Charles as we knew him in everyday life. Because we were devoted to him, we judged him sympathetically, yet most of us admitted that Charles suffered as a man from the same weakness which marred him as a writer. I knew him first when he was twenty-five, some of you knew him much earlier than that. He was ready-made: he seemed to have sprung from the womb with all his qualities, good and bad, already fully developed. His life was at least normally eventful; he suffered losses, disappointments, tragedies; he enjoyed great happiness, he fought four years of war. But nothing changed him: he learned no lessons. For his good qualities we rejoiced, but for his bad qualities we came near to despair.'

Wade paused again. He was aware of a faint stir below him; many of the disks had turned away; somebody was whispering.

'Charles Davenport wasn't a great man, yet more than most of us, he showed qualities of greatness. You will remember the high predictions made for him long ago. There was no single sensational moment which marked his failure to fulfil those predictions, yet our vague suspicion of failure grew until it hardened into a certainty. And it is the failure which we must consider now, for it was the most important thing about him. There's no need to discuss his charm, his wit, his great intellectual brilliance. It is only the lack which we can fruitfully consider.'

There was a din from the front pew as Lucy Davenport pushed noisily into the aisle. Her flat heel-less shoes clapped on the stone, and the church door opened and slammed, a round brief arch of green and blue.

'He lacked depth. He lacked patience.' But Wade had to pause again, to allow four or five other people to leave the church. 'Both in his personal and in his literary judgments Charles was as obstinate as he was superficial. His comments were always amusing and often illuminating, but neither wit nor illumination probed deep. And yet we all know that nothing would persuade him to reconsider. He lacked that profound and humble curiosity which is a true mark of greatness.'

By now he was talking to a moving audience; he was talking to their backs.

'We respected Davenport for his talent; we were grateful for the brilliance of his company. We were deeply fond of him, and our affection embraced his faults. Yet those faults precluded love. Davenport would take nothing from any of us: he didn't consider that he needed anything we could offer him. This precluded love because it is impossible to love someone to whom we may not give.'

Lister was still in his seat, a stiff figure with black legs crossed, a statue in its niche. But by now only one of the secular visitors remained, a tiny dim old lady far back in the darkest corner of the church. Wade recognized Davenport's mother, and he addressed his last words deliberately to the empty front pew.

'Charles achieved far more than most of us can hope to achieve, and enough to satisfy a lesser man. But the final summing-up must judge achievements by potentialities, and by this judgment Charles Davenport was a failure.'

As he stood down from the eagle Wade was attacked by a tumult of giddiness; and he rested one hand on the coffin while the black pews revolved in his eyes. Lister uncrossed his legs, and leaned forward with a hand on each knee. Wade shook his head.

'I imagine they'll be outside', he said. 'I mean the bearers.'

Lister stood up and Wade followed him down the aisle. The midday sun blinded them at the door, and they stood for a moment side by side.

'Fine!' a dry voice croaked in the sun beside him. 'I congratulate you, Mr. Wade.'

He looked down at old Mrs. Davenport, bent like a witch over her stick. 'I'm glad you thought it fine', he said. Lister was beckoning from the corner of the church, and when Wade followed him there he saw that all the guests had assembled round the grave.

'Please, Lister', he said, 'the normal service now'. He saw the four bearers walk sombrely across the grass, and he turned to leave.

'I always knew it, Mr. Wade. I always told them he was no good. A shallow, swanky boy. . . .'

Wade hurried quickly away, away from the dry poison voice and the four strong bearers approaching with their arms hanging stiff at their sides.

ANTHONY GOLDSMITH (Lt.)

# PLAYWRIGHTS OF THE FUTURE

*Tryeplyev*, . . . to my mind the present-day theatre is nothing but routine, superstition. When the curtain rises, and lit by artificial light, in a room with three walls, these great geniuses, the priests of the sacred art, show how people eat, drink, love, walk, wear their jackets; when out of banal scenes and phrases they try to fish a moral—a tiny little moral, easily comprehensible and useful for everyday needs; when in a thousand variations one and the same thing is offered me, one and the same—I run and run, as Maupassant ran from the Eiffel Tower, which weighed on his brain with its vulgarity.

*Sorin*: You can't dispense with the theatre.

(Tchehov. *The Seagull*.)

SERIOUS modern authors seldom write for the theatre. They hesitate, because they believe that managers are only interested in trivial work. They have a modest but assured market for their novels, essays and poems; why should they trouble to write plays that will probably never be performed?

There is some justification for their point of view. Primarily, it is a question of economics. A novel which sells five thousand copies at eight-and-six will make a profit for the publisher; but a play which sells five thousand eight-and-sixpenny seats and nothing more is a financial failure. Books are easily distributed, and the publisher can find patrons in every part of the world. The drama is less mobile; and the much larger public which is needed to make a play successful can be drawn only from the London area—for London, with its forty-odd playhouses, still dominates the dramatic life of the country. The theatres are too big to be filled by the few Londoners who are both well-to-do and intelligent, and, while the publisher can afford to produce books for the few, the theatrical manager is compelled to cater for the many. But even here his scope is limited. His expenses are so high that he cannot offer cheap tickets in vast quantities and so attract a universal audience. The best he can do is to provide a few seats at low prices in the more inaccessible parts of the house. Indeed, the really poor are practically excluded from the London