DRAMATIS PERSONAE

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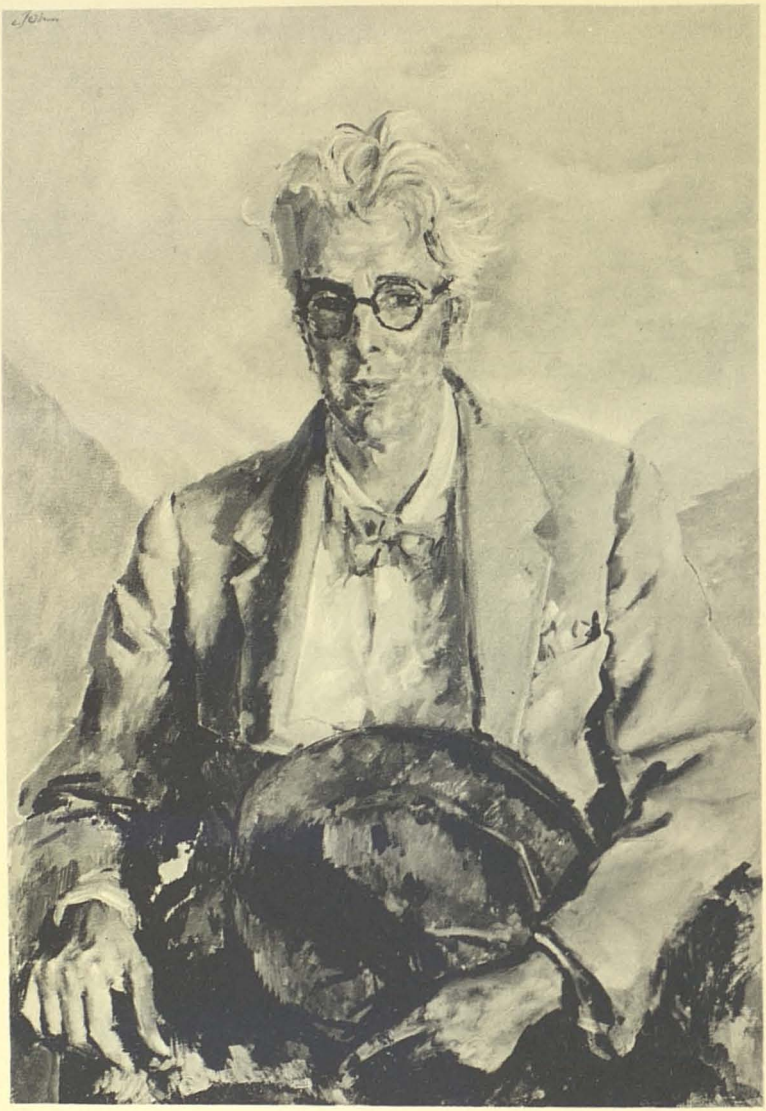

W. B. Yeats

From the portrait by Augustus John, R.A., in the Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Glasgow

W. B. YEATS

Dramatis Personae
1896–1902

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Estrangement

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The Death of Synge

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

1896–1902

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE, 1896–1902

I

WHEN I WAS THIRTY YEARS OLD the three great demesnes of three Galway houses, Coole House, Tullyra Castle, Roxborough House, lay within a half-hour or two hours' walk of each other. They were so old they seemed unchanging; now all have been divided among small farmers, their great ancient trees cut down. Roxborough House was burnt down during the Civil War; Coole House has passed to the Forestry Department; but Tullyra Castle is inhabited by blood relatives of those who built it. I went there for the first time with Arthur Symons, then editor of the *Savoy* magazine. I was taking him here and there through Ireland. We had just been sight-seeing in Sligo. Edward Martyn, met in London, perhaps with George Moore, had seemed so heavy, uncouth, countrified that I said as we turned in at the gate: 'We shall be waited on by a barefooted servant'. I was recalling a house seen at Sligo when a child. Then I saw the great trees, then the grey wall of the Castle.

Edward Martyn brought us up the wide stairs of his Gothic hall decorated by Crace and showed us our rooms. 'You can take your choice', he said. I took out a penny to toss, shocking Symons, who was perhaps all the more impressed by his surroundings because of what I had said about bare feet. I think the man of letters has powers of make-believe denied to the painter or the architect. We both knew that those pillars, that

stair and varnished roof with their mechanical ornament, were among the worst inventions of the Gothic revival, but upon several evenings we asked Edward Martyn to extinguish all light except that of a little Roman lamp, sat there in the shadows, as though upon a stage set for *Parsifal.* Edward Martyn sat at his harmonium, so placed among the pillars that it seemed some ancient instrument, and played Palestrina. He hated that house in all its detail—it had been built by his mother when he was a very young man to replace some plain eighteenth-century house—all except an ancient tower where he had his study. A fire had destroyed the old house, and whatever old furniture or pictures the family possessed, as though fate had deliberately prepared for an abstract mind that would see nothing in life but its vulgarity and temptations. In the tower room, in a light filtered through small stained-glass windows, without any quality of design, made before Whall rediscovered the methods of medieval glass-workers, he had read Saint Chrysostom, Ibsen, Swift, because they made abstinence easy by making life hateful in his eyes. He drank little, ate enormously, but thought himself an ascetic because he had but one meal a day, and suffered, though a courteous man, from a subconscious hatred of women. His father had been extravagantly amorous; I was later to collect folk-lore from one of his father's peasant mistresses, then an old woman. I have heard of his getting from his horse to chase a girl for a kiss. Edward's mother, who still lived, and is a frail, pinched figure in my memory, had tried to marry him to women who did not share or even

understand his tastes and were perhaps chosen for that reason. Edward, who admired Beardsley for his saturnine genius, had commissioned from him a great stained-glass window for the hall. And had Beardsley lived another year, his fat women, his effeminate men, his children drawn so as to suggest the foetus, would have fed Edward's hatred of life. I can remember his mother's current selection, a pretty somewhat ruddy girl, saying: 'I never could stand those Beardsleys', fixing her eye on an incomparable Utamaro. The drawing-room furniture was vulgar and pretentious, because he thought himself bound to satisfy what he believed to be the taste of women. Only his monklike bedroom, built over the stables and opening into the tower on the opposite side to the house, his study in the tower, and the pictures, showed his own improving taste. His first purchase, a large coffee-coloured sea picture by Edwin Ellis—not my friend the Blake scholar, but the Academician—had been a mistake; then, perhaps under the influence of George Moore, a relative on his father's side, came Degas, Monet, Corot, Utamaro, and of these pictures he talked with more intelligence, more feeling than when he talked of literature. His Degas showed the strongly marked shoulder-blades of a dancing-girl, robbing her of voluptuous charm. Degas had said to him: 'Cynicism is the only sublimity'. It hung somewhere near the Utamaro, which pleased him because of its almost abstract pattern, or because the beautiful women portrayed do not stir our Western senses.

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II

When Symons and I paid our visit, Martyn had just finished *The Heather Field.* Alexander had praised it and refused it, and he talked of having it produced in Germany. He sat down daily to some task, perhaps *Maeve*, but I was certain even then, I think, that though he would find subjects, construct plots, he would never learn to write; his mind was a fleshless skeleton. I used to think that two traditions met and destroyed each other in his blood, creating the sterility of a mule. His father's family was old and honoured; his mother but one generation from the peasant. Her father, an estate steward, earned money in some way that I have forgotten. His religion was a peasant religion; he knew nothing of those interpretations, casuistries, whereby my Catholic acquaintance adapt their ancient rules to modern necessities. What drove him to those long prayers, those long meditations, that stern Church music? What secret torture?

III

Presently, perhaps after Arthur Symons had gone, Lady Gregory called, reminded me that we had met in London though but for a few minutes at some fashionable house. A glimpse of a long vista of trees, over an undergrowth of clipped laurels, seen for a moment as the outside car approached her house on my first visit, is a vivid memory. Coole House, though it has lost the great park full of ancient trees, is still set in the midst of a thick wood, which spreads out behind the house

in two directions, in one along the edges of a lake which, as there is no escape for its water except a narrow subterranean passage, doubles or trebles its size in winter. In later years I was to know the edges of that lake better than any spot on earth, to know it in all the changes of the seasons, to find there always some new beauty. Wondering at myself, I remember that when I first saw that house I was so full of the medievalism of William Morris that I did not like the gold frames, some deep and full of ornament, round the pictures in the drawing-room; years were to pass before I came to understand the earlier nineteenth and later eighteenth century, and to love that house more than all other houses. Every generation had left its memorial; every generation had been highly educated; eldest sons had gone the grand tour, returning with statues or pictures; Mogul or Persian paintings had been brought from the Far East by a Gregory chairman of the East India Company, great earthenware ewers and basins, great silver bowls, by Lady Gregory's husband, a famous Governor of Ceylon, who had married in old age, and was now some seven years dead; but of all those Gregorys, the least distinguished, judged by accepted standards, most roused my interest—a Richard who at the close of the eighteenth century was a popular brilliant officer in the Guards. He was accused of pleading ill-health to escape active service, and though exonerated by some official inquiry, resigned his commission, gave up London and his friends. He made the acquaintance of a schoolgirl, carried her off, put her into a little house in Coole demesne, afterwards the steward's house, where she

lived disguised as a boy until his father died. They married, and at the end of last century the people still kept the memory of her kindness and her charity. One of the latest planted of the woods bore her name, and is, I hope, still called, now that the Government Foresters are in possession, 'The Isabella Wood'. While compelled to live in boy's clothes she had called herself 'Jack the Sailor' from a song of Dibdin's. Richard had brought in bullock-carts through Italy the marble copy of the Venus de Medici in the drawing-room, added to the library the Greek and Roman Classics bound by famous French and English binders, substituted for the old straight avenue two great sweeping avenues each a mile or a little more in length. Was it he or his father who had possessed the Arab horses, painted by Stubbs? It was perhaps Lady Gregory's husband, a Trustee of the English National Gallery, who had bought the greater number of the pictures. Those that I keep most in memory are a Canaletto, a Guardi, a Zurbarán. Two or three that once hung there had, before I saw those great rooms, gone to the National Gallery, and the fine portraits by Augustus John and Charles Shannon were still to come. The mezzotints and engravings of the masters and friends of the old Gregorys that hung round the small downstairs breakfast-room, Pitt, Fox, Lord Wellesley, Palmerston, Gladstone, many that I have forgotten, had increased generation by generation, and amongst them Lady Gregory had hung a letter from Burke to the Gregory that was chairman of the East India Company saying that he committed to his care, now that he himself had grown old, the people

of India. In the hall, or at one's right hand as one ascended the stairs, hung Persian helmets, Indian shields, Indian swords in elaborate sheaths, stuffed birds from various parts of the world, shot by whom nobody could remember, portraits of the members of Grillion's Club, illuminated addresses presented in Ceylon or Galway, signed photographs or engravings of Tennyson, Mark Twain, Browning, Thackeray, at a later date paintings of Galway scenery by Sir Richard Burton, bequeathed at his death, and etchings by Augustus John. I can remember somebody saying: 'Balzac would have given twenty pages to the stairs'. The house itself was plain and box-like, except on the side towards the lake, where somebody, probably Richard Gregory, had enlarged the drawing-room and dining-room with great bow windows. Edward Martyn's burnt house had been like it doubtless, for it was into such houses men moved, when it was safe to leave their castles, or the thatched cottages under castle walls; architecture did not return until the cut stone Georgian houses of a later date.

IV

Lady Gregory, as I first knew her, was a plainly dressed woman of forty-five, without obvious good looks, except the charm that comes from strength, intelligence and kindness. One who knew her at an earlier date speaks of dark skin, of an extreme vitality, and a portrait by Mrs. Jopling that may have flattered shows considerable beauty. When her husband died, she had given up her London house, had devoted herself to the

estate and to her son, spending little that mortgages might be paid off. The house had become her passion. That passion grew greater still when the house took its place in the public life of Ireland. She was a type that only the superficial observer could identify with Victorian earnestness, for her point of view was founded, not on any narrow modern habit, but upon her sense of great literature, upon her own strange feudal, almost medieval youth. She was a Persse—a form of the name Shakespeare calls Percy—descended from some Duke of Northumberland; her family had settled in the seventeenth century somewhere in the midlands, but finding, the legend declares, the visits of Lord Clanricarde, going and returning between his estate and Dublin, expensive, they had moved that they might be no longer near the high road and bought vast tracts of Galway land. Roxborough House, small and plain, but interesting for its high-pitched roof—the first slate roof built in Galway—was beside the road from Gort to Loughrea, a few yards from the bounding wall of a demesne that was nine miles round. Three or four masons were, during Lady Gregory's girlhood, continually busy upon the wall. On the other side of the road rose the Slievoughter range, feeding grouse and wild deer. The house contained neither pictures nor furniture of historic interest. The Persses had been soldiers, farmers, riders to hounds and, in the time of the Irish Parliament, politicians; a bridge within the wall commemorated the victory of the Irish Volunteers in 1782, but all had lacked intellectual curiosity until the downfall of their class had all but come. In the latter half of the nineteenth

century Lady Gregory was born, an older and a younger sister gave birth to Sir Hugh Lane and to that John Shawe-Taylor who, by an act of daring I must presently describe, made the settlement of the Land Question possible.

Popular legend attributes to all the sons of the house daring and physical strength; some years ago, Free State Ministers were fond of recounting the adventures of Lady Gregory's 'Seven Brothers', who, no matter who objected to their rents, or coveted their possessions, were safe 'because had one been killed, the others would have run down and shot the assassin'; how the wildest of the brothers, excluded by some misdemeanour from a Hunt Ball, had turned a hose on the guests; how, a famous shot, he had walked into a public-house in a time of disturbance and put a bullet through every number on the clock. They had all the necessities of life on the mountain, or within the walls of their demesne, exporting great quantities of game, ruling their tenants, as had their fathers before, with a despotic benevolence, were admired, and perhaps loved, for the Irish people, however lawless, respect a rule founded upon some visible supremacy. I heard an old man say once to Lady Gregory: 'There was never a man that could hold a bow with your brothers'. Those brothers were figures from the eighteenth century. Sir John Barrington might have celebrated their lives, but their mother and the mother of John Shawe-Taylor were of the nineteenth in one of their characteristics. Like so many Irish women of the upper classes, who reacted against the licence, the religious lassitude of the immediate past, they were

evangelical Protestants, and set out to convert their neighbourhood. Few remember how much of this movement was a genuine enthusiasm; that one of its missionaries who travelled Ireland has written her life, has described meetings in peasant cottages where everybody engaged in religious discussion, has said that she was everywhere opposed and slandered by the powerful and the wealthy because upon the side of the poor. I can turn from the pages of her book with sympathy. Were I a better man and a more ignorant I had liked just such a life. But that missionary would have met with no sympathy at Roxborough, except, it may be, amongst those boisterous brothers or from one studious girl, for Roxborough Protestantism was on the side of wealth and power. All there had an instinctive love for their country or their neighbourhood, the mail-boat had not yet drawn the thoughts of the wealthy classes elsewhere. My great-grandmother Corbet, the mistress of Sandymount Castle, had been out of Ireland but once. She had visited her son, afterwards Governor of Penang, at his English school, carrying a fortnight's provisions, so great were the hazards of the crossing; but that was some two generations earlier. Their proselytism expressed their love, they gave what they thought best. But the born student of the great literature of the world cannot proselytise, and Augusta Persse, as Lady Gregory was then named, walked and discussed Shakespeare with a man but little steadier than her brothers, a scholar of Trinity, in later years a famous botanist, a friendship ended by her alarmed mother. Was it earlier or later that she established a little shop

Edward Martyn

From the portrait by Sarah Purser, by permission of the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin

upon the estate and herself sold there that she might compel the shopkeepers to bring down their exorbitant prices? Other well-born women of that time, Ruskin's Rose amongst them, did the same. Born in 1852, she had passed her formative years in comparative peace, Fenianism a far-off threat; and her marriage with Sir William Gregory in her twenty-seventh year, visits to Ceylon, India, London, Rome, set her beyond the reach of the bitter struggle between landlord and tenant of the late 'seventies and early 'eighties. She knew Ireland always in its permanent relationships, associations,—violence but a brief interruption—never lost her sense of feudal responsibility, not of duty as the word is generally understood, but of burdens laid upon her by her station and her character, a choice constantly renewed in solitude. 'She has been', said an old man to me, 'like a serving-maid among us. She is plain and simple, like the Mother of God, and that was the greatest lady that ever lived.' When in later years her literary style became in my ears the best written by woman, she had made the people a part of her soul; a phrase of Aristotle's had become her motto: 'To think like a wise man, but to express oneself like the common people'.

V

When I went to Coole the curtain had fallen upon the first act of my drama. In 1891 I had founded in London the Irish Literary Society, joined by most London journalists of Irish birth, a couple of years later in Dublin, the National Literary Society; these societies

had given, as I intended, opportunity to a new generation of critics and writers to denounce the propagandist verse and prose that had gone by the name of Irish literature, and to substitute for it certain neglected writers: Sir Samuel Ferguson, a writer of ballads dry in their eighteenth-century sincerity; Standish O'Grady, whose *History of Ireland* retold the Irish heroic tales in romantic Carlyleian prose; the Clarence Mangan of *The Dark Rosaleen* and *O'Hussey's Ode to The Maguire*, our one poet raised to the first rank by intensity, and only that in these or perhaps in the second of these poems. No political purpose informed our meetings; no Lord Mayor, no Member of Parliament, was elected to the chair. John O'Leary, the old Fenian, since his return from his Parisian exile more scholar than politician, first president of the National Literary Society, was succeeded by Dr. Douglas Hyde. His famous presidential lecture upon what he called 'The De-Anglicisation of Ireland' led to the foundation of the Gaelic League, which, though not yet the great movement it became, was soon stronger than the movement in English. Irishmen who wrote in the English language were read by the Irish in England, by the general public there, nothing was read in Ireland except newspapers, prayer-books, popular novels; but if Ireland would not read literature it might listen to it, for politics and the Church had created listeners. I wanted a Theatre—I had wanted it for years, but knowing no way of getting money for a start in Ireland, had talked to Florence Farr, that accomplished speaker of verse, less accomplished actress, of some little London hall,

where I could produce plays. I first spoke to Lady Gregory of my abandoned plan for an Irish Theatre, if I can call anything so hopeless a plan, in the grounds of a little country house at Duras, on the sea-coast, where Galway ends and Clare begins. She had brought me to see the only person in Galway, perhaps I should say in Ireland, who was in any real sense her friend. His romantic name is written on the frame of a picture by Stott of Oldham in the Dublin Municipal Gallery: 'Given by A. Gregory and W. R. Gregory'—Lady Gregory's son, at the time of my first visit a boy of seventeen—'in memory of Count Florimond de Basterot'. He was a Catholic, an old man crippled by the sins of his youth, much devoted to his prayers, but an accomplished man of the world. He had flats in Paris and in Rome and divided his year between them and his little Galway house, passing through Dublin as quickly as possible because he thought it 'a shabby England'. Ancestors had fled from the French Revolution, bought a considerable Galway estate long since sold to some other landlord or divided among the tenants. In a few years, seven or eight, he was to speak to Lady Gregory and to myself, and for the first time, of estate and house, to drive us through what had once been park, show where the walls had stood, what had been garden, an aviary in the midst of it, where the avenue had wound, where upon that avenue he, a boy in his teens, and his father's men-servants had thrown a barricade across it and stood with guns in their hands. His father had died in debt, and at that time a creditor could seize a body and prevent its burial until paid. The creditor arrived,

but at the sight of armed men fled. De Basterot fulfilled a saying I have heard somewhere: 'Things reveal themselves passing away'. We never saw him again. In five or six weeks, several men and women with old French titles announced upon a black-edged card the death of 'Florimond, Alfred Jacques, Comte de Basterot, Chevalier de l'Ordre du Saint Sépulcre, leur Cousin Germain et Cousin'. In his garden under his friendly eyes, the Irish National Theatre, though not under that name, was born. I may then have used for the first time the comparison which in later years I turned into a proverb. Except during certain summer months, when they roost in the fields, crows at night-fall return to the vast rookeries round Tullyra Castle, whirling, counter-whirling, clamorous; excited, as it seems, by the sublime dance. It was the one unforgettable event of my first visit as of other visits there. And I was accustomed to say to Lady Gregory when it seemed that some play of mine must be first performed outside Ireland, or when it seemed, as it did once or twice, that I myself might find it impossible to live in Ireland: 'The crows of Tullyra return to their trees in winter' or 'The crows return at night-fall', meaning that, after my death, my books would be a part of Irish literature. She, however, with her feeling for immediate action, for the present moment, disapproved of my London project. She offered to collect or give the money for the first Irish performances. My *Countess Cathleen* was ready, and either I or Lady Gregory spoke to Edward Martyn, who gave up a proposed German performance and became enthusiastic. Then came an

unexpected difficulty. Dublin had two theatres, the Royal and the Gaiety, that had been granted patents, a system obsolete everywhere else. No performance, except for charity, could be given but at these two theatres; they were booked for the best months of the year by English travelling companies and in the worst months were expensive. We had to change the law, which we did with the assistance of an old friend of Lady Gregory's husband, Lecky the historian, representative in Parliament of Trinity College. The writing of letters, talks in the Lobby of the House of Commons, seemed to take up all our time.

