

# Next Door to George Moore

BY OLIVER S. J. GOGARTY

ELY PLACE runs from North to South and is closed at the Southern end by a wall ornamented in the austere style of the eighteenth century which knew so well how to relieve blankness by recessed arches, squares, and pilasters in low relief. An old street lamp in a bracket of wrought iron hangs over a central arch. The top line of the wall is broken by rectangular masses of masonry which, rising highest in the centre, give its blindness a dignity and suggest that one is regarding rather the end of some mansion in the country than the confining wall of a city cul-de-sac. On one side of Ely Place there are nineteen houses. There are twelve on my side, which is entered by Hume Street at right angles. It falls short by the space of my garden which could contain five houses, to equal those of the other side. My house is the last on my side; obliquely opposite to me, in the second last house on his side, lived George Moore for the ten years he was in Dublin.

To reach his garden George Moore had to cross the quiet street; but as it flanks the side of my house and is now my garden, looking back I can speak of him as living next door. There was none to come between us when we walked in the orchard garden of Upper Ely Place.

Though the five houses on the block in which George Moore lived were built some forty years after our great period and during the sudden decadence which followed the Union with England, they had not degenerated altogether from the grand spaciousness and unparalleled proportion of the buildings of our prime. From my bay window, looking obliquely over the garden and across the deserted street, I could see him, pink and white as a Dresden shepherd or a screen of hawthorn, gazing down from one of the two tall windows of his drawing room; and I knew that in a little while his apple green hall door would open and he would come sauntering across with the key to let himself into the grounds. Then he would stroll up and down knowing well that my work was done and that



GEORGE MOORE

I would soon be at his call. Rarely would he bring himself to whistle or to raise his voice. Never did I venture to hail him from my window. I would stand at the glass door of my dining room which gave on to the garden until I caught his eye and was called as if by chance to share his stroll.

"Ah, my dear Gogarty, come out and walk with me a little while." I would keep step silently on guard, for I knew that he had taken the air chiefly to vent the tension of his day, spent in composing, by some querulous argument with me. He had a way with him which silence could not force. It was unavailing for me to say nothing. That would only add to the tension until I felt that I was becoming rude. I was only too aware that a bent for silence was about the last thing he would attribute to me. So instead of waiting for the elder man to lead, I had to chatter on. It was hard to think of noncommittal phrases.

"You are blessed in your garden, Moore." Then goodbye to silence.

"Yes; if it were not for all the old maids and their cats. This place is

raucous at night with wailing over their love affairs."

"Cats?"

"Of course!"

"You could have been referring to the old maids from the way you constructed your sentence."

"My dear fellow, no one can construct a sentence since the death of Landor and the rise of journalism. What exactly did I say?"

"You said nothing exactly. You purposely left it open so that I could construe it to mean that the old maids were bewailing their love affairs nightly or that the cats were raucous. Or both."

"The cats are more audible. It is not a case of 'A pity beyond all telling' being 'hid in the heart of love.'" He smirked at the quotation from Yeats.

"No," I said, "It is a yelling beyond all pity." He hissed his appreciation.

"But their dogs are worse in a way than their cats. I would not mind the cats but that I sleep badly and have the most

awful dreams." He had told me of these nightmares once or twice before, but when I inquired into their nature he would dramatize his answer by a gesture of horror: "Oh, for Goodness' sake! Don't!" So now I made no comment.

"You were saying that the dogs were . . . ?"

"I have composed a Limerick. But you could do it so much better. Let me see. Och, I've forgotten it!"

"No, no! Go on. You cannot have forgotten it. I love Limericks. I think that they are the tersest form of statement in verse. It is a pity that they have become so associated with universal innuendoes or the far-flung geographical

## Next Week

YOUNG MEN IN SPATS

By P. G. WODEHOUSE

Reviewed by Robert Strunsky

THE RESTORATION OF PROPERTY

By HILAIRE BELLOC

Reviewed by Elmer Davis

cataclysms of Love. They hold dominion over palm and pine."

"Cataclysms? Come now! Surely you mean 'orgasms' of Love, not 'cataclysms'?"

"I mean cataclysms. Orgasms cannot be put into words or even music. They must be felt to be experienced. They constitute 'The pity beyond all telling.' But some Limericks revolve in dooms greater than those of Thebes; and woe is crowded on woe in the earthquake of their last line." He grinned again at the misuse of the great line of Yeats. But cajoled he began:

The dogs of the dirty Miss Drews  
Are suffered to do what they choose:  
Until they're called in  
With hysterical din;  
While I am wiping my shoes.

Again he hissed his strange short laugh through his teeth. And suddenly dismissed the cats and dogs of his neighbors, the Misses Drews.

Moore, now that I come to think of it, had engaged a new cook.

I made the proximity of my house an excuse for the informality of my visit. Obliquely it is thirty-three yards across the street from his doorstep to mine. "I just ran over to ask you when you can dine with us. Any night your cook goes out we would be glad to have you."

"Mrs. Gogarty is very kind. Thursday: to-morrow then."

"But to-morrow is Saturday. It is I who will be coming here. You asked me to dine."

