

men and women to maturity and responsibility by attempting to break their spirit and destroy their self-respect. And even the very immature are best helped to develop by treating them as men and women rather than as children.

Our authority for talking like this? A mass of material, only suggested above, from men and women who have recently passed through Training Colleges or are teaching there, and discussion with experienced and intelligent persons from all over the country.

L. C. KNIGHTS
(For the Editorial Board)

[The Editors wish to thank all those who helped in making the present survey. A scrutiny of the Examination System will appear in an early issue, and they would be glad if all who have experience of the system either as examiners or teachers and who have criticism to offer would write to them.]

FROM 'COOLSTONE PARK'

A NOVEL

'There is no mass of sincerity in any one place. What there is must be picked up patiently, a grain or two at a time; and the season for it is after a storm, after the overflowing of banks, and bursting of mounds, and sweeping away of landmarks.'

W. S. Landor.

I REMEMBER vividly the drawing-room at Coolstone Park. I remember the old French chairs with their eighteenth century elegance; the wide bow windows which looked over the park to the ridge of hills beyond; and the room itself, which seemed

always critical of its occupants. The chairs, which stood back to the wall, were the disciples of decorum: it was impossible to lounge or cross a leg in them. One felt that they imparted by their touch a moral code peculiarly their own; or perhaps they had reached an agreement with the critical blue walls against which they stood as to what was right and wrong in society. The walls never quite approved of the pictures which were hung upon them, nor the curtains of the designs of the carpet. The stranger entering for the first time would not be aware of these things. He might even take a chair from the rank against the wall and lounge in it for some little time before he realized that such things were not done in the drawing-room of Coolstone Park. We who lived in the house never made any mistake like this. We knew, and had always known, that our attitude towards the house and its furniture must be one of perpetual apology. There were so many flanges to hold us on the rails of convention. The rails did the steering, and so the journey from our birth was predestined without our being conscious of the fact.

It is quite easy to compare the memory with an emery wheel which, while it makes a thing smaller with grinding, at the same time makes it brighter. I have found that the memory polishes certain incidents and scenes which have been impressed upon it. The focus becomes smaller; but the actual recollection more vivid. It is a case, I suppose, of imagination working in opposition to time.

The recollection of the Coolstone drawing-room which I retain most vividly is in the evening after the long, formal dinner when custom demanded that we should sit and read, or play chess. It was always the time of half-silence. All that we wanted to say was by then supposed to have been said. We were preparing, in the school sense of preparation, for the lessons and trials of the morrow. I see now that the unconsciousness of self was the only thing which could have made this life endurable to us. We should be thankful for this drug, which took from us all power of questioning.

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It was curious how sometimes, when I returned from a walk, the house, white and puritanical among its trees, came upon my

senses with a paralyzing shock. It was due to my mind having shifted its impressions and thoughts into a new pattern and then suddenly reverting itself into the old. It was like a number of scattered iron filings swept together by a powerful magnet. I see now the absurdity of being so affected by four walls and a roof. But youth will always erect symbolism round itself.

As for the house, there was nothing really to distinguish it in appearance from dozens of its type. It was the product of the middle eighteenth century. It was a house built to serve people who had very definite notions as to how a house should serve them. Yet they had treated bricks and mortar with the condescension of their own polished culture—they had put them on an equality with themselves. Therefore the manner of the house was sceptical and urbane. The pillars each side of the front door were not only an ornament, but seemed to give moral support to the whole house. And the windows, generously square, were a perpetual reminder that the generation who built them were conscious that the secret of life lay in taking a wide view. The garden, too, was laid out on the principle that nature must submit herself to the same decorum as society. Everywhere nature had been tamed; she had been cut and shaped as one might work a piece of cheese. There were triangular blocks of trees and vistas cut like canals. Only in corners could nature be herself, and then only in a tamed, self-conscious way. It was like putting an obstreperous child into a room and saying, 'Now be as naughty as you like, but remember I am watching.'

In its generation the house and garden would have been pleasantly domestic. There would have been no doubt that they had been created for the convenience of a superior being. The relationship of master and servant (condescendingly treated) would always be apparent. But to us things were completely different. We were in the position of being under a servant who no longer knew her place. As always, the question of servant and master is settled by the validity of domination; and this validity postulates having something which someone else hasn't got. The house became master by having in bricks and mortar the property of outlasting the generation which created it.

My brother was the most typical product of Coolstone Park. By his seniority he had signed the warrant of his own life sentence.

He had been brought up with the express purpose of assuming responsibility at the works when my father retired. The very word *responsibility* suggests its own subtle dangers. When we say that a man or woman is fitted to take responsibility we pay them an apparent compliment, but we know secretly that nothing of the kind is meant. We know that those who are best fitted to take responsibility are those who have not the power of creating it—the people whose thin, narrow lives are without imagination. They are often accepted in the world as pre-eminently good, an acceptance which carries with it its own suspicion. We do not question things we do not fear. It is the fate of these people to open charity bazaars.

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It is easy for me to summarize my recollections of Coolstone Park—the very act of putting them into compressed form brings them to me more vividly. It is easy to see my brother and sister in the light of our common circumstances; but as to that self of mine which showed then I am not so certain. I sometimes wonder if it was the self I know now. I think I must have been a kind of living mirror which reflected things without actually taking part in them. I have impressions which I cannot dove-tail into places where they should fit. I remember, for instance, seeing a woman dressed in black sitting at a desk in front of a high narrow window. The desk was made of satin wood with an olive-green inlay. The woman's face might be that of a relative, possibly an aunt—but the room . . . I can in no way place that room: it was oval. I am quite sure I have never seen an oval room, but every time that image flutters across my mind the oval room returns, always oval. I suppose the explanation is the fact that the mind forms composite pictures, that it cross-breeds the emotions provoked by one thing with those provoked by another, so that the product is unrecognizable. I am prepared to believe that the oval room is nothing more than a white hat box associated in some way with the woman at the desk.