VI

I must have spent the summer of 1897 at Coole. I was involved in a miserable love affair, that had but for one brief interruption absorbed my thoughts for years past, and would for some years yet. My devotion might as well have been offered to an image in a milliner's window, or to a statue in a museum, but romantic doctrine had reached its extreme development. Dowson was in love with a girl in an Italian restaurant, courted her for two years; at first she was too young, then he too disreputable; she married the waiter and his life went to wreck. Sober, he looked on no woman; drunk, he picked the cheapest whore. 'He did not even want them clean', said a friend. 'I have been faithful to thee, Cynara, in my fashion.' My health was giving way, my nerves had been wrecked. Finding that I could not work, and thinking the open air salutary, Lady Gregory brought me from cottage to cottage collecting folk-lore.

Every night she wrote out what we had heard in the dialect of the cottages. She wrote, if my memory does not deceive me, two hundred thousand words, discovering that vivid English she was the first to use upon the stage. My object was to find actual experience of the supernatural, for I did not believe, nor do I now, that it is possible to discover in the text-books of the schools, in the manuals sold by religious booksellers, even in the subtle reverie of saints, the most violent force in history. I have described elsewhere our discovery that when we passed the door of some peasant's cottage, we passed out of Europe as that word is understood. 'I have longed', she said once, 'to turn Catholic, that I might be nearer to the people, but you have taught me that paganism brings me nearer still.' Yet neither she nor those peasants were pagans. Christianity begins to recognise the validity of experiences that preceded its birth and were, in some sense, shared by its founders. When later she asked me to annotate and introduce her book, *Visions and Beliefs*, I began a study of 'Spiritualism' not only in its scientific form but as it is found among the London poor, and discovered that there was little difference except that the experience of the cottagers was the richer. Requiring no proof that we survive the grave, they could turn to what was dramatic or exciting and, though more ignorant than the townsmen, lacked vulgarity. Do the cottagers still live that mysterious life? Has it been driven away by exciting tales of ambush and assassination or has it become more inaccessible? When I was yet a very young man Sligo people told me whatever I asked, because all knew my

Lady Gregory

From the portrait by Mrs. Jopling, by permission of Mrs. Gough

mother's father, and some still remembered my father's grandfather. The people of South Galway did the same because Lady Gregory was my friend; an old witch-doctor in Clare said to us both: 'I have told you now what I have not told my own wife'; but if a stranger, or a neighbour that might mock, questioned them, they would say that all such things had long disappeared through the influence of the school. Once when I heard an old shepherd at Doneraile, where I spent a few days, give Lord Castletown such an answer, I said: 'Has anybody ever gone from here to consult Biddy Earley?'—a famous Clare witch—and in a moment the man's face became excited; he himself had stood at the roadside, watching spirits playing hurley in a field, until one came and pulled the cap over his eyes. What he saw, what he did not see but thought he saw, does not concern me here, being but a part of that traditional experience which I have discussed only too much elsewhere. That experience is my obsession, as Coole and its history, her hope that her son or her grandson might live there, were Lady Gregory's.

VII

It was now that George Moore came into our affairs, brought by Edward Martyn, who invited him to find a cast for *The Heather Field.* They were cousins and inseparable friends, bound one to the other by mutual contempt. When I told Martyn that Moore had good points, he replied: 'I know Moore a great deal longer than you do. He has no good points.' And a week or two later Moore said: 'That man Martyn is the most

selfish man alive. He thinks that I am damned and he doesn't care.' I have described their friendship in a little play called *The Cat and the Moon*; the speaker is a blind beggar-man, and Laban is a townland where Edward Martyn went to chapel: . . . 'Did you ever know a holy man but had a wicked man for his comrade and his heart's darling? There is not a more holy man in the barony than the man who has the big house at Laban, and he goes knocking about the roads day and night with that old lecher from the county of Mayo, and he a woman-hater from the day of his birth. And well you know and all the neighbours know what they talk of by daylight and candlelight. The old lecher does be telling over all the sins he committed, or maybe never committed at all, and the man of Laban does be trying to head him off and quiet him down that he may quit telling them.' Moore and Martyn were indeed in certain characteristics typical peasants, the peasant sinner, the peasant saint. Moore's grandfather or great-grandfather had been a convert, but there were Catholic marriages. Catholic families, beaten down by the Penal Laws, despised by Irish Protestants, by the few English Catholics they met, had but little choice as to where they picked their brides; boys, on one side of old family, grew up squireens, half-sirs, peasants who had lost their tradition, gentlemen who had lost theirs. Lady Gregory once told me what marriage coarsened the Moore blood, but I have forgotten.

George Moore had a ceaseless preoccupation with painting and the theatre, within certain limits a technical understanding of both; whatever idea possessed

him, courage and explosive power; but sacrificed all that seemed to other men good breeding, honour, friendship, in pursuit of what he considered the root facts of life. I had seen him once in the Cheshire Cheese. I had with me some proof-sheets of the Ellis and Yeats study of Blake's philosophy, and the drooping tree on the second page of *The Book of Thel* stirred him to eloquence. His 'How beautiful, how beautiful!' is all I can remember. Then one evening, in a narrow empty street between Fleet Street and the river, I heard a voice resounding as if in a funnel, someone in a hansom cab was denouncing its driver, and Moore drove by. Then I met him in Arthur Symons' flat in the Temple. He threw himself into a chair with the remark: 'I wish that woman would wash'. He had just returned from an assignation with his mistress, a woman known to Symons personally, to me by repute, an accomplished, witty, somewhat fashionable woman. All his friends suffered in some way; good behaviour was no protection, for it was all chance whether the facts he pursued were in actual life or in some story that amused him. Had 'that woman' prided herself upon her cleanliness, he would, had he decided upon a quarrel, have said with greater publicity: 'I wish that woman would wash'. His pursuit had now and then unfortunate results. 'What has depressed you, Moore?' said an acquaintance. 'I have been paying attention to a certain woman. I had every reason to think she liked me. I came to the point to-day and was turned down completely.' 'You must have said something wrong.' 'No, what I said was all right.' 'What was it?' 'I said I was clean and healthy

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and she could not do better.' Upon occasion it made him brutal and witty. He and I went to the town of Galway for a Gaelic festival that coincided with some assembly of priests. When we lunched at the Railway Hotel the room was full of priests. A Father Moloney, supposed to know all about Greek Art, caught sight of Moore and introduced himself. He probably knew nothing about Moore, except that he was some kind of critic, for he set out upon his favourite topic with: 'I have always considered it a proof of Greek purity that though they left the male form uncovered, they invariably draped the female'. 'Do you consider, Father Moloney', said Moore in a voice that rang through the whole room, 'that the female form is inherently more indecent than the male?' Every priest turned a stern and horrified eye upon Father Moloney, who sat hunched up and quivering.

I have twice known Moore alarmed and conscience-struck, when told that he had injured somebody's financial prospects—a financial prospect is a root fact—but he attacked with indifference so long as nothing suffered but his victim's dignity or feelings. To injure a famous scholar in a quarrel not his he had printed all the scandalous stories he could rake together, or invent, in a frenzy of political hatred. I had remonstrated in vain, except that he cut out a passage describing his victim as 'a long pink pig', yet when he thought he might have deprived that scholar of a post he was miserable.

He had gone to Paris straight from his father's racing stables, from a house where there was no culture, as

Symons and I understood that word, acquired copious inaccurate French, sat among art students, young writers about to become famous, in some café; a man carved out of a turnip, looking out of astonished eyes. I see him as that circle saw him, for I have in memory Manet's caricature. He spoke badly and much in a foreign tongue, read nothing, and was never to attain the discipline of style. 'I wrote a play in French', he said, 'before I had seen dialogue on paper.' I doubt if he had read a play of Shakespeare's even at the end of his life. He did not know that style existed until he returned to Ireland in middle life; what he learned, he learned from conversation, from acted plays, from pictures. A revolutionary in revolt against the ignorant Catholicism of Mayo, he chose for master Zola as another might have chosen Karl Marx. Even to conversation and acted plays, he gave an inattentive ear, instincts incapable of clear expression deafened him and blinded him; he was Milton's lion rising up, pawing out of the earth, but, unlike that lion, stuck half-way. He reached to middle life ignorant even of small practical details. He said to a friend: 'How do you keep your pants from falling about your knees?' 'Oh', said the friend, 'I put my braces through the little tapes that are sewn there for the purpose.' A few days later, he thanked the friend with emotion. Upon a long country bicycle ride with another friend, he had stopped because his pants were about his knees, had gone behind a hedge, had taken them off, and exchanged them at a cottage for a tumbler of milk. Only at pictures did he look undeafened and unblinded, for they impose their

silence upon us. His *Modern Painting* has colloquial animation and surprise that might have grown into a roundness and ripeness of speech that is a part of style had not ambition made him in later life prefer sentences a Dublin critic has compared to ribbons of tooth-paste squeezed out of a tube. When the Irish Theatre was founded, he had published *A Mummer's Wife*, which had made a considerable sensation, for it was the first realistic novel in the language, the first novel where every incident was there not because the author thought it beautiful, exciting or amusing, but because certain people who were neither beautiful, exciting, nor amusing must have acted in that way: the root facts of life, as they are known to the greatest number of people, that and nothing else. Balzac would have added his wisdom. Moore had but his blind ambition. *Esther Waters* should have been a greater novel, for the scene is more varied. Esther is tempted to steal a half-crown; Balzac might have made her steal it and keep our sympathy, but Moore must create a personification of motherly goodness, almost an abstraction. Five years later he begged a number of his friends to read it. 'I have just read it', he said. 'It has done me good, it radiates goodness.' He had wanted to be good as the mass of men understand goodness. In later life he wrote a long preface to prove that he had a mistress in Mayfair.

VIII

I knew nothing of Moore at the time I write of except what Symons or Martyn told me, or I had

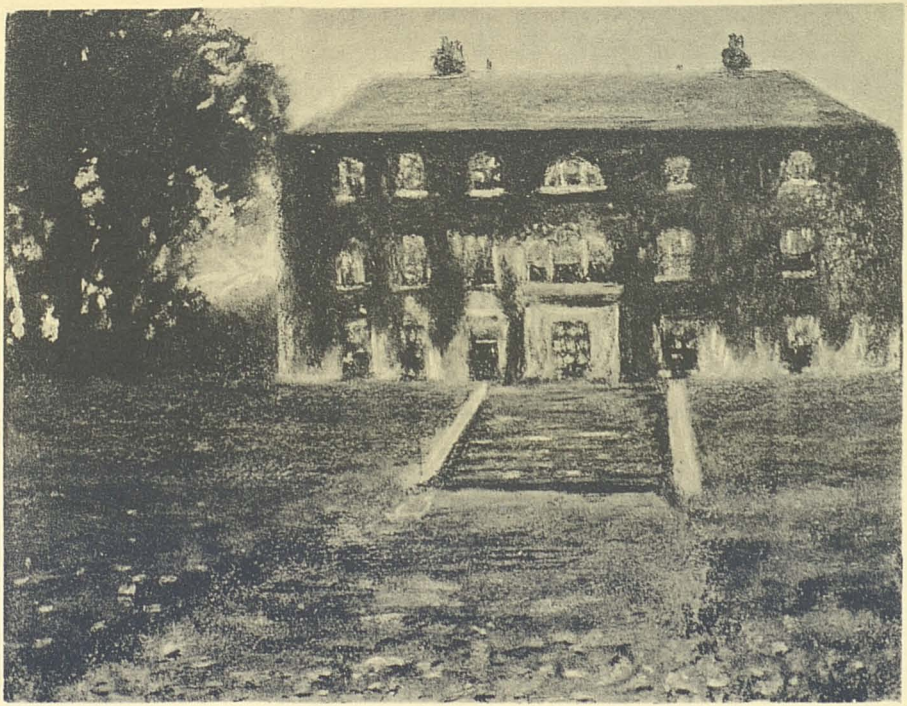
learnt from his occasional articles. I had read no book of his, nor would I, had he not insisted, for my sympathies were narrow. I cared for nothing but poetry or prose that shared its intensity. Florence Farr and I had just begun that attempt described in 'Speaking to the Psaltery' to revive the ancient art of minstrelsy. Florence Farr had ruined her career by premature success. For ten years she had played a series of parts, which had through their association with controversial movements attained great publicity. I remember most vividly her performance in *Arms and the Man* and in *Rosmersholm*, but most of all her first success in Dr. Todhunter's *Sicilian Idyll*. Because she could not accept less than twenty pounds a week without loss of status and got it but rarely, she was doomed to remain an amateur. Yet her voice was among the most beautiful of her time, her elocution, her mastery of poetical rhythm incomparable.

IX

To remind myself of these and other events I have been looking through the letters I wrote to Lady Gregory during those first years of our friendship. She was now at Coole, now at Queen Anne's Mansions, now in Paris, I at 18 Woburn Buildings, London, or with an uncle at Sligo. On the ground floor at Woburn Buildings lived a shoemaker; on the first floor a workman and his family; I on the second floor; in the attic an old pedlar, who painted a little in water-colours. I wrote in one of the earliest letters: 'I have measured the window' (Lady Gregory must have given me the

great blue curtain that was a principal feature there for twenty years.) 'Ought I to let you do all these kind things for me? . . . I have reasoned myself out of the instincts and rules by which one mostly surrounds oneself. I have nothing but reason to trust to, and so am in continual doubt about simple things.'

Presently she gave me a great leather arm-chair which is before my eyes at this moment. From her came the great collection of folklore that, turned into essays for the monthly reviews, brought ten or fifteen pounds at a time. Then one night when she and the other guests had gone I found twenty pounds behind my clock. I went to see her and tried to return it. 'You must take this money', she said. 'You should give up journalism. The only wrong act that matters is not doing one's best work.' She had that test for everyone. We were all like packets of herbs, each with its special quality. From time to time from that on she gave me money. I was not to consider it a loan, though I might return it some day if well off. When I finished my first lecture tour in the United States, the winter of 1903–04, I tried to return it, but she said: 'Not until I think you have enough money to feel independent'. I inherited a little money from a relative, but she still refused. Four or five years later she consented. I asked how much; she said, 'Five hundred'. It was a shock to find I owed so much. I wrote to an American lecture agent, earned the money and paid it back. That I am ashamed of that long debt to so dear a friend, that I have told it after a struggle with myself, puts me to shame. Of still greater service were those summers at Coole. For twenty years



Coole House

From a pastel by W. B. Yeats

I spent two or three months there in every year. Because of those summers, because of that money, I was able through the greater part of my working life to write without thought of anything but the beauty or the utility of what I wrote. Until I was nearly fifty, my writing never brought me more than two hundred a year, and most often less, and I am not by nature economical.

I wrote from Sligo of my uncle George Pollexfen (I have described him in *The Trembling of the Veil*): 'He is just at this moment in one of his bad fits owing to the fact that the inhabitants attack him as they cannot get at me. He brought me to a Masonic concert on Thursday. Somebody sang a stage Irishman's song—the usual whiskey, shillelagh kind of thing—and I hissed him, and lest my hiss might be lost in the general applause, waited until the applause had died down and hissed again. That gave somebody also courage, and we both hissed. My uncle defends me, but says that he makes a poor hand of it and gets beaten.'

Then I wrote about 'A great battle with George Armstrong' (Professor of Literature at Cork; author of a trilogy, *Saul*, *David*, *Solomon*). 'He lectured on *The Two Irelands, or Ireland in Literature*, and his whole lecture was an attack on the "Celtic Movement", full of insinuations about conspiracies to prevent his success as a poet, to keep him out of anthologies, etc. I replied with a great deal of fierceness, described the barrenness of the so-called intellect of Ireland, told him that all the cleverest of the young men were leaving him and coming to us. I then attacked his scholarship and showed

that his knowledge of Irish things was of the most obsolete kind. I believe I was unanswerable. At any rate Armstrong made no attempt to reply, but excused himself because of the lateness of the hour, which was weak as he had brought the contest upon himself, and made the hour late by speaking for two hours. Father Barry, who was in the chair, said afterwards: "Thank you for your speech. I agree with almost every word of it". I was glad of this, as it was probably the fiercest the Society had ever heard.'

Then I told how I had taken the chair at some public meeting in London where speakers talked open sedition: 'A principal speaker was the Vicar of Plumpton, who advised everybody to buy a breechloader and prepare for the day of battle and wound up by singing a patriotic song, apparently of his own making. . . . I was in such a rage that I forgot to put the Resolutions.' Then I described old Cipriani, who spoke as though he stood 'on a battlefield, and he has stood on fifty'. A magnificent-looking old man, a friend of Garibaldi, he had gone all over the world fighting for liberty, and Maud Gonne had brought him to Ireland to work out a scheme for insurrection, then to some London Irish to make his report. In one letter I used a phrase Lady Gregory was often to chaff me about, though never to repudiate: 'In a battle like Ireland's, which is one of poverty against wealth, we must prove our sincerity by making ourselves unpopular to wealth. We must accept the baptism of the gutter. Have not all the leaders done that?'