"Why! Of course it is. What a nuisance!"

"But it does not mean that you will not be welcome on Sunday or Monday."

"I meant what a nuisance calling days by names is. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and all the rest of it."

"Yes; one would think that a thing so secret, unobtrusive, and silent as Time would have escaped this tendency of Nominalism. Abelard of course!"

A trim figure, but a figure not soldierly for all the years it had "served," was coming up the quiet street. The Colonel, I said. George's brother, Colonel Maurice Moore. He was by no means a frequent visitor to No. 4. I wondered on what errand he was bound when he must have known that George's "At Home" would be on to-morrow night. Rumor will have it that he does the gallant act of which his brother only talks.

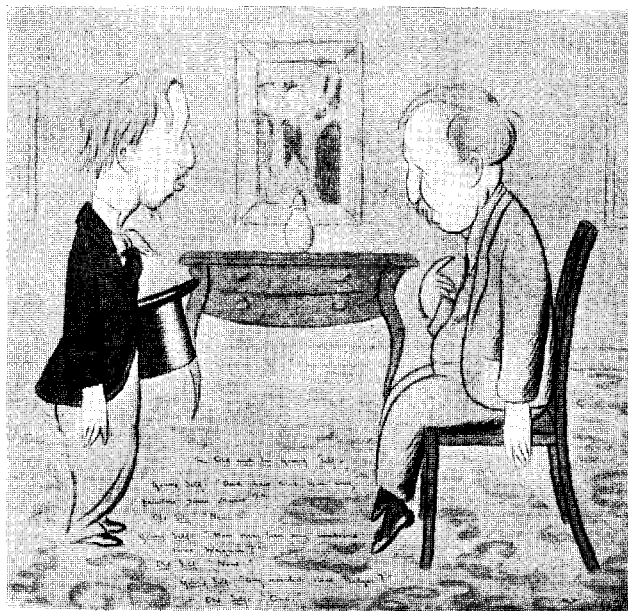
As he passed, my identity dawned on him. He stopped with a low sound to himself, then uncertainly, loudly: "Ah! Here!

I say. . . I had almost passed you without seeing. . ."

"Gogarty."

"Yes, of course. Of course." He smiled under his military moustache and his eyes brightened without the parrot scrutiny of George's. "You see a good deal of that brother of mine. Look here, if you have any influence with him . . . no one has . . . but if you could persuade him to drop his insistence on the suicide of my—our father, the publishers could bring out the book. You know that I have completed a Life of my father, George Henry Moore. George was to write the Preface but he insists in it that his father, our father committed suicide. He is even somewhat proud of it. . ."

I knew how distressing the thought of his parent's eternal damnation must be to a religious mind like the Colonel's. I also knew how George must be preening him-



GEORGE MOORE: from Max Beerbohm's "Observations."

YOUNG SELF: "And have there been any painters since Manet?" OLD SELF: "None." YOUNG SELF: "Have there been any composers since Wagner?" OLD SELF: "None." YOUNG SELF: "Any novelists since Balzac?" OLD SELF: "One."

self at the Colonel's distress. And I knew that were I to approach George and to ask for mercy on the Colonel and his father, he would only become the more perverse the more the notoriety he felt he was achieving.

"A thing like that is best left alone. . ." I was beginning to say.

The Colonel bridled. "But this is not a thing to be hushed up. It is an outrageous and wholly unsubstantiated statement by my brother; an absolute invention which he refuses to withdraw from the Preface. I cannot publish it in its present form, with the result that he has held up the book."

What could I do?

"Might I see the Preface?" And I

glanced at the parcel in his hand. "Come in; and while I am reading it, have a cup of tea."

The Colonel hesitated; but the thought of enlisting me decided him. "Oh, very well." I led the way.

At a glance it was evident that George had not his heart in the Life of his father George Henry Moore by his brother the Colonel. There was no enthusiasm in the prose. It halted. The passage about suicide seemed to me to be unexceptionable. George only hoped his father had committed it despite the evidence of death by serious apoplexy which was absolving and unequivocal.

This is what I read of the Preface by George:

Politics drew him away from Moore Hall again. He sold his horses and went to England to compose speeches in the morning and deliver them in the House of Commons at night. But, as if determined to save him from becoming a dull parliamentarian, his tenants rose against him, declaring that they would not pay rent, and he returned to Mayo to fight the first Rent Campaign. I remember the night he went away, and how he returned from the front door to give me a sovereign. He died of a broken heart. My brother gives a letter which, I should like to believe, points to suicide, for it would please me to think of my father dying like an old Roman. His valet told me that he was quite well the day before; when he came to call him in the morning he was breathing heavily, when he called again my father was dead; and this tragic death seems the legitimate end of a brave life, and in my brother's book he appears to me as wonderful as any character invented by Balzac or Turguenev.

"There is very little in this to which you can take exception. Perhaps it is only George's way of adding something dramatic to the Life. Only the other day

I was telling him about Petronius, the Arbiter of the Elegances, the man without whose approval Nero could not appear in public for fear that his toga was unseemly in its fall. George was greatly interested in my account of his suicide when he sang Limericks, 'levia carmina,' in his bath as his veins let out the life, and of how he forbore to utter trite precepts or to indulge in a vulgar display of courage. Just a bawdy song or two to make him merry. And then the breaking of his seal."