It is only in recalling small intimate details that my mind confuses itself. The main impressions and events are vivid; more so, perhaps, than they were when new because my memory has

had time to shuffle its cards; it has put aside those of small value and turned up only the aces.

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The number of our acquaintances at Coolstone Park was small. They were very much the usual type of person—the type which one can call a human being, but in politeness can go no further. They moved round us in a circle of teas, dinner parties, fêtes and all other such functions at which it is a social stigma to say what you mean. I find it so easy to be bitter about them now, and see their faults and trivialities with such microscopic plainness. But the fact that I lived among them so long without questioning their status, condemns me as much as them. There was one Mr. Walters who was typical of his herd. It was difficult to realize that he had not been born with a teacup in his hand; that he walked anywhere else except in gardens given over to charity bazaars. Yet I believe he realized that there was a grandeur lacking in his life, and that something should be done about it. He had therefore tried to get himself acquainted with the atmosphere of great men. He had read an immense number of books about the Duke of Wellington and collected anecdotes of his hero as one might collect butterflies. His mind was a case of stiffened, pin-set anecdotes which were ready for display on any occasion. I blush to think how my brother and I revered Mr. Walters, mistaking his banality for inherent genius.

My father was the centre of society for some little distance round the neighbourhood: the Coolstone works gave a substantial income in those days. It was a society which was not sure of itself and was consequently driven to take refuge behind a code of formality which insured safety. It was a difficult code for a beginner to learn, and mistakes were seldom forgiven. There were, of course, exceptions made if a person's income was found to be larger than first rumoured; but the Intelligence Department was accurate and knew its work. The code, when mastered, became second nature. I was never conscious (brought up as I was in the academy which formulated it) that I was using a code at all. But all my gestures, all I said, signalled that I was in league with those around me. Unconsciously I kept assuring them that I would say nothing serious, nothing which could surprise them

into thought. I pledged myself to ask no questions which might be awkward to answer. I signed a treaty of complete acquiescence whose major clause bound me to accept everything in society at its surface value. And yet I had no knowledge of what I did, nor how far I had committed myself. This ignorance was the mutual safeguard of the circle. Anyone who questioned the conventions which were mutually accepted would have automatically disqualified himself from society. By taking thought he would have pricked his own bubble. I should like very much to know how a real, living, thinking person would have affected the circle; but the very act of thinking was incompatible with entry. It is as useless to wonder how air would mix with a vacuum.

Yet even these people must have been alive once. I should be most interested to know how the change came about; was it through fear of life, or a disgust of it? Was the process a slow petrification, or a sudden freezing? It is a thing impossible to discover. If I were to meet one of these people now and ask them the question which I should most like answered, what reply would they give? The sudden shock of such a question might force an answer; but I could not wait for it. I could not bear the reproach in their eyes; they would accuse me of being a traitor—one who had broken the treaty of acquiescence. And I should feel a certain amount of that moral discomfiture which is felt always, I think, when our own superiority shows itself in contrast to someone else; and yet we know it is not we, but mere chance, which has brought the superiority. In my case it was chance which released me from Coolstone Park, and at a time when I was still sensitive enough to get the rhythm of a new life. I shudder to think how near I was to becoming another Mr. Walters.

C. H. PEACOCK.

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

ORDEAL BY VULGARITY

Many readers of *Scrutiny* who do not ordinarily see the *Daily Telegraph* have, no doubt, had Miss Rebecca West's now notorious fling of vulgar spite brought to their attention. 'Who is Rebecca West?' some of them will have asked. And it must be replied that, intrinsically insignificant as she is, the times are such that Mr. I. M. Parsons' very adequate 'placing' of her in the *Spectator* was necessary. Jealous inferiority, however gross, snarling at unignorable and unsuppressible distinction, can now be taken as authority, and to have to take notice of it is an humiliation to which we are all exposed. It is, for instance, also necessary, perhaps, that we should repudiate all community between our attitude to Mr. Eliot and Miss West's. To criticize him as we have done is to acknowledge our enormous debt to him—a debt that we all in this age share, whether we will or not. If there is no Chinese Wall to keep out the barbarians that is certainly not his fault, but the fault (if one) of those of us who, capable of seeing the need, are not prepared to do our utmost in the building and the manning.

'CHUCK IT, SMITH!'

This heading is not urbane. But it comes irresistibly as the appropriate comment on the genteel, belletristic futility of the essay by Mr. Logan Pearsall Smith that, announced as an 'outstanding feature,' filled most of the September *Life and Letters* and was puffed in two columns of the *New Statesman and Nation* by the Hon. Harold Nicolson. From Mr. Smith's elegant and prolix maunderings *On Reading Shakespeare* it is apparent that he, like most of the cultivated, is incapable of reading Shakespeare. It is the representative nature of his case that makes it worth considering. What responsibility must be laid, positively, on education, and, negatively, on the virtual absence of even the beginnings of Shakespeare criticism, will be brought out by the reminder that Mr. Smith wrote that excellent little book *Words and Idioms*, and