Then an adventure: 'Yesterday I was in a tea-shop',

I wrote from London, 'when a woman with an obvious look of the country introduced herself to me as a Gaelic Leaguer, and straightway introduced me to two friends, a man and a woman who had an equally country look. They told me with wonderful brogues that they were on their way to the Paris Exhibition, and wanted to shake hands with me. They had a great deal to say about the Movement and talked very fast for fear I might go before they had said it. What they said was chiefly about a play in Irish to be acted in Macroom next Monday. It is by one Father Peter O'Leary, and is about a man who lived in Macroom and arranged his own funeral to escape the bailiff. There was immense local enthusiasm over it, and deep indignation among the descendants of the bailiff.'

There is an allusion to the Cabbalistic Society, which had taught me methods of meditation that had greatly affected my thought. A talented girl I had tried to find work for had after years of victorious prudery become the mistress of a drunken scoundrel, and advertised the fact everywhere, even pouring out tea with his arm round her waist. 'Because she has enough genius', I wrote, 'to make her thirst for reality, and not enough intellect to understand the temporal use of unreal things, she is throwing off every remnant of respectability.' Presently, from excitability, shock, bewilderment at her private circle, which had no objection to lovers but much to that particular lover, her health broke down. Then the Cabbalistic Society took her affairs in hand, a rich member had 'collected all her unpaid bills . . . another mystic sees her to-day and will

give her whatever help may be wanted. These mystics will not demoralise her, which her other friends have been doing, especially Lady ——.' (She had denounced the crime of picking the wrong man. Her own entanglement was notorious but exalted.) 'For their faith makes them look on everything in the world as so wrong that the conventional errors seem to them trivial, and all defiance meritorious. They keep their morality for each other, and are firmly divided just now into the compassionate who lack idealism, and the idealists who lack compassion—Moore's "Idle Devout"; and —— has been handed over to the compassionate, to the joy of the "Idle Devout" who are anxious to be forgotten by their enemies.' A year or two later I was to describe her crying over Wilde's death: ' "He was so kind, nobody ever lived who was so kind". As she said it I thought of Homer's description of the captive women: "Weeping in seeming for Patroclus, yet each weeping for her own sorrow, because he was ever kind".' I wrote to Lady Gregory about this girl, because I was certain of her sympathy, yet those who did not know her thought her stern. A beautiful woman, whose love affairs were notorious, once said to me: 'When I got into the train at Broadstone, there were only two vacant places, one next Lady Gregory and one next the Bishop of Tuam. I thought "I am in for a lecture from somebody" and took the place next the Bishop, and all he said was: "Well, my child, you know a great deal more of the world than when I confirmed you".'

X

I invited Florence Farr to find players for my *Countess Cathleen.* I do not remember whether it was Florence Farr or I or Edward Martyn who asked a Dublin amateur actor to play a principal part in both plays, but it was certainly Edward Martyn who invited George Moore to a rehearsal of *The Heather Field.* I wrote to Lady Gregory in March or April 1899: 'Moore first got rid of practically the whole cast', putting X (the Dublin amateur actor) out of the part of Usher. 'He ran at the chairs, kicked them and called Moore names, upon which the prompter threatened him with personal violence if he used such language in the presence of ladies.'

Then Moore descended upon my rehearsals. I was relieved, for I was rehearsing in the part of Countess Cathleen a young girl who had made a great success some years before as the Faery Child in my *Land of Heart's Desire.* She had a beautiful speaking voice but lacked experience. I describe the result: 'Moore has put a Miss Whitty to act Countess Cathleen. She acts admirably, and has no sense of rhythm whatever. . . . She enrages me every moment, but will make the part a success. I am getting the others to speak with a little, a very little music. Mrs. Emery (Florence Farr) alone satisfies my ear.' Perhaps I should have insisted upon the young girl, for after Miss Whitty's dress rehearsal somebody said: 'Miss Whitty brought tears into my eyes because she had them in her voice, but that young girl brought them into my eyes with beauty'.

When 'The Antient Concert Rooms' had been taken, the rehearsals almost begun, Edward Martyn wrote to Lady Gregory and myself withdrawing financial support. Some monk, I never learned the name, had called *The Countess Cathleen* heretical. She sells her soul to certain demons for money that the people may not be compelled by starvation to sell theirs. She dies. The demons had deceived themselves, had trusted to bond and signature, but God sees 'the motive and not the deed'. My error was doubly dangerous, for I had put the thought into the mouth of an angel. A political enemy wrote a pamphlet against the play, quoting the opinions of the demons as if they were the author's, sold it in the shops, in the streets, dropped copies into every doctor's letter-box, but Edward Martyn was not disturbed. No popular agitation disturbed him. Somebody had read or shown the pamphlet to old Cardinal Logue, and he had written to the newspapers that if the play was as represented, no Catholic should go to it. And that, too, did not disturb him, because Cardinal Logue had not seen the play. Lady Gregory and I thought that two ecclesiastics might be got to outvote one; Martyn agreed to accept the verdict, and Lady Gregory made Moore promise silence for a fortnight. I have lost Father Finlay's letter, it approved the play, but I have Father Barry's. He was the author of *The New Antigone*, a famous book in those days, and what is more, a learned, accomplished man. 'From the literal point of view', he wrote, "theologians, Catholic or other, could object that no one is free to sell his soul in order to buy bread even for the starving, but Saint

Paul says: "I wish to be anathema for my people", which is another way for expressing what you have put into the story. I would give the play and the explanation afterwards.' Edward Martyn was quite content, but not Moore. 'Martyn', I wrote to Lady Gregory, 'is in excellent spirits, but says that if any person in authority were to speak, he would withdraw again.' (The votes would be equal.) Moore, upon the other hand, lamented his lost row. He had meant to write an article called 'Edward Martyn and his Soul'. He said: 'It was the best opportunity I ever had. What a sensation it would have made! Nobody has ever written that way about his most intimate friend. What a chance! It would have been heard of everywhere.' As Florence Farr and I sat at breakfast in a Dublin hotel, having just arrived by the mail-boat to make some final arrangements, Martyn came wiping the perspiration from his face in great excitement. His first sentence was: 'I withdraw again'. He had just received by post 'Edward Martyn and his Soul' in the form of a letter. We comforted him all we could, and before twelve o'clock all was well. Before the first performance, to the charge of heresy was added that of representing Irish men and women as selling their souls, whereas 'their refusal to change their religion, even when starving, proved that they would not'. On the night of the performance, there was a friendly house drawn from the general public, but many interrupters in the gallery. I had asked for police protection and found twenty or thirty police awaiting my arrival. A sergeant explained that they could not act unless called upon. I turned to a friend, once

Secretary to the Land League, and said: 'Stay with me, I have no experience'. All the police smiled, and I remembered a lying rumour that I had organised the Jubilee riots; people had even told each other what sum I paid for every rioter. The selling of the souls; the lines—

> The Light of Lights
> Looks always on the motive not the deed;

and

> Sign with this quill.
> It was a feather growing on the cock
> That crowed when Peter dared deny his Master,
> And all who use it have great honour in Hell;

the last four considered an attack on the Pope, caused disturbances. Every disturbance was drowned by cheers. Arthur Griffith, afterwards slanderer of Lane and Synge, founder of the Sinn Fein Movement, first President of the Irish Free State, and at that time an enthusiastic anti-cleric, claimed to have brought 'a lot of men from the Quays and told them to applaud everything the Church would not like'. I did not want my play turned into an anti-clerical demonstration, and decided from the general feeling of discomfort when an evil peasant in my first act trampled upon a Catholic shrine that the disturbances were in part my own fault. In using what I considered traditional symbols I forgot that in Ireland they are not symbols but realities. But the attacks in the main, like those upon Synge and O'Casey, came from the public ignorance of literary method. The play itself was ill-constructed, the dialogue turning aside at the lure of word or metaphor,

very different, I hope, from the play as it is to-day after many alterations, every alteration tested by performance. It was not, nor is it now, more than a piece of tapestry. The Countess sells her soul, but she is not transformed. If I were to think out that scene to-day, she would, the moment her hand has signed, burst into loud laughter, mock at all she has held holy, horrify the peasants in the midst of their temptations. Nothing satisfied me but Florence Farr's performance in the part of Aleel. Dublin talked of it for years, and after five-and-thirty years I keep among my unforgettable memories the sense of coming disaster she put into the words:

> . . . but now
> Two grey horned owls hooted above our heads.

I telegraphed to Moore: 'Play a success'; he arrived in time for *The Heather Field.* He says in *Ave* that Martyn telegraphed: 'The sceptre of intellect has passed from England to Ireland', but that sounds more like Moore than the economical, tongue-tied Martyn, and suggests the state of exaltation he arrived in. *The Heather Field* was a much greater success than *The Countess Cathleen,* being in the manner of Ibsen, the manner of the moment. The construction seemed masterly. I tried to believe that a great new dramatist had appeared. Miss Whitty, who in *The Countess Cathleen* had been effective and commonplace, moving us to tears by the tears in her own voice, was now acrid, powerful, original; an actor who played the hero driven to madness by his too practical wife (Mrs.

Martyn's attempts to find a wife for her son came into my head) was perhaps even better. At the end of the performance, Moore forced his way through the crowded lobby triumphant (I did not know until months afterwards that the masterly construction had been his), and catching sight of a tall friend near the street door shouted: 'I see by the morning paper that . . . has provided Lord . . . with an heir', thereby starting a scandal that ran for months from village to village, disturbing several circles, private and official.

XI

A couple of years before, it had seemed for a few months that the old political groupings were about to break up, everywhere people had looked forward, expecting, speculating. A Royal Commission, its members drawn from all parties, appointed by a Conservative Government, presided over by Gladstone's Lord Chancellor, had reported that the over-taxation of Ireland for the last fifty years amounted to some three hundred millions. The Irish Landlord Party, which based its politics upon the conviction that Ireland had gained by the Union, had a revulsion of conscience. Lord Castletown made a famous speech declaring that Ireland must imitate the colonists who flung the tea into Boston Harbour. Landlord committees were appointed in every county. Then Lord Salisbury appointed a second Royal Commission to consider the wrongs of landlords, and not one of those committees met again. There was deep disappointment. Protestant Ireland had immense prestige, Burke, Swift, Grattan,

Emmet, Fitzgerald, Parnell, almost every name sung in modern song, had been Protestant; Dublin's dignity depended upon the gaunt magnificence of buildings founded under the old Parliament; but wherever it attempted some corporate action, wherein Ireland stood against England, the show, however gallant it seemed, was soon over. It sold its Parliament for solid money, and now it sold this cause for a phantom. Nobody was the better or worse for Lord Salisbury's new Commission. Protestant Ireland could not have done otherwise; it lacked hereditary passion. Parnell, its last great figure, finding that this lack had made the party of my father's old friend Isaac Butt powerless, called in the peasants' tenacity and violence, but for months now the peasants had stood aside and waited, hoping that their old masters might take the leadership again. Standish O'Grady, a man past middle life, was now principal leader-writer of the *Daily Express*, the most uncompromising of the Dublin Unionist newspapers. He was of landlord stock, based all his hopes for Ireland upon that stock. He resigned his position in despair, bought a provincial newspaper, hoped, having made it a success, to buy up other provincial newspapers till he had all the provincial newspapers in Ireland. They would keep their local news, but all would contain his articles, all would rouse the gentry to their duty. He wrote pamphlets, published a weekly review, the same theme recurring. A famous passage described the downfall and flight of the Catholic aristocracy, lamented by the poor, sung by poets, but their successors, he cried out, would pass unlamented, unsung. In another,

fixing his thought upon the poorer gentry, he compared them to the lean hounds that are the best hunters: 'Oh, lean hounds, when will you begin to hunt?' His plans brought him misfortune. A certain man had, in his opinion, wronged and slandered a county family. He denounced him, and because the county took no notice wrote lofty essays upon its lack of public spirit. He wrote for his equals, wrote as Grattan spoke, not for the mob that he scorned. Hearing a great noise under his window, he looked out; men were marching to take ship for South Africa, cheering for Kruger, at their head the man he had denounced. His words had destroyed that man's influence among those O'Grady scorned without affecting it anywhere else. He lost his head and in fierce melancholy wrote that he no longer condemned 'the poor wretch himself, but the three bad men who supported him', naming the Master of the Foxhounds, the Bishop and the principal nobleman of that district. After that an action for libel and financial disaster. The Bishop—or was it the Master of Foxhounds?—never heard of the essays, never knew that there was a charge against 'the poor wretch himself', and as O'Grady was unable to prove the contrary, friends arranged for his apology and mitigated his bankruptcy. All that, however, was yet to come.

Horace Plunkett had bought the *Daily Express*. Under T. P. Gill, an ex-Parnellite Member and London journalist, it expounded Plunkett's agricultural policy, avoiding all that might excite passion. Gill had spent his life manipulating incompatibles; at the Parnellite split he took neither side. I think of him as making

toy houses with little bits of pasteboard, gummed together with stamp-paper. 'So-and-so is flat-footed', he would say, characterising some person whose heavy step might shake the table, and the flat-footed abounded at the moment. The relations of England and France were disturbed, a French officer, batoned in the Dublin streets, reported to the French War Office that Ireland was ready for insurrection. Maud Gonne had persuaded that Office to take from a pigeon-hole a scheme for an invasion of Ireland. A man I met in Sligo dreamed that he was entrenched in a swamp, fighting against invaders. 'What will you do', somebody asked the *Express* Editor, 'if the French land at Killala?' 'I will write the best article of my life', was the answer. 'I will call upon my readers to remember their great traditions, to remember their own ancestors, to make up their minds with the utmost resolution, without a moment's hesitation, which side they are going to take.'

The *Daily Express* was almost as unsuccessful financially as Standish O'Grady's paper. When it wrote of a Protestant and of a Catholic Archbishop, old subscribers withdrew because the first, being the only true Archbishop, required no prefix. New subscribers bought little but the Friday number, which reviewed books, avoided contemporary politics, but contained articles that made people say: 'Something is going to happen'. In its correspondence column, controversies were fought out that are still remembered.

Then Horace Plunkett told Gill to give a public dinner to Edward Martyn and myself. I do not remember who took the chair, or the names of more than

half a dozen of the guests. Moore has described it in *Ave*, but our memories differ. I doubt even his first sentence: 'Not an opera hat amongst them, and no one should be seen without one . . . perhaps they have not even changed their socks'. He was thinking of taking up politics, wanted to go into Parliament as an Irish patriot, had suggested, with that ingenuous way of his, that I should do the same, he would even accept me as his leader, and when I would not, wrote—or did that come later?—to John Redmond, then in control of the reunited Party, and offered himself as a candidate. He came to the dinner carrying in his hand the only political speech he was ever to deliver, an attack on William O'Brien, then about to return to public life at the head of his Mayo peasants. A little before he stood up, J. F. Taylor came, late for the dinner, but in time for his main interest, the speeches. He was Moore's opposite, a great orator, the greatest I have heard, doomed by the violence of his temper to speak before Law Students' Debating Societies, obscure Young Ireland Societies, Workmen's Clubs. His body was angular, often rigid with suppressed rage, his gaze fixed upon some object, his clothes badly made, his erect attitude suggesting a firm base. Moore's body was insinuating, upflowing, circulative, curvicular, pop-eyed. What brought Taylor, I do not know. He hated me, partly because his mind, trained in Catholic schools, where formal logic had importance, was dry and abstract, except in the great flights of his rhetoric, mine romantic, but mainly because jealous of my influence with the old Fenian John O'Leary. O'Leary used to say: 'I have

three followers—Taylor, Yeats, and Rolleston'. But now that Rolleston had taken office under the Crown, he had but Taylor and me. He came perhaps because *The Heather Field's* lack of sensuous form, or its logical structure, attracted him. Moore seemed timid, and was certainly all but inaudible. Taylor alone seemed to listen, but he listened stiffening. William O'Brien was his special private butt, he had denounced him for ten years as the type of an unscrupulous, reckless demagogue. How dared anybody touch his pheasant, his partridge, his snipe? What Moore said, I do not remember. I remember Taylor, though lacking the crowd of young men, the instrument on which he had learned to play, he was not at his best. 'When William O'Brien was making the sacrifice of Mr. Yeats' *Countess Cathleen*, damning his soul for his country, where was Mr. Moore? In London, in Paris?' Thereon he described Moore's life, in phrases that were perhaps influenced by Carlyle's description at the opening of his *French Revolution*, of the 'Scarlet Woman' Dubarry. Moore has written that I tried to make him answer, but I was at the other side of the table, and had learnt from defeats of my own not to rouse that formidable man. Moore with *Esther Waters* and *A Mummer's Wife* to his account, one or other in the mind of every man there, had no need to answer. Towards the end of the evening, when everybody was more or less drunk, O'Grady spoke. He was very drunk, but neither his voice nor his manner showed it. I had never heard him speak, and at first he reminded me of Cardinal Manning. There was the same simplicity, the same gentle-

ness. He stood between two tables, touching one or the other for support, and said in a low penetrating voice: 'We have now a literary movement, it is not very important; it will be followed by a political movement, that will not be very important; then must come a military movement, that will be important indeed'. Tyrrell, Professor of Greek in Trinity College, known to scholars for his share in the Tyrrell-Purser edition of Cicero's Letters, a Unionist, but very drunk, led the applause. Then O'Grady described the Boy Scout Act, which had just passed, urged the landlords of Ireland to avail themselves of that Act and drill the sons of their tenants—'paying but little attention to the age limit'—then, pointing to where he supposed England to be, they must bid them 'march to the conquest of that decadent nation'. I knew what was in his mind. England was decadent because, democratic and so without fixed principles, it had used Irish landlords, his own ancestors or living relatives, as its garrison, and later left them deserted among their enemies. Tyrrell, understanding nothing but the sweetness of that voice, the nobility of that gesture, continued to lead the applause. Moore for all his toil had never style. Taylor had it in flights of oratorical frenzy, but drunk or sober, idle or toiling, this man had it; their torch smoked, their wine had dregs, his element burned or ran pure. When in later years compelled to answer some bitter personal attack, he showed that alone among our public men he could rise above bitterness, use words that, for all their convincing logic, made his reader murmur:

Ye do it wrong, being so majestical,
To offer it the show of violence.