"A pagan proceeding! You have instigated George!"

I hastened to reassure him. "After all 'heavy breathing' spells apoplexy to any

(Continued on page 15)



# The Great Naturalists

**GREEN LAURELS.** By Donald Culross Peattie. New York: Simon and Schuster. 1936. \$3.75.

Reviewed by WILLIAM BEEBE

**I** CRAVE to be an Appreciator instead of a Critic in regard to the present volume, for, by cross reference, O. E. D. defines the former as one who professes adequate or high estimation, sympathetic recognition of excellence. This I do most sincerely in the conception and the manner of achievement of the author's review of more than a score of great naturalists throughout a period of less than five centuries.

The publishers tell us that in this book "We explore the Himalayan roofs of our planet, hack our way through the jungle," etc., none of which, to my delight, I find to be true. The treatment is that of an elaborate and finished essay on the personalities of well known natural historians of the past—personalities as seen through the mind of a sympathetic and all but unbiased observer. He by no means hides behind his puppets—nor are his subjects puppets. He has read and digested thoroughly what is known about them, and has then in most excellent and smooth language given them vivid consideration. Of their travels, dangers, adventures he is almost silent, and this is a relief. We have far too much of what explorers and naturalists, worthy of the name, have already forgotten when they return. Here are easy and clear presentations of the results of the life work of these men, the growth of their theories and discoveries, and how these impinge on the minds of their friends and enemies and public. There is sufficient minor and relevant detail to round out the picture, and best of all, a clever, slow shift of scene—a continuity—which presents each character as a development of his predecessors and an adumbration of his successors.

The book is well written; the author has had the daring to scatter such words as endemicity and enisled on the same

page, a worthy habit which we need all too much in these days of dictional shrinkage and sterility. These pages will be read and reread for their warmth and color of phrase.

I think Peattie's sympathetic and yet impartial delineations are to be praised most, and this in spite of the fact that he declares himself alien to some of the ways of naturalists. Only once do I find him unfairly influenced by recent theories of closet experimentalists where he says, "I sometimes wonder if Darwin did not also assume too much in supposing that female animals make any choice at all of their mates. In Victorian times one 'spoke to' a young lady, and she bestowed her hand or refused it. The possibility that outside the human species most mating is an acceptable sort of rape did not occur to his gentle mind." Nor does it to mine nor to that of many naturalists who have witnessed the details of numberless courtships in the wilderness.

The author has chosen and rejected at will, not only in regard to cross-sections of biography, but omitting what men he chose; he has prologued and epilogued almost every naturalist, and overlaid them with his own estimates and interpretations, has interjected personal places and methods of work, and yet the reading reveals none of these mechanics of production, no joints, no hiatuses. Instead there is an unbroken delightful flow, which results in an eminently satisfying visioning of the actors and the scene, whether of damp, stone classrooms of the medieval herbalists, or the dangers worse than those of any jungle threatened by the early church, alert to punish any new theory tinged with the least heretical suspicion; or the tragedy of Lamarck or the victory of Darwin. Peattie has made these men arise, pass, and live again, and English literature is the richer for his endeavor.

William Beebe has written many widely read books in the field of natural science, including "Jungle Ways" and "Edge of the Jungle"; his latest is "Half Mile Down."



OLAF STAPLEDON

## The Superman and the Human Spider

**ODD JOHN.** By Olaf Stapledon. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1936. \$2.

Reviewed by ELMER DAVIS

**T**HE English philosopher Stapledon, whose "Last and First Men" was perhaps the boldest and most intelligently imaginative book of our times, now renews his attack, but more modestly, on the same problem, the inadequacy of the present human race. "Last and First Men" was cosmic history on an astronomical time scale, setting forth the doings of seventeen subsequent species of men; "Odd John" deals with a single superman, born into a middle-class English family of today, with some reference to a score of others of his kind whom he discovers by telepathy.

That there have occasionally been instances of mutation, amounting to the production of individuals of a new species, is probable enough; Alexander the Great seems to have been unlike other men in quality as well as in degree, and there may have been others who never emerged from obscurity. Why did they not emerge? Well, the difficulties of social and psychological adjustment encountered by "gifted children" of I. Q. 180 or so suggest what would happen to supermen of I. Q. 500 or 1000 who did not have the luck, like Alexander, to be born kings. Some of them would go insane; others would be locked up as insane by their "normal" neighbors; and others, attempting any overt action, would be crushed by the short-sighted suspicion of ordinary men, as were Stapledon's John Wainwright and his associates.

Biologically and socially, then, Stapledon's suppositions are plausible enough; but unfortunately fiction is a tool he uses awkwardly, and crudities that could be overlooked in the tremendous sweep of "Last and First Men" are all too protuberant in a story of individuals. Stu-



LINNAEUS, AUDUBON, DARWIN, AND FABRE. From "Green Laurels."