When I try to recall his physical appearance, my father's picture in the Municipal Gallery blots out my own memory. He comes before me with a normal robust body, dim obsessed eyes, upon the wall above his head the title of a forgotten novel: *Ye Loste Lande.*

XII

The Countess Cathleen and *The Heather Field* were performed in the week commencing May 8th, 1899, and such was our faith in the author of *The Heather Field* that, though we had not seen his unfinished play, we engaged the Gaiety Theatre for a week in 1900. His play, understood to be satirical and topical, was to be the main event. *Maeve*, originally published with *The Heather Field*, would accompany it, but was, we thought, too poetical, too remote from normal life to draw the crowd. I spent the summer at Coole; George Moore was at Tullyra, but on Sunday mornings Edward Martyn's old coachman would drive up by the Gort Avenue, George Moore behind him on the old outside car: Moore had been to Mass. As Moore had been brought up a Catholic, Martyn insisted upon Mass; how they avoided the Ardrahan church and Martyn's company I cannot remember; perhaps Martyn went to early Mass; but Gort suited them both. Moore would listen for a minute, would slip out, meet his coachman at the side door of a public-house which ignored the Act of Parliament for its more valuable customers, find the outside car in some yard. Coole was

but two miles off, one mile of road, one mile of demesne under great trees. Devotion to Parnell had made the coachman an anti-cleric. A couple of years later I saw him for the last time, he wanted an introduction to somebody he knew of that lacked a coachman. When Lady Gregory asked about his dismissal he said: 'I think Mr. Martyn thought I must soon die because I am an old man, and that he might see my ghost'. Lady Gregory remembered that Mrs. Martyn had died the year before, that Martyn, whose conscience tortured him because he had opposed her plans, perhaps because he had refused to marry, had seen some sight or heard some sound that terrified him. Sometimes Moore drove over in the afternoon. One afternoon he asked to see me alone. I brought him to the path by the lakeside. He had constructed *The Heather Field*, he said, telling Martyn what was to go into every speech but writing nothing, had partly constructed *Maeve*—I heard only the other day that Arthur Symons had revised the style for a fee, setting it high above Martyn's level—but that Martyn now refused his help. 'He can find subjects', Moore said, 'and I cannot, but he will never write a play alone; I am ready to collaborate all my life and say nothing about it. You must go to Tullyra and persuade Martyn.' This was a Moore I had known nothing of; he had certainly kept silent; it was improbable he could do so now that the play was a success, but it did not seem so at the moment. Moore in his moments of self-abnegation was convinced and convincing. I do not remember whether he had brought the new play as Martyn had written it or whether

Martyn sent it later, but I know that my interview with Martyn was postponed until Lady Gregory and I had read it. It seemed to us crude throughout, childish in parts, a play to make our movement and ourselves ridiculous. I was now Moore's advocate and, unlike Lady Gregory, unable to see with Martyn's eyes. I went to Tullyra and there denounced the play. I seem to remember Moore as anxious and subdued. Later when he described the scene he compared me to Torquemada. Martyn told us to do what we liked with the play. Moore asked for my collaboration as it was a satire upon contemporary Irish politics and of these he knew nothing. I moved from Coole to Tullyra. The finished work was Moore's in its construction and characterisation, but most of the political epigrams and certain bitter sentences put into the mouth of Deane, a dramatisation of Standish O'Grady, were mine. A rhetorical, undramatic second act about the Celtic Movement, which I had begun to outlive, was all Moore's; as convert he was embarrassing, unsubduable, preposterous.

Lady Gregory thought that no man could endure the sight of others altering all that he had done and discussing the alterations within earshot. She was doubtless right, for Martyn suddenly took the play back. If he could not write his own plays he was no use, he said; but when the position of the theatre was put before him, my determination and Lady Gregory's to refuse his play, his loss of money, for he was to pay for all, if we had only *Maeve*, he gave way once more. Moore, however, must sign the play; he would not sign with

him 'because Moore would put in what he liked'. Moore was unwilling, he thought little could be made of such material; but being for the moment all self-abnegation, agreed, and was soon convinced that he had written a masterpiece.

There were continual quarrels, sometimes because both were woman-mad, Martyn with contempt, sometimes because Moore did not want to go to Mass, once because he had over-slept himself 'on purpose.' Yet Moore was at this time neither anti-clerical nor anti-Catholic. He had written not only *Evelyn Innes* but *Sister Teresa*, a sympathetic study of a convent; nor was he ever to lose an understanding of emotions and beliefs remembered from childhood. He did not want to go to Mass, because his flesh was unwilling, as it was a year later when the teacher, engaged to teach him Gaelic, was told that he was out.

He had exhausted his England in *A Mummer's Wife* and *Esther Waters*, and had turned to us, seeking his new task with an ungovernable childlike passion. In later years he attributed his distaste for England to his work upon *The Bending of the Bough*, his name for Martyn's rewritten play, and it is possible that it made him aware of change. Violent and coarse of temper, he was bound to follow his pendulum's utmost swing; hatred of Queen Victoria, admiration of Catholicism, hatred of the English language, love of everything Gaelic, were bound to follow one upon another till he had found his new limit. His relations to men and women ran through like alternations, in his relations to women he touched madness. On a visit to Coole,

during some revising of *The Bending of the Bough*, or to begin *Diarmuid and Grania*, its successor, he behaved well till there came a long pause in the conversation one night after dinner. 'I wonder', said Moore, 'why Mrs. —— threw me over; was it because she wanted to marry ——' —he named a famous woman and a famous peer—'or was it conscience?' I followed Moore to his room and said, 'You have broken the understanding?' 'What understanding?' 'That your conversation would be fit for Robert.' Robert, Lady Gregory's son, was on holiday there from Harrow. 'The word conscience can have only one meaning.' 'But it's true.' 'There is a social rule that bars such indiscretions.' 'It has gone out.' 'Not here.' 'But it is the only thing I can say about her that she would mind.' Mrs. —— had been much taken with Moore, I had heard her talk of him all evening, but was of strict morals: I knew from the friend who had listened to Moore's daily complaints and later to his contradictory inventions, that he had courted her in vain. Two or three years after his Coole transgression, he was accustomed to say: 'Once she and I were walking in the Green Park. "There is nothing more cruel than lust", she said. "There is", I said. "What is that?" "Vanity", and I let her go a step or two ahead and gave her a kick behind.'

XIII

On February 19th, *The Bending of the Bough* and a narrative undramatic play by Alice Milligan, *The Last Feast of the Fianna*; on February 20th, *Maeve*, were

performed at the Gaiety Theatre. The actors had been collected by Moore in London. Our audiences, which seemed to us very large, did not fill the house, but were enthusiastic; we worked, perhaps I still work, for a small fanatical sect. *The Bending of the Bough* was badly constructed, had never become a single thought or passion, but was the first dramatisation of an Irish problem. Lady Gregory wrote in her diary: 'M. is in great enthusiasm over it, says it will cause a revolution (whoever M. was he was not Martyn, who hated the play). H. says no young man who sees that play will leave the house as he came into it. . . . The Gaelic League, in great force, sang "Fainne geal an lae" between the acts, and "The Wearing of the Green" in Irish. . . . The play hits so impartially all round that no one is really offended.' Edward Martyn had shaped Peg Inerny, a principal character in *Maeve*, under the influence of stories gathered by Lady Gregory and myself. She is one of those women who in sleep pass into another state, are 'away' as the people say, seem to live among people long dead, in the midst of another civilisation. We had thought the play dim and metaphysical, but it did not seem so in performance. *Maeve*, Lady Gregory wrote, 'which we did not think a nationalist play at all, has turned out to be one, the audience understanding and applauding the allegory. There is such applause at 'I am only an old woman, but I tell you that Erin will never be subdued', Lady —— reported to the Castle that they had better boycott it, which they have done.'

XIV

I disliked Moore's now sentimental, now promiscuous amours, the main matter of his talk. A romantic, when romanticism was in its final extravagance, I thought one woman, whether wife, mistress, or incitement to platonic love, enough for a lifetime: a Parsifal, Tristram, Don Quixote, without the intellectual prepossessions that gave them solidity. I disliked almost as much the manner of his talk, I told him that he was more mob than man, always an enthusiastic listener or noisy interrupter. Yet I admired him and found myself his advocate. I wrote to Lady Gregory: 'He is constantly so likeable that one can believe no evil of him, and then in a moment a kind of devil takes hold of him, his voice changes, his look changes, and he becomes hateful. . . . It is so hard not to trust him, yet he is quite untrustworthy. He has what Talleyrand calls "the terrible gift familiarity". One must look upon him as a mind that can be of service to one's cause.' Moore, driven to frenzy by the Boer War, had some project of lecturing in America against an Anglo-American alliance, much talked of at the time. 'I shall be glad', I wrote, 'if he himself goes.' (I had refused to go with him.) 'Less because of any harm he may do the Anglo-American alliance than because it will help to make our extremists think about the foundations of life and letters, which they certainly do not at present. To transmute the anti-English passion into a passion of hatred against the vulgarity and materialism whereon England has founded her worst life and the whole life

that she sends us, has always been a dream of mine, and Moore may help in that transmutation.' Moore, accustomed by his journalism to an immediate sensational contact with public opinion, was always urging Lady Gregory and me to do this or do that, that we might be more notorious, more popular. 'How Moore lives in the present', I wrote. 'If the National Theatre is ever started' (the company of players that was to succeed to the annual dramatic event with English players) 'what he is and what I am will be weighed, and very little what we have said or done. A phrase more or less matters little. . . . Yet I suppose we would both be more popular if I could keep from saying what I think, and Moore from saying what he does not think. You may tell him that the wisest of men does not know what is expedient, but that we can all know what is our particular truth, cajolery never lit the fire.' Yet to friends who complained by letter or word of mouth against my bringing such a man into the movement, I defended him and attacked his enemies. George Russell (A. E.), afterwards Moore's chief Dublin friend, had complained much, and I wrote—too much aware of what I thought my own quality—'He and I are the opposite of one another. I think I understand people easily, easily sympathise with all kinds of character, easily forgive all kinds of defects. Apart from opinions which I judge too sternly, I scarcely judge people at all, am altogether lax in my attitude towards conduct. He understands nobody but himself, so must be always condemning or worshipping. He is a good judge of right and wrong so long as they can be judged apart

from people, so long as they are merely action to be weighed by the moral sense. His moral enthusiasm is an inspiration, but it makes him understand ideas and not human nature. One pays a price for everything.' My advocacy had threatened to disrupt the Irish Literary Society which I had founded and still thought a useful instrument. Early in the year its treasurer, Charles Russell, the famous lawyer, invited Moore to become a member, forgot he had done so, proposed that the Committee should blackball him—there was some anti-Catholic passage in *A Drama in Muslin*—and was supported by Barry O'Brien, who could not abide *Parnell and his Island.* I got rid of Charles Russell by producing his letter of invitation, but Barry O'Brien remained, and after a long fight I withdrew Moore's name and resigned rather than force his resignation. He and I had given the Society what energy it had, keeping it out of the commonplace that was bound to overtake it in the end.

It was Moore's own fault that everybody hated him except a few London painters. In one of Dostoievsky's novels there is a man who proposes that everybody present should tell his worst action. Nobody takes the proposal seriously; everybody is witty or amusing until his turn comes. He confesses that he once stole half-a-crown and left a servant-girl to bear the blame. Moore might have so confessed, but his confession would have been a plagiarism or a whole lie. I met a man who hated Moore because Moore told some audience that he had selected a Parisian street-boy, for one day dressed him in good clothes, housed him in an expensive hotel, gave

him all that he wanted, then put him back into rags and turned him out to discover what would happen: a plagiarism from a well-known French author. 'Yeats', he said to me once, 'I was sitting here in my room the other night when there was a ring. My servant was out; when I opened the door a woman ran in and threw her arms round my neck. "At last I have found you. There were thirteen George Moores in the *London Directory*. You're the ninth I have called on. What? Not recollect me—not recollect the woman you raped in Paris twenty years ago?" ' She had called about her daughter's musical education, he said. Had I been more sympathetic I would have heard of a new Evelyn Innes. He was jealous of his own Sir Owen Asher. He was all self and yet had so little self that he would destroy his reputation, or that of some friend, to make his audience believe that the story running in his head at the moment had happened, had only just happened.

XV

I saw Moore daily, we were at work on *Diarmuid and Grania*. Lady Gregory thought such collaboration would injure my own art, and was perhaps right. Because his mind was argumentative, abstract, diagrammatic, mine sensuous, concrete, rhythmical, we argued about words. In later years, through much knowledge of the stage, through the exfoliation of my own style, I learnt that occasional prosaic words gave the impression of an active man speaking. In dream poetry, in *Kubla Khan*, in *The Stream's Secret*, every line, every word, can carry its unanalysable, rich associations; but

if we dramatise some possible singer or speaker we remember that he is moved by one thing at a time, certain words must be dull and numb. Here and there in correcting my early poems I have introduced such numbness and dullness, turned, for instance, 'the curd-pale moon' into the 'brilliant moon', that all might seem, as it were, remembered with indifference, except some one vivid image. When I began to rehearse a play I had the defects of my early poetry; I insisted upon obvious all-pervading rhythm. Later on I found myself saying that only in those lines or words where the beauty of the passage came to its climax, must rhythm be obvious. Because Moore thought all drama should be about possible people set in their appropriate surroundings, because he was fundamentally a realist ('Who are his people?' he said after a performance of George Russell's *Deirdre*. 'Ours were cattle merchants') he required many dull, numb words. But he put them in more often than not because he had no feeling for words in themselves, none for their historical associations. He insisted for days upon calling the Fianna 'soldiers'. In *A Story-teller's Holiday* he makes a young man in the thirteenth century go to the 'salons' of 'the fashionable ladies' in Paris, in his last story men and women of the Homeric age read books. Our worst quarrels, however, were when he tried to be poetical, to write in what he considered my style. He made the dying Diarmuid say to Fionn: 'I will kick you down the stairway of the stars'. My letters to Lady Gregory show that we made peace at last, Moore accepting my judgment upon words, I his upon construction. To

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that he would sacrifice what he had thought the day before not only his best scene but 'the best scene in any modern play', and without regret: all must receive its being from the central idea; nothing be in itself anything. He would have been a master of construction, but that his practice as a novelist made him long for descriptions and reminiscences. If *Diarmuid and Grania* failed in performance, and I am not sure that it did, it failed because the second act, instead of moving swiftly from incident to incident, was reminiscent and descriptive; almost a new first act. I had written enough poetical drama to know this and to point it out to Moore. After the performance and just before our final quarrel the letters speak of an agreement to rewrite this act. I had sent Moore a scenario.

XVI

When in later years some play after months of work grew more and more incoherent, I blamed those two years' collaboration. My father began life a pre-Raphaelite painter; when past thirty he fell under the influence of contemporary French painting. Instead of finishing a picture one square inch at a time, he kept all fluid, every detail dependent upon every other, and remained a poor man to the end of his life, because the more anxious he was to succeed, the more did his pictures sink through innumerable sittings into final confusion. Only when he was compelled to finish in eight or nine sittings were his pictures the work of a great painter. *Deirdre* and *Baile's Strand*, unified after I had torn up many manuscripts, are more profound

than the sentimental *Land of Heart's Desire*, than the tapestry-like *Countess Cathleen*, finished scene by scene, but that first manner might have found its own profundity. It is not far from popular songs and stories with their traditional subject-matter and treatment, it travels a narrow path. A painter or poet can from the first carry the complete work in his head and so finish scene by scene, but when the puppet-play becomes Goethe's *Faust*, Parts I and II, when *Gil Blas* is transformed into *Wilhelm Meister*, the *Waverley Novels* into the *Comédie Humaine*, he must, unhelped by tradition, all nature there to tempt him, try, fail perhaps, to impose his own limits. Hodos Chameliontos had no terrors for Moore; he was more simple, more naïve, more one-idea'd than a Bank-holiday schoolboy. Yet whatever effect that collaboration had on me, it was unmixed misfortune for Moore, it set him upon a pursuit of style that made barren his later years. I no longer underrate him, I know that he had written, or was about to write, five great novels. But *A Mummer's Wife*, *Esther Waters*, *Sister Teresa* (everything is there of the convent, a priest said to me, except the religious life), *Muslin*, *The Lake*, gained nothing from their style. I may speak later of the books he was to write under what seems to me a misunderstanding of his powers.

England had turned from style, as it has been understood from the translators of the Bible to Walter Pater, sought mere clarity in statement and debate, a journalistic effectiveness, at the moment when Irish men of letters began to quote the saying of Sainte-Beuve: 'There is nothing immortal in literature except style'.

Style was his growing obsession, he would point out all the errors of some silly experiment of mine, then copy it. It was from some such experiment that he learnt those long, flaccid, structureless sentences, 'and, and and, and and'; there is one of twenty-eight lines in *Muslin*. Sometimes he rebelled: 'Yeats, I have a deep distrust of any man who has a style', but it was generally I who tried to stop the obsession. 'Moore, if you ever get a style', I would say, 'it will ruin you. It is coloured glass and you need a plate-glass window.' When he formed his own circle he found no escape; the difficulties of modern Irish literature, from the loose, romantic, legendary stories of Standish O'Grady to James Joyce and Synge, had been in the formation of a style. He heard those difficulties discussed. All his life he had learnt from conversation, not from books. His nature, bitter, violent, discordant, did not fit him to write the sentences men murmur again and again for years. Charm and rhythm had been denied him. Improvement makes straight roads; he pumice-stoned every surface because will had to do the work for nature. I said once: 'You work so hard that, like the Lancelot of Tennyson, you will almost see the Grail'. But now, his finished work before me, I am convinced that he was denied even that 'almost'.

XVII

Douglas Hyde was at Coole in the summer of 1899. Lady Gregory, who had learnt Gaelic to satisfy her son's passing desire for a teacher, had founded a branch of the Gaelic League; men began to know the name of

the poet whose songs they had sung for years. Lady Gregory and I wanted a Gaelic drama, and I made a scenario for a one-act play founded upon an episode in my *Stories of Red Hanrahan*; I had some hope that my invention, if Hyde would but accept it, might pass into legend as though he were a historical character. In later years Lady Gregory and I gave Hyde other scenarios and I always watched him with astonishment. His ordinary English style is without charm; he explores facts without explaining them, and in the language of the newspapers—Moore compared one of his speeches to frothing porter. His Gaelic, like the dialect of his *Love Songs of Connacht*, written a couple of years earlier, had charm, seemed all spontaneous, all joyous, every speech born out of itself. Had he shared our modern preoccupation with the mystery of life, learnt our modern construction, he might have grown into another and happier Synge. But emotion and imagery came as they would, not as he would; somebody else had to put them together. He had the folk mind as no modern man has had it, its qualities and its defects, and for a few days in the year Lady Gregory and I shared his absorption in that mind. When I wrote verse, five or six lines in two or three laborious hours were a day's work, and I longed for somebody to interrupt me; but he wrote all day, whether in verse or prose, and without apparent effort. Effort was there, but in the unconscious. He had given up verse writing because it affected his lungs or his heart. Lady Gregory kept watch, to draw him from his table after so many hours; the game-keeper had the boat and the guns ready; there were

ducks upon the lake. He wrote in joy and at great speed because emotion brought the appropriate word. Nothing in that language of his was abstract, nothing worn-out; he need not, as must the writer of some language exhausted by modern civilisation, reject word after word, cadence after cadence; he had escaped our perpetual, painful, purification. I read him, translated by Lady Gregory or by himself into that dialect which gets from Gaelic its syntax and keeps its still partly Tudor vocabulary; little was, I think, lost.

> I was myself one time a poor barnacle goose;
> The night was not plain to me more than the day
> Till I got sight of her.

That does not impress me to-day; it is too easy to copy, too many have copied it; when I first read it, I was fresh from my struggle with Victorian rhetoric. I began to test my poetical inventions by translating them into like speech. Lady Gregory had already, I think, without knowing it, begun a transformation of her whole mind into the mind of the people, begun 'to think like a wise man' but to express herself like 'the common people'. I proposed that *Diarmuid and Grania* should be turned or half turned into dialect, the rough, peasant-like characters using much, the others using little or none. But Moore was impatient and would not listen. Later on this method was more clearly defined by Lady Gregory. The more educated characters should use as much dialect as would seem natural in the mouth of some country gentleman who had spent all his life on his estate. It was first tested in *The White*

Cockade. Deirdre of the Sorrows, had Synge lived to weave, as he had intended, a grotesque peasant element through the entire play, would have justified it by a world-famous masterpiece. It should have been obvious from the first; Shakespeare made his old man with the ass talk 'Somerset'. The distant in time and space live only in the near and present. Lady Gregory's successful translations from Molière are in dialect. The Indian yogi sinks into a trance, his thought, like his eye, fixed upon the point of his tongue, symbolical of all the senses. He must not meditate upon abstractions, nor, because unseen, upon eye and ear. Yet when I made my suggestion to Moore I was not sure, I was easily put off it. A movement develops in darkness and timidity, nor does it follow that Lady Gregory remembered my suggestion when she began *The White Cockade*; a movement is like an animal, its shape is from the seed.

XVIII

Diarmuid and Grania was read to famous actors and actresses, was greatly admired; a famous actress offered some hundreds as a first payment; but there was always the difficulty; there must be a simultaneous or first performance in Dublin. The actress said: 'If you make a failure there, it will be no use coming to me'. I was in negotiation with her, but took to my bed with influenza. After a fortnight Moore came: 'I have withdrawn the play. She asked me to call upon her manager. I said that her manager should call upon me. Am I not right?' I said: 'The naturalist Waterton climbed to the

top of St. Peter's at Rome and put his glove on the lightning-conductor; such feats make me dizzy'. 'But don't you see it?' he replied. 'I thought her manager was going to refuse the play; now instead of that refusal getting into the papers there will be weeks of controversy as to whether a manager should call upon an author or an author upon a manager.' 'And now', I said, 'in spite of all that, you want me to call upon her, repudiate you, and give the play back.' Yes, that was what he wanted. He was repudiated, and all seemed well. I cannot remember, and my letters to Lady Gregory do not record, what arrangements were made or unmade except that Benson undertook the Dublin performance, with Mrs. Benson as Grania. 'She will be all right', said Moore. 'She will play her body.' Moore had behaved well, although convinced that the play was worth 'two thousand pounds'—I learnt later that always when writing a play, he valued it at that sum—he risked it for the sake of the Irish Literary Theatre. On October 2nd, 1901, *Diarmuid and Grania*, preceded by *The Twisting of the Rope*, was produced for a week by the Benson Company in the Gaiety Theatre, Dublin. Theatre managers must have thought it failed, or that the newspapers' comments had taken freshness from it, for the London managers who had admired it in MS. were silent. Yet it did not seem to fail; when Maud Gonne and I got into our cab to go to some supper party after the performance, the crowd from the gallery wanted to take the horse out of the cab and drag us there, but Maud Gonne, weary of public demonstrations, refused. What was it like? York

Powell, Scandinavian scholar, historian, an impressionable man, preferred it to Ibsen's *Vikings at Helgeland.* I do not know. I have but a draft of some unfinished scenes, and of the performance I can but recall Benson's athletic dignity in one scene and the notes of the horn in Elgar's dirge over the dead Diarmuid. *The Twisting of the Rope*, Hyde as the chief character—he had always acted his speeches—the enthusiasm of his Gaelic Leaguers for the first Gaelic play ever acted in a theatre, are still vivid. But then Lady Gregory's translation of the Gaelic text has renewed my memory.

XIX

Moore had inherited a large Mayo estate, and no Mayo country gentleman had ever dressed the part so well. He lacked manners, but had manner; he could enter a room so as to draw your attention without seeming to, his French, his knowledge of painting, suggested travel and lesiure. Yet nature had denied to him the final touch: he had a coarse palate. Edward Martyn alone suspected it. When Moore abused the waiter or the cook, he had thought, 'I know what he is hiding'. In a London restaurant on a night when the soup was particularly good, just when Moore had the spoon at his lip, he said: 'Do you mean to say you are going to drink that?' Moore tasted the soup, then called the waiter, and ran through the usual performance. Martyn did not undeceive him, content to chuckle in solitude. Moore had taken a house in Upper Ely Place; he spent a week at our principal hotel while his furniture was moving in: he denounced the food to the

waiter, to the manager, went down to the kitchen and denounced it to the cook. 'He has written to the proprietress', said the manager, 'that the steak is like brown paper. How can you believe a word such a man would say, a steak cannot be like brown paper.' He had his own bread sent in from the baker and said on the day he left: 'How can these people endure it?' 'Because', said the admiring head-waiter, 'they are not *comme il faut*.' A little later I stayed with him and wrote to Lady Gregory: 'He is boisterously enduring the sixth cook.' Then from Sligo a few days later: 'Moore dismissed the sixth cook the day I left—six in three weeks. One brought in a policeman, Moore had made so much noise. He dragged the policeman into the dining-room and said: "Is there a law in this country to compel me to eat this abominable omelette?"'

Sometimes Moore, instead of asking us to accept for true some monstrous invention, would press a spontaneous action into deliberate comedy; starting in bad blood or blind passion, he would all in a moment see himself as others saw him. When he arrived in Dublin, all the doors in Upper Ely Place had been painted white by an agreement between the landlord and the tenants. Moore had his door painted green, and three Miss Beams—no, I have not got the name quite right—who lived next door protested to the landlord. Then began a correspondence between Moore and the landlord wherein Moore insisted on his position as an art critic, that the whole decoration of his house required a green door—I imagine that he had but wrapped the green flag around him—then the indignant young

women bought a copy of *Esther Waters*, tore it up, put the fragments into a large envelope, wrote thereon: 'Too filthy to keep in the house', dropped it into his letter-box. I was staying with Moore, I let myself in with a latch-key some night after twelve, and found a note on the hall table asking me to put the door on the chain. As I was undressing, I heard Moore trying to get in; when I had opened the door and pointed to the note he said: 'Oh, I forgot. Every night I go out at eleven, at twelve, at one, and rattle my stick on the railing to make the Miss Beams' dogs bark'. Then I saw in the newspapers that the Miss Beams had hired organ-grinders to play under Moore's window when he was writing, that he had prosecuted the organ-grinders. Moore had a large garden on the other side of the street, a blackbird sang there; he received his friends upon Saturday evening and made a moving speech upon the bird. 'I enjoy its song. If I were the bad man people say I am, could I enjoy its song?' He wrote every morning at an open window on the ground floor, and one morning saw the Miss Beams' cat cross the street, and thought, 'That cat will get my bird'. He went out and filled his pocket with stones, and whenever he saw the cat, threw a stone. Somebody, perhaps the typist, must have laughed, for the rest of the tale fills me with doubt. I was passing through Dublin just on my way to Coole; he came to my hotel. 'I remembered how early that cat got up. I thought it might get the blackbird if I was not there to protect it, so I set a trap. The Miss Beams wrote to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and I am carrying on a correspondence with

its secretary, cat versus bird.' (Perhaps after all, the archives of the Society do contain that correspondence. The tale is not yet incredible.) I passed through Dublin again, perhaps on my way back. Moore came to see me in seeming great depression. 'Remember that trap?' 'Yes.' 'Remember that bird?' 'Yes.' 'I have caught the bird.'

Moore gave a garden party during the annual festival of the Gaelic League; there was a Gaelic play by Douglas Hyde based upon a scenario of Moore's, and to this garden party he invited the Catholic Archbishop, beginning the letter with: 'Cher confrère'. The Archbishop did not answer. He had already in a letter to the Press invited the Archbishop to institute a stage censorship. 'But, my dear Yeats, Archbishops are educated men. If there is some difficulty about a play, I will call upon him. I will explain. He will approve the play. No more mob rule. No more such trouble as we had about *The Countess Cathleen*. No more letters to the Press signed "Father of a Family".'

XX

I was depressed; we had promised, seeing no other way, to bring over English actors for a week in every year for three years, and now the three years were up. Moore wanted to negotiate with Benson for a stock company, taught by English actors, or made up of actors chosen by Benson, or with such actors in the principal parts. At first it seemed probable that Martyn would find the money; I urged him to employ Gordon Craig, a young unknown man who had staged a Purcell

opera at his own or his friends' expense. But Martyn said with characteristic decision: 'Henceforth I will pay for nobody's plays but my own'. Perhaps somebody, or some committee, would take his place, negotiation dragged on; perhaps Moore's unpopularity, or mine, made Benson hesitate. We had attacked Queen Victoria, said that she came to Ireland recruiting, that she had, in Moore's words, driven through the city 'a shilling between her finger and thumb, a bag of shillings under the seat'. William Fay and his brother, whose company of amateurs played in a Lockhart's coffee-house, were putting their case, and all my Nationalist friends backing it. I summarised their arguments in *Samhain*, a little annual published in the interests of the movement. Any project that needed much money would have to promise good behaviour, and Ireland was turning towards revolution, but I did not give my own opinion. As yet I had none, and if I had I would have held it back.

I felt that Moore wanted the professional stage that he had known all his life. I wanted to keep him in good humour till *Diarmuid and Grania* was finished; we had learnt from the performance, and he had just accepted my sketch of a new second act. Then I wanted to write; I had been organising for ten years and if I joined Fay I saw no end to it. I felt acutely my unpopularity and told my publisher not to send my books for review in Ireland, a decision kept for many years. A. H. Bullen, Elizabethan scholar, a handsome man with a great mass of curly grey hair, at that time my publisher, came to Dublin. 'He told me', I wrote to Lady Gregory, 'that he was amazed to find the hostility of the booksellers.

A——, he declared, seemed hardly to like to speak my name. I am looked upon as heterodox. *The Secret Rose* was particularly disapproved of, but they spoke with hostility, too, of *The Shadowy Waters*. . . . Memory of the *Countess Cathleen* dispute accounts for a great deal. Bullen found the Protestant booksellers little better, asked if T. C. D. disliked me. B——, the College bookseller, said, "What is he doing here? Why doesn't he go away and leave us in peace?" Bullen was rather drunk, but his travellers gave the same account. He had tried to sell a book of Carleton's, too, and said that Carleton and I were received with the same suspicion. This was, of course, because of Carleton's early stories. I imagine that as I withdraw from politics my friends among the Nationalists grow less and my foes more numerous. What I have heard confirms the idea that I had at the time of the *Countess Cathleen* row, that it would make a serious difference in my position.' I had withdrawn from politics because I could not bear perplexing, by what I said about books, the simple patriotic men whose confidence I had gained by what I said about nationality.

Some work connected with our theatrical project brought Lady Gregory to Dublin. Bullen asked to be introduced, and until we arrived at her hotel I did not notice how drunk he was. When he sat down he was on the verge of tears. 'Yeats is an astrologer. He knows the moment of my death. No, no, it is no use denying it, he knows the moment of my death.' Presently I wrote from Sligo that my uncle, the High Sheriff, had been warned that I must keep away from a certain

Club. Moore was constantly attacked in the English Press, and every attack reached Dublin. I found that certain of our enemies were passing round some article in a monthly review, pointing out the plagiarisms in his *Modern Painting*, and I, not knowing how well-founded the attack was, had suggested a reply. 'The man I object to', said Moore, 'is the man who plagiarises without knowing it; I always know; I took ten pages.' To Lady Gregory he said, 'We both quote well, but you always put inverted commas, I never do'.

XXI

I saw William Fay's amateur company play Miss Milligan's *Red Hugh*, an historical play in two scenes in the style of Walter Scott. 'Yonder battlements', all the old rattle-traps acquired modernity, reality, spoken by those voices. I came away with my head on fire. I wanted to hear my own unfinished *Baile's Strand*, to hear Greek tragedy, spoken with a Dublin accent. After consulting with Lady Gregory I gave William Fay my *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, the first play where dialect was not used with an exclusively comic intention, to be produced in April 1902, in a hall attached to a church in a back street. A. E. gave his *Deirdre*, a protest against *Diarmuid and Grania* because the play had made mere men out of heroes. It was well constructed (A. E. in later years gave plots, or incidents that suggested plots, to several dramatists), but all its male characters resembled Lord Tennyson's King Arthur. Five or six years earlier he had published his lovely *Homeward Songs by the Way*, and because of those poems and

what he was in himself, writers or would-be writers, among them James Stephens, who has all my admiration to-day, gathered at his house upon Sunday nights, making it a chief centre of literary life in Dublin. I was not friendly with that centre, considering it made up for the most part of 'barren rascals'—critics as Balzac saw critics. For the next few years it seemed to lead the opposition, not the violent attacks, but the sapping and mining. A. E. himself, then as always, I loved and hated, and when I read or saw his play, I distrusted my judgment, fearing it mere jealousy, or some sort of party dislike. It was admired by everybody, hurt no national susceptibility, but in a few years A. E. himself abandoned it as Moore and I abandoned *Diarmuid and Grania*. I wrote to Lady Gregory, who was then in Italy: 'They took to *Deirdre* from the first. The hall was crowded and great numbers could not get in. I hated *Deirdre*. In fact I did not remain in the theatre because I was nervous about it. I still hate it, but I suppose Moore is the only person who shares my opinion. When I saw it in rehearsal I thought it superficial and sentimental as I thought when it came out in the *All Ireland Review*. *Cathleen ni Houlihan* was also enthusiastically received. The one defect was that the mild humour of the part before Cathleen came in kept them in such delighted laughter that it took them some little while to realise the tragic meaning of Cathleen's part though Maud Gonne played it magnificently and with weird power. I should have struck a tragic note at the start.' Then two days later: 'The plays are over. Last night was the most enthusiastic of all. The audience

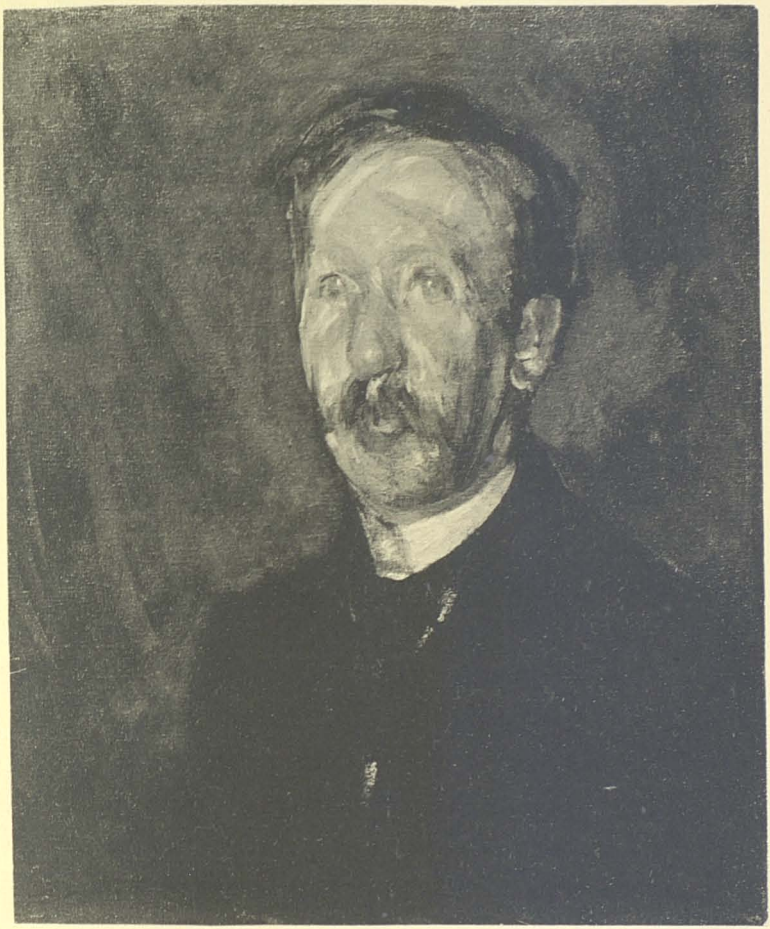
now understands *Cathleen ni Houlihan* and there is no difficulty in getting from humour to tragedy. There is continual applause, and strange to say I like *Deirdre.* The absence of character is like the absence of individual expression in wall decoration. It was acted with great simplicity; the actors kept very quiet, often merely posing and speaking. The result was curiously dream-like and gentle. Russell is planning a play on the Children of Tuireann and will, I imagine, do quite a number of plays. The costumes and scenery from designs of his were beautiful; there was a thin gauze veil in front. It was really a wonderful sight to see crowds of people standing up at the back of the hall where they could hardly see because there were people in front, yet patient, and enthusiastic.' I gave Fay a little farce, *The Pot of Broth*, written with Lady Gregory's help but showing that neither Lady Gregory nor I could yet distinguish between the swift-moving town dialect—the dialect of the Irish novelists no matter what part of Ireland they wrote of,—and the slow-moving country dialect. In *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, written too with Lady Gregory's help, the dialect is as it were neutral, neither predominantly town nor country; my stage technique, swifter than Lady Gregory's when a tragic crisis is the theme, had pared it to the bone. It was, I think, this spareness, or barrenness, that made Arthur Symons tell me after he had seen Synge's first play to write no more peasant plays.

I had joined Fay's dramatic society but had as yet no authority. I wrote to Lady Gregory that I had not marked my scornful analysis of one of Fay's dramatists

'private' because 'the sooner I have that man for an enemy the better'. When *The Pot of Broth* was played in the Antient Concert Rooms in October, that trivial, unambitious retelling of an old folk-tale showed William Fay for the first time as a most lovable comedian. He could play dirty tramp, stupid countryman, legendary fool, insist on dirt and imbecility, yet play—paradox of the stage—with indescribable personal distinction.

XXII

In the early autumn Zola died, asphyxiated by a charcoal stove. Innumerable paragraphs and leading articles made Moore jealous and angry; he hated his own past in Zola. He talked much to his friends on Saturday nights. 'Anybody can get himself asphyxiated.' Then after some six weeks announced that he himself had awakened that very morning to smell gas, a few minutes more and he would have been dead; the obsession was over. But there had been another torture earlier in the year. A brother of his, Augustus Moore, a London journalist, had taken an action about a scenario, whether against an actor, a writer or a manager, I cannot remember; he would appear in the witness-box, be examined, cross-examined, re-examined, and would not, could not, rise to the occasion, whereas he, George Moore, could have been amusing, profound, all the world looking on. When it seemed likely that Benson, or some company brought together by Martyn, would continue the Irish Literary Theatre, I had told Moore a fantastic plot for a play, suggested collaboration, and



George Moore

From the portrait by W. R. Sickert in the Tate Gallery

for twenty minutes or half an hour walked up and down a path in his garden discussing it. He proposed that my hero's brother should seduce the housemaid. When I had decided to work with Fay, Moore had withdrawn from the movement. I had written him regretting that I must write that play without his help. He did not answer, the letter required no answer. Weeks or months passed, then at some Gaelic festival in the town of Galway we met. I saw that he had something on his mind, he was gloomy and silent. I pointed out the number of young women with Douglas Hyde's pseudonym in gilt letters round their hats: 'No woman, Moore, has ever done that for you', I said. He took my banter well, threw off his gloom; had I not started his favourite theme? But on his return to Dublin he telegraphed: 'I have written a novel on that scenario we composed together. Will get an injunction if you use it.' Had I known about his brother's law-case I would have known that Moore had not written a line and that his telegram was drama; knowing nothing, I wrote or telegraphed that I would use nothing of his but would certainly use my own plot. I went to Coole, asked the assistance of Lady Gregory and of a certain cautious friend, whose name must be left out of this narrative, and in a fortnight they and I dictated or wrote a five-act tragedy. I called it *Where there is Nothing* and published it as a supplement to *The United Irishman*, afterwards the organ of the Sinn Fein movement. Moore had been talking and his talk had reached me, he was expecting a London trial, and this was checkmate. Boys were shouting the supplement in the streets as he came

out of the Antient Concert Rooms, where he had seen Fay's company. He bought a copy, spoke to nobody about it, always declared that he never read it, nor any other edition of the play. 'Has Yeats' hero got a brother?' he said to somebody. 'Yes.' 'Then Yeats has stolen the spoons.' But my hero's brother was in a monastery. Some months later an American friend, John Quinn, a strong supporter and helper of our movement, brought us together, but we were never cordial again; on my side distrust remained, on his disgust. I look back with some remorse. 'Yeats', Moore had said, 'a man can only have one conscience, mine is artistic.' Had I abandoned my plot and made him write the novel, he might have put beside *Muslin* and *The Lake* a third masterpiece, but I was young, vain, self-righteous, and bent on proving myself a man of action. *Where there is Nothing* is a bad play; I had caught sight of Tolstoy's essay about the Sermon on the Mount lying on a chair and made the most important act pivot upon pacificist commonplace. I soon came to my senses, refused a distinguished Frenchman permission to translate it, and in later years with Lady Gregory's help turned it into *The Unicorn from the Stars*. For the moment it was successful; it could not be played in Ireland for religious reasons, but the Stage Society found an approving audience and it set the tinkers of Mayo rioting. My anonymous collaborator, when asked to name a tinker in the play, had named him after a real tinker. A farmer who had read the *United Ireland* supplement reproached that tinker for letting his daughter marry a man with no visible means of sub-

sistence and permitting her to solemnise the marriage by jumping over a bucket. The angry parent called God to witness that he had done no such thing, other farmers and tinkers joined what grew into a considerable fight, and all were brought up before the magistrate.

XXIII

During these first years Lady Gregory was friend and hostess, a centre of peace, an adviser who never overestimated or underestimated trouble, but neither she nor we thought her a possible creator. And now all in a moment, as it seemed, she became the founder of modern Irish dialect literature. When her husband died she had sold her London house, hiring instead a small flat in Queen Anne's Mansions, lived most of the year at Coole, cutting down expenses that her son might inherit an unencumbered estate. In early life she had written two or three articles, such as many clever fashionable women write, more recently had edited her husband, Sir William Gregory's, *Autobiography* and *Mr. Gregory's Letter-Box*, a volume of letters to Richard Gregory, Irish Under-Secretary at the beginning of the nineteenth century, from Palmerston, Wellesley, many famous men, drawn from the Coole archives. Some slight desire to create had been put aside until her son reached manhood; but now he had left the university and she was fifty. I told her that Alfred Nutt had offered to supply me with translations of the Irish heroic cycles if I would pick the best versions and put my English upon them, attempting what Malory had done for the old French narratives. I told her that

I was too busy with my own work. Some days later she asked if I would object to her attempting it, making or finding the translations herself. An eminent Trinity College professor had described ancient Irish literature as 'silly, religious, or indecent', and she thought such work necessary for the dignity of Ireland. 'We work to add dignity to Ireland' was a favourite phrase of hers. I hesitated, I saw nothing in her past to fit her for that work; but in a week or two she brought a translation of some heroic tale, what tale I cannot now remember, in the dialect of the neighbourhood, where one discovers the unemphatic cadence, the occasional poignancy of Tudor English. Looking back, *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* and *Gods and Fighting Men* at my side, I can see that they were made possible by her past; semi-feudal Roxborough, her inherited sense of caste, her knowledge of that top of the world where men and women are valued for their manhood and their charm, not for their opinions, her long study of Scottish Ballads, of Percy's *Reliques*, of the *Morte D'Arthur*. If she had not found those tales, or finding them had not found the dialect of Kiltartan, that past could not, as it were, have drawn itself together, come to birth as present personality. Sometimes in her letters, in her books when she wrote ordinary English, she was the late-Victorian woman turning aside from reality to what seems pleasing, or to a slightly sentimental persiflage as to a form of politeness—in society, to discover 'eternity glaring', as Carlyle did when he met Charles Lamb for the first time, is scarcely in good taste—but in her last years, when speaking in her own character,

she seemed always her greater self. A writer must die every day he lives, be reborn, as it is said in the Burial Service, an incorruptible self, that self opposite of all that he has named 'himself'. George Moore, dreading the annihilation of an impersonal bleak realism, used life like a mediaeval ghost making a body for itself out of drifting dust and vapour; and have I not sung in describing guests at Coole—'There one that ruffled in a manly pose, For all his timid heart'—that one myself? Synge was a sick man picturing energy, a doomed man picturing gaiety; Lady Gregory, in her life much artifice, in her nature much pride, was born to see the glory of the world in a peasant mirror. 'I saw the household of Finn; it was not the household of a soft race; I had a vision of that man yesterday. . . . A King of heavy blows; my law; my adviser, my sense and my wisdom, prince and poet, braver than kings, King of the Fianna, brave in all countries; golden salmon of the sea, clean hawk of the air . . . a high messenger in bravery and in music. His skin lime-white, his hair golden; ready to work, gentle to women. His great green vessels full of rough sharp wine, it is rich the king was, the head of his people.' And then Grania's song over the sleeping Diarmuid:—

' "Sleep a little, sleep a little, for there is nothing at all to fear, Diarmuid, grandson of Duibhne; sleep here soundly, soundly, Diarmuid, to whom I have given my love. It is I will keep watch for you, grandchild of shapely Duibhne; sleep a little, a blessing on you, beside the well of the strong field; my lamb from above the lake, from the banks of the strong streams. Let your

sleep be like the sleep in the North of fair comely Fionnchadh of Ess Ruadh, the time he took Slaine with bravery as we think, in spite of Failbhe of the Hard Head.

"Let your sleep be like the sleep in the West of Aine, daughter of Gailian, the time she went on a journey in the night with Dubhthach from Dorinis, by the light of torches.

"Let your sleep be like the sleep in the East of Deaghadh the proud, the brave fighter, the time he took Coincheann, daughter of Binn, in spite of fierce Decheall of Duibhreann.

"O heart of the valour of the world to the west of Greece, my heart will go near to breaking if I do not see you every day. The parting of us two will be the parting of two children of the one house; it will be the parting of life from the body."'

'And then to rouse him she would make another song, and it is what she would say: "Caoinche will be loosed on your track; it is not slow the running of Caoilte will be; do not let death reach to you, do not give yourself to sleep forever.

"The stag to the East is not asleep, he does not cease from bellowing; the bog lark is not asleep to-night on the high stormy bogs; the sound of her clear voice is sweet; she is not sleeping between the streams."'

ESTRANGEMENT

EXTRACTS FROM A DIARY KEPT IN 1909

ESTRANGEMENT

I

To keep these notes natural and useful to me I must keep one note from leading on to another, that I may not surrender myself to literature. Every note must come as a casual thought, then it will be my life. Neither Christ nor Buddha nor Socrates wrote a book, for to do that is to exchange life for a logical process.

II

Last night there was a debate in the Arts Club on a political question. I was for a moment tempted to use arguments merely to answer something said, but did not do so, and noticed that every argument I had been tempted to use was used by somebody or other. Logic is a machine, one can leave it to itself; unhelped it will force those present to exhaust the subject, the fool is as likely as the sage to speak the appropriate answer to any statement, and if an answer is forgotten somebody will go home miserable. You throw your money on the table and you receive so much change.

Style, personality—deliberately adopted and therefore a mask—is the only escape from the hot-faced bargainers and the money-changers.

III

I have been talking to a man typical of a class common elsewhere but new in Ireland: often not ill-bred in

manner and therefore the more manifestly with the ill-breeding of the mind, every thought made in some manufactory and with the mark upon it of its wholesale origin—thoughts never really thought out in their current form in any individual mind, but the creation of impersonal mechanism—of schools, of text-books, of newspapers, these above all. He had that confidence which the first thinker of anything never has, for all thinkers are alike in that they approach the truth full of hesitation and doubt. Confidence comes from repetition, from the breath of many mouths. This ill-breeding of the mind is a far worse thing than the mere bad manners that spit on the floor. Is not all charm inherited, whether of the intellect, of the manners, of the character, or of literature? A great lady is as simple as a good poet. Neither possesses anything that is not ancient and their own, and both are full of uncertainty about everything but themselves, about everything that can be changed, about all that they merely think. They assume convictions as if they were a fashion in clothes and remould all slightly.

IV

The articles upon *The Miser* in to-day's paper show the old dislike of farce and dialect; written by men who are essentially parvenus in intellectual things, they shudder at all that is not obviously and notoriously refined —the objection to the word 'shift' over again. Our Abbey secretary has a deep hatred of Molière. None of these people can get it out of their heads that we are exaggerating the farce of Molière. We reduce it. Years

ago Dr. Sigerson said of the last verse of my 'Moll Magee', 'Why candles? Surely tapers?'

V

To oppose the new ill-breeding of Ireland, which may in a few years destroy all that has given Ireland a distinguished name in the world—'Mother of the bravest soldiers and the most beautiful women', cried Borrow, or some such words, remembering the hospitality shown to him, a distributor of Bibles, by the Irish Monks of Spain—I can only set up a secondary or interior personality created out of the tradition of myself, and this personality (alas, only possible to me in my writings) must be always gracious and simple. It must have that slight separation from interests which makes charm possible, while remaining near enough for passion. Is not charm what it is because an escape from mechanism? So much of the world as is dominated by the contest of interests is a mechanism. The newspaper is the roar of the machine. Argument, the moment acknowledged victory is sought, becomes a clash of interests. One should not—above all in books, which sigh for immortality—argue at all if not ready to leave to another apparent victory. In daily life one becomes rude the moment one grudges to the clown his perpetual triumph.

VI

My father says, 'A man does not love a woman because he thinks her clever or because he admires her, but because he likes the way she has of scratching her head'.

VII

It seems to me that true love is a discipline, and it needs so much wisdom that the love of Solomon and Sheba must have lasted, for all the silence of the Scriptures. Each divines the secret self of the other, and refusing to believe in the mere daily self, creates a mirror where the lover or the beloved sees an image to copy in daily life; for love also creates the Mask.

VIII

Our modern poetry is imaginative. It is the poetry of the young. The poetry of the greatest periods is a sustained expression of the appetites and habits. Hence we select where they exhausted.

IX

I have remembered to-day that the Brahmin Mohini said to me, 'When I was young I was happy. I thought truth was something that could be conveyed from one man's mind to another. I now know that it is a state of mind.'

X

Last night I met A——.[1] There was some rich man there, and some person spoke of the great power that wealth might have for good. The rich man was talking

[1] The initials used in these extracts are never those of the persons quoted or described. With the exception of A. E., George Russell's pseudonym, they are copied from a dictionary of painters, the initials or initial of the first name under A, then of the second under A or of the first under B and so on.

of starting a deer forest in Connaught. A—— said, 'Wealth has very little power, it can really do very little'. I said, 'Yet every now and then one meets some charming person who likes all fine things and is quite delightful and who would not have had these qualities if some great-grandfather had not sold his country for gold'. A—— answered, 'I admit that wealth occasionally—Darwin is an example—enables someone to write a great book'. I answered, 'O, I was not thinking of that. I meant that it creates the fine life which we look at with affectionate eyes out of our garret windows. We must not leave our garrets, but we could not write well but for what we see from their windows.' A—— answered, 'Then writers are parasites'. I noticed that most of the guests seemed, besides A—— and the rich man, too sympathetic and anxious to please; I myself among the rest. We talked, they were talked to. Dean B—— was there too, a charming and intelligent man with an ingratiating manner like that of certain well-educated Catholic priests, a manner one does not think compatible with deep spiritual experience. We discussed self-realisation and self-sacrifice. He said the classic self-realisation had failed and yet the victory of Christian self-sacrifice had plunged the world into the Dark Ages. I reminded him of some Norse God, who was hung over an abyss for three days, 'a sacrifice to himself', to show that the two were not incompatible, but he answered, 'Von Hartmann discusses the question whether the soul may not sacrifice itself, even to the losing of itself, for some good end'. I said, 'That is the problem of my *Countess Cathleen*', and he said, 'It is a further

problem whether a nation may make this sacrifice'. He must have been thinking of Ireland.

XI

I see clearly that when I rewrite *The Adoration of the Magi* the message given to the old men must be a series of seemingly arbitrary commands: A year of silence, certain rules of diet, and so on. Without the arbitrary there cannot be religion, because there cannot be the last sacrifice, that of the spirit. The old men should refuse to record the message on hearing that it contains not wisdom but the supernaturally sanctioned arbitrary, the commanded pose that makes all definite. The tree has to die before it can be made into a cross.

XII

I have noticed that when these men (certain disciples of A. E.) take to any kind of action it is to some kind of extreme politics. Partly, I think, because they have never learned the discipline which enables the most ardent nature to accept obtainable things, even if a little sadly; but still more because they cannot believe in any success that is not in the unconditioned future, and because, like an artist described by Balzac, they long for popularity that they may believe in themselves.

XIII

A. E. endures them because he has the religious genius, for to the religious genius all souls are of equal value: the queen is not more than an old apple-woman. His

poetical genius does not affect his mind as a whole, and probably he puts aside as unworthy every suggestion of his poetical genius which would separate man from man. The most fundamental of divisions is that between the intellect, which can only do its work by saying continually 'thou fool', and the religious genius which makes all equal. That is why we have discovered that the mountain-top and the monastery are necessary to civilisation. Civilisation dies of all those things that feed the soul, and both die if the Remnant refuse the wilderness.

XIV

One of their errors is to continually mistake a philosophical idea for a spiritual experience. The very preoccupation of the intellect with the soul destroys that experience, for everywhere impressions are checked by opinion.

XV

The real life being despised is only prized when sentimentalised over, and so the soul is shut off alike from earth and Heaven.

XVI

I heard Miss A—— B—— speak this the other day: 'We have such a wonderful cat and it is so full of dignity that if the kitten goes to take its food it leaves the dish. It will not struggle. It will not assert itself. And what's more, our cat won't eat at all if there is not a perfectly clean napkin spread under the plate. I assure you it is quite true. I have often noticed it. It will not eat if there is even a spot on the napkin.'

XVII

When A. E. and I were fellow-students at the art-schools there was a strange mad pious student who used to come sometimes with a daisy chain round his neck. A. E. lent him a little theosophical book, *Light on the Path*. He stayed away for several days and then came one day looking very troubled. He gave the book back saying, 'You will drift into a penumbra'.

XVIII

In Christianity what was philosophy in Eastern Asia became life, biography and drama. A play passes through the same process in being written. At first, if it has psychological depth, there is a bundle of ideas, something that can be stated in philosophical terms; my *Countess Cathleen*, for instance, was once the moral question, may a soul sacrifice itself for a good end? but gradually philosophy is eliminated until at last the only philosophy audible, if there is even that, is the mere expression of one character or another. When it is completely life it seems to the hasty reader a mere story. Was the *Bhagavad Gita* the 'scenario' from which the Gospels were made?

XIX

One reason for the tendency of the A. E. group to extreme political opinion is that a taste fed for long on milk diet thirsts for strong flavours. In England the reaction would be vice, in Ireland it is politics.

XX

I have once more met Miss A—— B——. 'O, it is not because of the pictures that I said I liked Mr. Lane's Gallery. I like it because it has such a beautiful atmosphere, because of the muffed glass.'

XXI

All empty souls tend to extreme opinion. It is only in those who have built up a rich world of memories and habits of thought that extreme opinions affront the sense of probability. Propositions, for instance, which set all the truth upon one side can only enter rich minds to dislocate and strain, if they can enter at all, and sooner or later the mind expels them by instinct.

XXII

There is a relation between discipline and the theatrical sense. If we cannot imagine ourselves as different from what we are and assume that second self, we cannot impose a discipline upon ourselves, though we may accept one from others. Active virtue as distinguished from the passive acceptance of a current code is therefore theatrical, consciously dramatic, the wearing of a mask. It is the condition of arduous full life. One constantly notices in very active natures a tendency to pose, or if the pose has become a second self a preoccupation with the effect they are producing. One notices this in Plutarch's *Lives*, and every now and then in some modern who has tried to live by classical ideas, in Oscar Wilde, for instance, and less obviously in men like Walt

Whitman. Wordsworth is often flat and heavy, partly because his moral sense has no theatrical element, it is an obedience to a discipline which he has not created. This increases his popularity with the better sort of journalists, writers in the *Spectator*, for instance, with all who are part of the machine and yet care for poetry.

XXIII

All my life I have been haunted with the idea that the poet should know all classes of men as one of themselves, that he should combine the greatest possible personal realisation with the greatest possible knowledge of the speech and circumstances of the world. Fifteen or twenty years ago I remember longing, with this purpose, to disguise myself as a peasant and wander through the West, and then to ship as sailor. But when one shrinks from all business with a stranger, and is unnatural with all who are not intimate friends, because one underrates or overrates unknown people, one cannot adventure forth. The artist grows more and more distinct, more and more a being in his own right as it were, but more and more loses grasp of the always more complex world. Some day setting out to find knowledge, like some pilgrim to the Holy Land, he will become the most romantic of characters. He will play with all masks.

XXIV

Tragedy is passion alone, and rejecting character, it gets form from motives, from the wandering of passion; while comedy is the clash of character. Eliminate char-

acter from comedy and you get farce. Farce is bound together by incident alone. In practice most works are mixed: Shakespeare being tragi-comedy. Comedy is joyous because all assumption of a part, of a personal mask, whether of the individualised face of comedy or of the grotesque face of farce, is a display of energy, and all energy is joyous. A poet creates tragedy from his own soul, that soul which is alike in all men. It has not joy, as we understand that word, but ecstasy, which is from the contemplation of things vaster than the individual and imperfectly seen, perhaps, by all those that still live. The masks of tragedy contain neither character nor personal energy. They are allied to decoration and to the abstract figures of Egyptian temples. Before the mind can look out of their eyes the active will perishes, hence their sorrowful calm. Joy is of the will which labours, which overcomes obstacles, which knows triumph. The soul knows its changes of state alone, and I think the motives of tragedy are not related to action but to changes of state. I feel this but do not see clearly, for I am hunting truth into its thicket and it is my business to keep close to the impressions of sense, to common daily life. Yet is not ecstasy some fulfilment of the soul in itself, some slow or sudden expansion of it like an overflowing well? Is not this what is meant by beauty?

XXV

Allingham and Davis have two different kinds of love of Ireland. In Allingham I find the entire emotion for the place one grew up in which I felt as a child.

Davis on the other hand was concerned with ideas of Ireland, with conscious patriotism. His Ireland was artificial, an idea built up in a couple of generations by a few commonplace men. This artificial idea has done me as much harm as the other has helped me. I tried to free myself from it, and all my enemies come from my fighting it in others. The beauty of peasant thought is partly from a spontaneity unspoiled by the artificial town-made thought. One cannot sum up a nation intellectually, and when the summing up is made by half-educated men the idea fills one with alarm. I remember when I was nine or ten years old walking along Kensington High Street so full of love for the fields and roads of Sligo that I longed—a strange sentiment for a child —for earth from a road there that I might kiss it. I had no politics; a couple of years before, I had read with delight a volume of Orange verses belonging to my grandmother's stable-boy, and my mother, who loved Sligo where she had been born and bred with the same passion, was, if she had any politics, Unionist. This love was instinctive and left the soul free. If I could have kept it and yet never felt the influence of Young Ireland I had given a more profound picture of Ireland in my work. Synge's purity of genius comes in part from having kept this instinct and this alone. Emotion is always justified by time, thought hardly ever. It can only bring us back to emotion. I went to see Synge yesterday and found him ill: if he dies it will set me wondering if he could have lived had he not had his long misunderstanding with the wreckage of Young Ireland. Even a successful performance of one of his plays seems to have

made him ill. My sister reminded me of this the other day and urged me not to revive the *Playboy* while he is ill. In one thing he and Lady Gregory are the strongest souls I have ever known. He and she alike have never for an instant spoken to me the thoughts of their inferiors as their own thoughts. I have never known them to lose the self-possession of their intellects. The others here—even Moore for all his defiance—possess their own thoughts above the general flood only for a season, and Moore has in addition an automatic combativeness that makes even his original thought a reaction not a creation. Both Synge and Lady Gregory isolate themselves, Synge instinctively and Lady Gregory consciously, from all contagious opinions of poorer minds: Synge so instinctively and naturally—helped certainly by the habits of an invalid—that no one is conscious of rejection. Lady Gregory's life is too energetic and complex for her rejections to be other than deliberate. I do neither the one nor the other, being too talkative, too full of belief in whatever thought lays hold on me to reject people from my company, and so keep by angry outbreaks which are pure folly, from these invasions of the soul. One must agree with the clown or be silent, for he has in him the strength and confidence of the multitudes.

Lady Gregory is planting trees; for a year they have taken up much of her time. Her grandson will be fifty years old before they can be cut. We artists, do not we also plant trees and it is only after some fifty years that we are of much value? Every day I notice some new analogy between the long-established life of the well-

born and the artists' life. We come from the permanent things and create them, and instead of old blood we have old emotions and we carry in our heads always that form of society aristocracies create now and again for some brief moment at Urbino or Versailles. We too despise the mob and suffer at its hands, and when we are happiest we have some little post in the house of Duke Frederick where we watch the proud dreamless world with humility, knowing that our knowledge is invisible and that at the first breath of ambition our dreams vanish. If we do not see daily beautiful life at which we look as old men and women do at young children, we become theorists—thinkers as it is called, —or else give ourselves to strained emotions, to some overflow of sentiment 'sighing after Jerusalem in the regions of the grave'. How can we sing without our bush of whins, our clump of heather, and does not Blake say that it takes a thousand years to create a flower?

XXVI

Blake talking to Crabb Robinson said once that he preferred to any man of intellect a happy thoughtless person, or some such phrase. It followed, I suppose, from his praise of life—'all that lives is holy'—and from his dislike of abstract things. Balzac, though when he is praising some beautiful high-bred woman he makes one think he had the same preference, is too much taken up with his worship of the will, which cannot be thoughtless even if it can be happy, to be aware of the preference if he has it. Nietzsche had it doubtless at the moment

when he imagined the 'Superman' as a child. We artists suffer in our art if we do not love most of all life at peace with itself and doing without forethought what its humanity bids it and therefore happily. We are, as seen from life, an artifice, an emphasis, an uncompleted arc perhaps. Those whom it is our business to cherish and celebrate are complete arcs. Because the life man sees is not the final end of things, the moment we attain to greatness of any kind by personal labour and will we become fragmentary, and find no task in active life which can use our finest faculties. We are compelled to think and express and not to do. Faust in the end was only able to reclaim land like some official of the Agricultural Board. It is right that Romeo should not be a man of intellect or learning, it is enough for us that there is nature in him. We see all his arc, for in literature we need completed things. Men of action, our celebrators of life and passion, should be in all men's eyes, but it is not well that we should be too much talked of. Plutarch was right when he said the artist should not be too prominent in the State because no young man, born for war and love, desires to be like Phidias. Life confesses to the Priest and honours him, but we confess to Life and tell it all that we would do if we were young, beautiful and rich, and Life answers, 'I could never have thought of all that for myself, I have so little time'. And it is our praise that it goes upon its way with shining eyes forgetting us.

XXVII

I have to speak to-night at the Arts Club and have no time for much preparation. I will speak, I think, of the life of a young Irishman, his gradual absorption in some propaganda. How the very nature of youth makes this come readily. Youth is always giving itself, expending itself. It is only after years that we begin the supreme work, the adapting of our energies to a chosen end, the disciplining of ourselves. A young man in Ireland meets only crude, impersonal things, things that make him like others. One cannot discuss his ideas or ideals, for he has none. He has not the beginning of aesthetic culture. He never tries to make his rooms charming, for instance. The slow perfecting of the senses which we call taste has not even begun. When he throws himself into the work of some league he succeeds just in so far as he puts aside all delicate and personal gifts. I myself know the sense of strain that comes when one speaks to ignorant or, still worse, half-ignorant men. There is a perpetual temptation not merely to over-simplification but to exaggeration, for all ignorant thought is exaggerated thought. I can only wish that a young Irishman of talent and culture may spend his life, from eighteen to twenty-five, outside Ireland. Can one prescribe duties to a developed soul?—and I suppose him to grow conscious of himself in those years. If one can, I would wish him to return. I will then describe the idea of modern culture as I see it in some young Oxford man: to have perfect taste; to have felt all the finest emotions that art can give. The young Dublin man who sticks to

his books becomes a pedant because he only believes in external things. I will then describe a debate at Oxford a few years ago when I felt so much pity for that young brilliant man full of feminine sensitiveness. Surely the ideal of culture expressed by Pater can only create feminine souls. The soul becomes a mirror not a brazier. This culture is self-knowledge in so far as the self is a calm, deliberating, discriminating thing, for when we have awakened our tastes, and criticised the world in tasting it, we have come to know ourselves; ourselves, not as misers, or spendthrifts, or magistrates, or pleaders, but as men, face to face with what is permanent in the world. Newman defines culture as wise receptivity, though I do not think he uses these words. Culture of this kind produces the most perfect flowers in a few high-bred women. It gives to its sons an exquisite delicacy. I will then compare the culture of the Renaissance, which seems to me founded not on self-knowledge but on knowledge of some other self, Christ or Caesar, not on delicate sincerity but on imitative energy.

XXVIII

This morning I got a letter telling me of A—— C——'s illness. I did not recognise her son's writing at first, and my mind wandered, I suppose because I was not well. I thought my mother was ill and that my sister was asking me to come at once: then I remembered that my mother died years ago and that more than kin was at stake. She has been to me mother, friend, sister and brother. I cannot realise the world without her—she

brought to my wavering thoughts steadfast nobility. All the day the thought of losing her is like a conflagration in the rafters. Friendship is all the house I have.

XXIX

A—— C—— is better but writes in pencil that she 'very nearly slipped away'. All Wednesday I heard Castiglione's phrase ringing in my memory, 'Never be it spoken without tears, the Duchess, too, is dead', and that phrase, which—coming where it did among the numbering of his dead—often moved me till my eyes dimmed, brought before me now all his sorrow and my own, as though one saw the worth of life fade for ever.

> Sickness brought me this
> Thought, in that scale of his:
> Why should I be dismayed
> Though flame had burned the whole
> World, as it were a coal,
> Now I have seen it weighed
> Against a soul?

XXX

I went for a walk in the woods with little E—— and we talked of religion. He said, 'There is no longer belief, nobody with belief ever comes to my Bible Class but you yourself. If people believed, they would talk of God and Christ. They think it good taste not to talk of such things, and yet people always talk of what they care for. Belief makes a mind abundant.' I thought of the perpetual desire of all lovers to talk of their love and how many lovers' quarrels have come from it. I said,

'What of the Dublin theosophists?' He said fiercely, 'They are thieves. They pick up names and thoughts all over the world and these never become being in their minds, never become their own, because they have no worship.' He is not easy to understand, but I gradually drew from him these thoughts. 'They are all self, all presumption. They do not know what it is to abase themselves before Christ, or their own Gods, or anything. If one does that, one is filled with life. Christ is so full of life that it flows into us. The whole world is vivid to us. They are all self, and so they despise the foundation.' He means by the foundation, life, nature. I said, 'But what are the forms they see?' He answered, 'They can only be lesser spirits—part of what they call the Astral—creatures that live on them and draw away their life'. I said, 'Must one therefore either feed or be fed?' He said, 'Yes, surely. Have you not noticed that they are all fluid, tenuous, flimsy-minded? You know Miss A—— B——? They are all like that. It is the astral fluid. There is no life, the life has been sucked out. They despise the foundation, and that no one can do till after the resurrection. They are all self, and so they live on stolen goods. Of course there are a few chosen spirits who need not enter into life, but they are very few. Ah! if only one could see all boys and girls after nineteen married.' He told me earlier in the day that once when mountaineering he was in great danger. Someone had slipped and dragged another with him, and he had the weight of two men hanging from the rope—but he felt a great being descending into him and strengthening him. Even when the danger was over he

felt no loss of nerve as he looked back on the danger. He had been filled with life. On the way back E—— said, 'There is so little life now. Look at the modern soldier—he is nothing—and the ancient soldier was something—he had to be strong and skilful, they fought man to man.' I said, 'There are some books like that—ideas as wonderful as a campaign by Moltke, but no man. The plan of campaign was not so impressive in the old books, but all was human!' He answered, 'When races cease to believe in Christ, God takes the life out of them, at last they cease to procreate'. E—— himself, all muscular force and ardour, makes me think of that line written, as one believes, of Shakespeare by Ben Jonson —'So rammed with life that he can but grow in life with being'. The irregular line of his thought which makes him obscure is itself a sign of this. He is as full of twists and turns as a tree.

XXXI

The other day when I was speaking at the Arts Club someone asked me what life I would recommend to young Irishmen, the thought my whole speech if it were logical should have led up to. I was glad to be able to reply, 'I do not know, though I have thought much about it'. Who does not distrust complete ideas?

XXXII

There is an astrological sense in which a man's wife or sweetheart is always an Eve made from a rib of his body. She is drawn to him because she represents a group of stellar influences in the radical horoscope.

These influences also create an element in his character, and his destiny, in things apart from love or marriage. Whether this element be good or evil she is therefore its external expression. The happiest have such horoscopes that they find what they have of good in their wives, others must find what they have of evil, or a man may have both affinities. Sometimes a man may find the evil of his horoscope in a woman, and in rescuing her from her own self may conquer his own evil, as with Simon Magus who married a harlot. Others may find in a woman the good that conquers them and shapes them. All external events of life are of course an externalisation of character in the same way, but not to the same degree as the wife, who may represent the gathering up of an entire web of influences. A friend represented by a powerful star in the eleventh house may be the same, especially if the sun apply to the star. We are mirrors of the stellar light and we cast this light outward as incidents, magnetic attractions, characterisations, desires. This casting outward of the light is that fall into the circumference the mystics talk of.

XXXIII

By implication the philosophy of Irish faery lore declares that all power is from the body, all intelligence from the spirit. Western civilisation, religion and magic insist on power and therefore on body, and hence these three doctrines—efficient rule—the Incarnation—thaumaturgy. Eastern thoughts answer to these with indifference to rule, scorn of the flesh, contemplation of

the formless. Western minds who follow the Eastern way become weak and vapoury, because unfit for the work forced upon them by Western life. Every symbol is an invocation which produces its equivalent expression in all worlds. The Incarnation invoked modern science and modern efficiency, and individualised emotion. It produced a solidification of all those things that grow from individual will. The historical truth of the Incarnation is indifferent, though the belief in that truth was essential to the power of the invocation. All civilisation is held together by the suggestions of an invisible hypnotist—by artificially created illusions. The knowledge of reality is always in some measure a secret knowledge. It is a kind of death.

XXXIV

While Lady Gregory has brought herself to death's door with overwork, to give us, while neglecting no other duty, enough plays, translated or original, to keep the Theatre alive, our base half-men of letters, or rather half-journalists, that coterie of patriots who have never been bought because no one ever thought them worth a price, have been whispering everywhere that she takes advantage of her position as director to put her own plays upon the stage. When I think, too, of Synge dying at this moment of their bitterness and ignorance, as I believe, I wonder if I have been right to shape my style to sweetness and serenity, and there comes into my mind that verse that Fergus spoke, 'No man seeks my help because I be not of the things I dream'. On the

night of the '*Playboy* debate' they were all there, silent and craven, but not in the stalls for fear they might be asked to speak and face the mob. A—— D—— even refused by a subterfuge and joined the others in the gallery. No man of all literary Dublin dared show his face but my own father, who spoke to, or rather in the presence of, that howling mob with sweetness and simplicity. I fought them, he did a finer thing—forgot them.

XXXV

Those who accuse Synge of some base motive are the great-grandchildren of those Dublin men who accused Smith O'Brien of being paid by the Government to fail. It is of such as these Goethe thought when he said, 'The Irish always seem to me like a pack of hounds dragging down some noble stag'.

XXXVI

Last night, Miss Allgood, who has been bad hitherto, gave a good performance in *Kincora*. This play in its new form gives me the greatest joy—colour, speech, all has its music, and the scenes with the servants make one feel intimate and friendly with those great people who otherwise would be far off—mere figures of speech. The joy that this play gives makes me understand how much I dislike plays like———and———and———. If at all possible I will now keep at the Theatre till I have seen produced a mass of fine work. If we can create a taste for translated work—which we have not yet done—we can carry on the Theatre without vulgarity.

If not, the mere growth of the audience will make all useless, for the Irish town mind will by many channels, public and private, press its vulgarity upon us. If we should feel that happening, if the Theatre is not to continue as we have shaped it, it must, for the sake of our future influence, for the sake of our example, be allowed to pass out of our hands, or cease. We must not be responsible for a compromise.

XXXVII

Last night I read E—— a passage in which Coventry Patmore says we cannot teach another religious truth; we can only point out to him a way whereby he may find it for himself. E—— said, 'If one could show another religious experience, which is of the whole being, one would have to give one's whole being, one would be Christ. He alone can give Himself.'

XXXVIII

I often wonder if my talent will ever recover from the heterogeneous labour of these last few years. The younger Hallam says that vice does not destroy genius but that the heterogeneous does. I cry out vainly for liberty and have ever less and less inner life. Evil comes to us men of imagination wearing as its mask all the virtues. I have certainly known more men destroyed by the desire to have wife and child and to keep them in comfort than I have seen destroyed by drink and harlots. L—— E—— at the Rhymers' Club used to say that he meant to have a butler and that he thought it his

duty to his wife to keep a house on that scale. Harlots in his case finished what the virtues began, but it was the virtues and not the harlots that killed his knack of verse. I thought myself loving neither vice nor virtue; but virtue has come upon me and given me a nation instead of a home. Has it left me any lyrical faculty? Whatever happens I must go on that there may be a man behind the lines already written; I cast the die long ago and must be true to the cast.

XXXIX

Two hours' idleness—because I have no excuse but to begin creative work, an intolerable toil. Little D—— F—— of Hyderabad told me that in her father's garden one met an opium-eater who made poems in his dreams and wrote the title-pages when he awoke but forgot the rest. He was the only happy poet.

XL

A couple of days ago I went to see Dr. F—— F——. He spoke of the attacks on both him and myself in *Sinn Fein* and of their untruthfulness. He said, 'I congratulated Edward Martyn some time ago on being leader of an important political party, and he answered, "I don't want to be, I want to do my own work". Says I, "I want to do my own work also", and then says he, "The worst of it is that those fellows would not leave either of us there for five minutes if they thought we liked it".'

XLI

The root of it all is that the political class in Ireland —the lower-middle class from whom the patriotic associations have drawn their journalists and their leaders for the last ten years—have suffered through the cultivation of hatred as the one energy of their movement, a deprivation which is the intellectual equivalent to a certain surgical operation. Hence the shrillness of their voices. They contemplate all creative power as the eunuchs contemplate Don Juan as he passes through Hell on the white horse.

XLII

To-night G—— said that he has always thought that the bad luck of Ireland comes from hatred being the foundation of our politics. It is possible that emotion is an evocation and in ways beyond the senses alters events —creating good and evil luck. Certain individuals who hate much seem to be followed by violent events outside their control. B—— G—— has been so followed always. It is possible to explain it by saying that hatred awakens hatred in others and in oneself a tendency to violent action; but there are times when there seems more than this—an actual stream of ill-luck. Certainly evocation with symbol has taught me that much that we think limited to certain obvious effects influences the whole being. A meditation on sunlight, for instance, affects the nature throughout, producing all the effects which follow from the symbolical nature of the sun. Hate must, in the same way, create sterility, producing

many effects which would follow from meditation on a symbol. Such a symbol would produce not merely hate but associated effects. An emotion produces a symbol —sensual emotion dreams of water, for instance—just as a symbol produces emotion. The symbol without emotion is more precise and, perhaps, more powerful than an emotion without symbol. Hatred as a basis of imagination, in ways which one could explain even without magic, helps to dry up the nature and make the sexual abstinence, so common among young men and women in Ireland, possible. This abstinence reacts in its turn on the imagination, so that we get at last that strange eunuch-like tone and temper. For the last ten or twenty years there has been a perpetual drying of the Irish mind with the resultant dust-cloud.

XLIII

I saw Synge to-day and asked how much of his *Deirdre* was done. He said the third act was right, that he had put a grotesque character, a new character, into the second act and intended to weave him into Act One. He was to come in with Conchubor, carrying some of his belongings, and afterwards at the end of the act to return for a forgotten knife—just enough to make it possible to use him in Act Two. He spoke of his work this winter doubtfully, thought it not very good, seemed only certain of the third act. I did not like to ask more questions lest he should understand that I wished to know if another could complete the work if he died. He is certainly too ill to work himself, and will be for a long time.

XLIV

Met MacDonagh[1] yesterday—a man with some literary faculty which will probably come to nothing through lack of culture and encouragement. He had just written an article for *The Leader*, and spoke much as I do myself of the destructiveness of journalism here in Ireland, and was apologetic about his article. He is managing a school on Irish and Gaelic League principles but says he is losing faith in the League. Its writers are infecting Irish not only with the English idiom but with the habits of thought of current Irish journalism, a most un-Celtic thing. 'The League', he said, 'is killing Celtic civilisation.' I told him that Synge about ten years ago foretold this in an article in the *Academy*. He thought the National Movement practically dead, that the language would be revived but without all that he loved it for. In England this man would have become remarkable in some way, here he is being crushed by the mechanical logic and commonplace eloquence which give power to the most empty mind, because, being 'something other than human life', they have no use for distinguished feeling or individual thought. I mean that within his own mind this mechanical thought is crushing as with an iron roller all that is organic.

XLV

The soul of Ireland has become a vapour and her body a stone.

[1] Executed in 1916.

XLVI

Ireland has grown sterile, because power has passed to men who lack the training which requires a certain amount of wealth to ensure continuity from generation to generation, and to free the mind in part from other tasks. A gentleman is a man whose principal ideas are not connected with his personal needs and his personal success. In old days he was a clerk or a noble, that is to say, he had freedom because of inherited wealth and position, or because of a personal renunciation. The names are different to-day, and I would put the artist and the scholar in the category of the clerk, yet personal renunciation is not now sufficient or the *hysterica passio* of Ireland would be inspiration, or perhaps it is sufficient but is impossible without inherited culture. For without culture or holiness, which are always the gift of a very few, a man may renounce wealth or any other external thing, but he cannot renounce hatred, envy, jealousy, revenge. Culture is the sanctity of the intellect.

XLVII

I have been talking of the literary element in painting with Miss E—— G—— and turning over the leaves of Binyon's book on Eastern Painting, in which he shows how traditional, how literary that is. The revolt against the literary element in painting was accompanied by a similar revolt in poetry. The doctrine of what the younger Hallam called the Aesthetic School was expounded in his essay on Tennyson, and when I was a

boy the unimportance of subject was a canon. A French poet had written of girls taking lice out of a child's hair. Henley was supposed to have founded a new modern art in the 'hospital poems', though he would not have claimed this. Hallam argued that poetry was the impression on the senses of certain very sensitive men. It was such with the pure artists, Keats and Shelley, but not so with the impure artists who, like Wordsworth, mixed up popular morality with their work. I now see that the literary element in painting, the moral element in poetry, are the means whereby the two arts are accepted into the social order and become a part of life and not things of the study and the exhibition. Supreme art is a traditional statement of certain heroic and religious truths, passed on from age to age, modified by individual genius, but never abandoned. The revolt of individualism came because the tradition had become degraded, or rather because a spurious copy had been accepted in its stead. Classical morality—not quite natural in Christianised Europe—dominated this tradition at the Renaissance, and passed from Milton to Wordsworth and to Arnold, always growing more formal and empty until it became a vulgarity in our time—just as classical forms passed on from Raphael to the Academicians. But Anarchic revolt is coming to an end, and the arts are about to restate the traditional morality. A great work of art, the 'Ode to a Nightingale' not less than the 'Ode to Duty', is as rooted in the early ages as the Mass which goes back to savage folklore. In what temple garden did the nightingale first sing?

XLVIII

No art can conquer the people alone—the people are conquered by an ideal of life upheld by authority. As this ideal is rediscovered, the arts, music and poetry, painting and literature, will draw closer together.

XLIX

The Abbey Theatre will fail to do its full work because there is no accepted authority to explain why the more difficult pleasure is the nobler pleasure. The fascination of the National Movement for me in my youth was, I think, that it seemed to promise such authority. One cannot love a nation struggling to realise itself without an idea of that nation as a whole being present in our mind. One could always appeal to that idea in the mind of others. National spirit is, for the present, dying, because the influence of *The Nation* newspaper, which first gave popular expression to that idea in English, has passed away. *Kincora*, which should have certain poems and traditions to help it, and at its first production caused so much excitement, rouses now but slight interest, while H——'s plays grow more and more popular. H—— alone requires nothing but his own thought.

L

I cry continually against my life. I have sleepless nights, thinking of the time that I must take from poetry —last night I could not sleep—and yet, perhaps, I must do all these things that I may set myself into a life of

action and express not the traditional poet but that forgotten thing, the normal active man.

LI

We require a new statement of moral doctrine, which shall be accepted by the average man, but be at the same time beyond his power in practice. Classical morality in its decay became an instrument in the hands of commonplace energy to overthrow distinguished men. A true system of morals is from the first a weapon in the hands of the most distinguished. The Catholic Church created a system only possible for saints, hence its prolonged power. Its definition of the good was narrow, but it did not set out to make shopkeepers. A lofty morality should be tolerant, for none declare its laws but those worn out with its warfare, and they must pity sinners. Besides, it must needs take a personal form in their minds and give to those minds the timidity of discoverers, not less than the courtesy of soldiers.

LII

A few days ago my sister Lolly dreamed that she saw three dead bodies on a bed. One had its face to the wall, one had a pink mask like a child's toy mask, and before she could look at the third, somebody put a mask on that too. While she was looking at them the body with its face to the wall suddenly moved. The same night J—— dreamed that she saw three very long funerals and that she saw what she thought a body on a bed. She thought it the body of a brother of hers

who had died lately. She lay down on the bed by it, and it suddenly moved. The same night my sister Lily dreamed that she had received three telegrams.

LIII

There is a dying-out of national feeling very simple in its origin. You cannot keep the idea of a nation alive where there are no national institutions to reverence, no national success to admire, without a model of it in the mind of the people. You can call it 'Cathleen ni Houlihan' or the 'Shan van Voght' in a mood of simple feeling, and love that image, but for the general purposes of life you must have a complex mass of images, something like an architect's model. The Young Ireland poets created a mass of obvious images that filled the minds of the young—Wolfe Tone, King Brian, Emmet, Owen Roe, Sarsfield, the Fisherman of Kinsale—answered the traditional slanders on Irish character and entered so into the affections that it followed men on to the scaffold. The ethical ideas implied were of necessity very simple, needing neither study nor unusual gifts for their understanding. Our own movement thought to do the same thing in a more profound and therefore more enduring way. When I was twenty-five or twenty-six I planned a *Légende des Siècles* of Ireland that was to set out with my *Wanderings of Oisin*, and show something of every century. Lionel Johnson's work and, later, Lady Gregory's, carried on the dream in a different form; and I did not see, until Synge began to write, that we must renounce the deliberate creation of

a kind of Holy City in the imagination, and express the individual. The Irish people were not educated enough to accept images more profound, more true to human nature, than the schoolboy thoughts of Young Ireland. You can only create a model of a race to inspire the action of that race as a whole, apart from exceptional individuals, when you and it share the same simple moral understanding of life. Milton and Shakespeare inspire the active life of England, but they do it through exceptional individuals. Having no understanding of life that we can teach to others, we must not seek to create a school. Could we create a vision of the race as noble as that of Sophocles and of Aeschylus, it would be attacked upon some trivial ground by minds that prefer Young Ireland rhetoric, or the obvious sentiment of popular English literature, a few Irish thoughts and feelings added for conscience' sake.

Meanwhile, the need of a model of the nation, of some moral diagram, is as great as in the early nineteenth century, when national feeling was losing itself in a religious feud over tithes and emancipation. Neither the grammars of the Gaelic League nor the industrialism of the *Leader*, nor the *Sinn Fein* attacks upon the Irish Party, give sensible images to the affections. Yet in the work of Lady Gregory, of Synge, of O'Grady, of Lionel Johnson, in my own work, a school of journalists with simple moral ideas could find right building material to create a historical and literary nationalism as powerful as the old and nobler. That done, they could bid the people love and not hate.

LIV

Nobody running at full speed has either a head or a heart.

LV

I told my sister that I was to spend the night in the K—— Street haunted house. She said, 'O, I know about that house. I saw a furniture-van there one day and furniture going in, and ten days after, the house was empty again; and somebody I know was passing by in the early morning and saw an old woman on a window-sill, clinging to the sash. She was the caretaker. The ghost had driven her out and there was a policeman trying to get her down. But the pious Protestants say that there is no ghost or anything but the young novices in the Convent opposite "screaming in the night-time".'

THE DEATH OF SYNGE

EXTRACTS FROM A DIARY KEPT IN 1909

THE DEATH OF SYNGE

I

WHY DOES THE STRUGGLE to come at truth take away our pity, and the struggle to overcome our passions restore it again?

II

National feeling could be roused again if some man of good education—if a Catholic, he should have been educated outside Ireland—gathered about him a few men like himself, and founded a new *Nation* newspaper, forbidding it all personal attacks, all arguments that assume a base motive in an opponent, and choosing for its national policy, not what seems most desirable in the abstract, but such policy as may stir the imagination and yet gather to its support the greatest possible number of educated men. Ireland is ruined by abstractions, and should prefer what may seem a worse policy if it gathers better men. So long as all is ordered for attack, and that alone, leaders will instinctively increase the number of enemies that they may give their followers something to do, and Irish enemies rather than English because they are the more easily injured. The greater the enemy, the greater the hatred, and therefore the greater seems the power. They would give a nation the frenzy of a sect. A sign that this

method, powerful in the time of Parnell, no longer satisfies the nation is that parties are drifting into the hands of feebler and more ignorant men.

III

The education of our Irish secondary schools, especially the Catholic schools, substitutes pedantry for taste. Men learn the dates of writers, the external facts of masterpieces, and not sense of style or feeling for life. I have met no young man out of these schools who has not been injured by the literature and the literary history learned there. The arts have nothing to give but that joy of theirs which is the other side of sorrow, that exhausting contemplation: and in youth before habits have been formed—unless our teachers be wise men—we turn from it to pedantry, which opens to the mind a kind of sensual ease. The young Catholic men and women who have not been through the secondary schools are upon the other hand more imaginative than Protestant boys and girls of the same age. Catholic secondary education destroys, I think, much that the Catholic religion gives. Provincialism destroys the nobility of the Middle Ages.

IV

March 17.

As I go to and from my bedroom, here at Coole, I pass a wall covered with Augustus John's etchings and drawings. I notice a woman with strongly marked shoulder-blades and a big nose, and a pencil drawing called 'Epithalamium'. In the 'Epithalamium' an un-

gainly, ill-grown boy holds out his arms to a tall woman with thin shoulders and a large stomach. Near them is a vivid etching of a woman with the same large stomach and thin shoulders. There is not one of these fifty or sixty clerks and seamstresses and students that has not been broken by labour or wasted by sedentary life. A gymnast would find in all something to amend; and the better he mended the more would those bodies, as with the voice of Dürer, declare that ancient canon discovered in the Greek gymnasium, which, whenever present in painting or sculpture, shows a compact between the artist and society. John is not interested in the social need, in the perpetual thirst for greater health, but in character, in the revolt from all that makes one man like another. The old art, if carried to its logical conclusion, would have led to the creation of one single type of man, one single type of woman; gathering up by a kind of deification a capacity for all energy and all passion, into a Krishna, a Christ, a Dionysus; and at all times a poetical painter, a Botticelli, a Rossetti, creates as his supreme achievement one type of face, known afterwards by his name. The new art can create innumerable personalities, but in each of these the capacity for passion has been sacrificed to some habit of body or of mind. That woman with the big shoulder-blades has, for instance, a nature too keen, too clever for any passion, with the cleverness of people who cannot rest, and that young lad with his arms spread out will sink back into disillusionment and exhaustion after the brief pleasure of a passion which is in part curiosity. Some limiting environment or

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idiosyncrasy is displayed; man is studied as an individual fact, and not as that energy which seems measureless and hates all that is not itself. It is a powerful but prosaic art, celebrating the 'fall into division' not the 'resurrection into unity'. Did not even Balzac, who looked at the world so often with similar eyes, find it necessary to deny character to his great ladies and young lovers that he might give them passion? What beautiful woman delights us by her look of character? That shows itself when beauty is gone, being the creation of habit, the bare stalk when the flower of spring has withered. Beauty consumes character with what Patmore calls 'the integrity of fire'.

It is this lack of the capacity for passion which makes women dislike the schools of characterisation, and makes the modern artist despise woman's judgment. Women, for the same reason, dislike pure comedy. How few women like Molière!

Here at Coole my room is hung with Arundel prints from Botticelli, Benozzo Gozzoli, Giorgione, Mantegna and the Van Eycks. Here everywhere is the expression of desire, though in the Van Eycks the new interest has begun. All display bodies to please an amorous woman's eyes or the eyes of a great King. The martyrs and saints even must show the capacity for all they have renounced.

V

These notes are morbid, but I heard a man of science say that all progress is at the outset pathological, and I write for my own good.

The pain others give passes away in their later kindness, but that of our own blunders, especially when they hurt our vanity, never passes away. Our own acts are isolated and one act does not buy absolution for another. They are always present before a strangely abstract judgment. We are never a unity, a personality to ourselves. Small acts of years ago are so painful in the memory that often we start at the presence a little below 'the threshold of consciousness' of a thought that remains unknown. It sheds a vague light like that of the moon before it rises, or after its setting. Vanity is so intimately associated with our spiritual identity that whatever hurts it, above all if it came from it, is more painful in the memory than serious sin, and yet I do not think it follows that we are very vain. The harm we do to others is lost in changing events and passes away and so is healed by time, unless it was very great. Looking back I find only one offence which is as painful to me as a hurt to vanity. It was done to a man who died shortly after. Because of his death, it has not been touched by the transforming hand—tolerant Nature has not rescued it from Justice.

VI

I think that all happiness depends on the energy to assume the mask of some other self; that all joyous or creative life is a re-birth as something not oneself, something which has no memory and is created in a moment and perpetually renewed. We put on a grotesque or solemn painted face to hide us from the

terrors of judgment, invent an imaginative Saturnalia where one forgets reality, a game like that of a child, where one loses the infinite pain of self-realisation. Perhaps all the sins and energies of the world are but its flight from an infinite blinding beam.

VII

F—— is learning Gaelic. I would sooner see her in the Gaelic movement than in any Irish movement I can think of. I fear some new absorption in political opinion. Women, because the main event of their lives has been a giving themselves and giving birth, give all to an opinion as if it were some terrible stone doll. Men take up an opinion lightly and are easily false to it, and when faithful keep the habit of many interests. We still see the world, if we are of strong mind and body, with considerate eyes, but to women opinions become as their children or their sweethearts, and the greater their emotional capacity the more do they forget all other things. They grow cruel, as if in defence of lover or child, and all this is done for 'something other than human life'. At last the opinion is so much identified with their nature that it seems a part of their flesh becomes stone and passes out of life. It was a part of F——'s power in the past that though she made this surrender with her mind, she kept the sweetness of her voice and much humour, and yet I am afraid. Women should have their play with dolls finished in childish happiness, for if they play with them again it is amid hatred and malice.

VIII

Women should find in the mask enough joy to forget the doll without regret. There is always a living face behind the mask.

IX

Last night at 'The Theatre of Ireland' I talked to the man next to me. 'I have been to your theatre also', he said. 'I like your popular plays, *The Suburban Groove* and those plays by the Frenchman, I do not remember his name' (evidently Molière), 'but I don't like your mysteries.' I thought he meant something of mine, as the word 'mystery' is a popular reproach since *The Shadowy Waters*, but I found he meant *Kincora*. I said, 'Why do you find that mysterious?' He said, 'O, I know nothing about all that history'. I replied, 'When I was young every Irish Nationalist young man knew as much about King Brian as about Saint Patrick'. He thought I was talking of the peasants and said he was afraid that sort of knowledge was dying out amongst them. He evidently thought it their business alone, like the rath and the blessed well.

X

March 23.

MacDonagh called to-day. Very sad about Ireland. Says that he finds a barrier between himself and the Irish-speaking peasantry, who are 'cold, dark and reticent' and 'too polite'. He watches the Irish-speaking boys at his school, and when nobody is looking, or when they are alone with the Irish-speaking gardener,

they are merry, clever and talkative. When they meet an English speaker or one who has learned Gaelic, they are stupid. They are in a different world. Presently he spoke of his nine years in a monastery and I asked what it was like. 'O', he said, 'everybody is very simple and happy enough. There is a little jealousy sometimes. If one brother goes into a town with a Superior, another brother is jealous.' He then told me that the Bishop of Raphoe had forbidden anybody in his See to contribute to the Gaelic League because its Secretary 'has blasphemed against the holy Adamnan'. The Secretary had said, 'The Bishop is an enemy, like the founder of his See, S. Adamnan, who tried to injure the Gaelic language by writing in Latin'. MacDonagh says, 'Two old countrymen fell out and one said, "I have a brother who will make you behave", meaning the Bishop of Raphoe, and the other said, "I have a son who will put sense into you", meaning Cardinal Logue.'

XI

Molly Allgood came to-day to ask where I would be to-morrow, as Synge wishes to send for me if strong enough. He wants 'to make arrangements'. He is dying. They have ceased to give him food. Should we close the Abbey or keep it open while he still lives? Poor Molly is going through her work as always. Perhaps that is best for her. I feel Synge's coming death less now than when he first became ill. I am used to the thought of it and I do not find that I pity him. I pity her. He is fading out of life. I felt the same when

I saw M—— in the madhouse. I pitied his wife. He seemed already dead. One does not feel that death is evil when one meets it,—evil, I mean, for the one who dies. Our Daimon is silent as was that other before the death of Socrates. The wildest sorrow that comes at the thought of death is, I think, 'Ages will pass over and no one ever again look on that nobleness or that beauty'. What is this but to pity the living and to praise the dead?

XII

March 24.

Synge is dead. In the early morning he said to the nurse, 'It is no use fighting death any longer' and he turned over and died. I called at the hospital this afternoon and asked the assistant matron if he knew he was dying. She answered, 'He may have known it for weeks, but he would not have said so to anyone. He would have no fuss. He was like that.' She added, with emotion in her voice, 'We were devoted to him'.

XIII

March 28.

Mr. Stephens, Synge's brother-in-law, said he suffered no pain but only great weakness. On Sunday he questioned the doctor and convinced himself that he was dying. He told his brother-in-law next day and was quite cheerful, even making jokes. In the evening he saw Molly and told her to be brave and sent her to me that I might arrange about his writings. On the morning when I heard of his death a heavy storm was

blowing and I doubt not when he died that it had well begun. That morning Lady Gregory felt a very great depression and was certain that some evil was coming, but feared for her grandchild, feared it was going to be ill. On the other hand, my sister Lolly said at breakfast, 'I think it will be all right with Synge, for last night I saw a galley struggling with a storm and then it shot into calm and bright sunlight and I heard the keel grate on the shore'. One remembers the voyages to Tir-nan-oge, certainly the voyages of souls after death to their place of peace.

XIV

I have been looking through his poems and have read once more that on page 21, 'I asked if I got sick and died'. Certainly they were there at the funeral, his 'idiot' enemies: A—— who against all regulations rushed up to the dressing-rooms during the *Playboy* riot to tell the actors they should not have played in so disgraceful a play; B—— who has always used his considerable influence with the Company against Synge, and has spoken against him in public; there, too, were the feeble friends who pretended to believe but gave no help. And there was C—— whose obituary notice speaks of Synge's work as only important in promise, of the exaggeration of those who praise it, and then claims that its writer spent many hours a day with Synge in Paris (getting the date wrong by two years, however), with Synge who was proud and lonely, almost as proud of his old blood as of his genius, and

had few friends. There was D——, the Secretary of the Society—it had sent a wreath—whose animosity had much to do with the attacks in *Sinn Fein*. It was, to quote E——, a funeral 'small but select'. A good friend of Synge's quoted to me:

> How shall the ritual then be read,
> The requiem how be sung
> By you, by yours the evil eye,
> By yours the slanderous tongue,
> That did to death the innocence,
> That died, and died so young?

Yet these men came, though but in remorse; they saw his plays, though but to dislike; they spoke his name, though but to slander. Well-to-do Ireland never saw his plays nor spoke his name. Was he ever asked to any country house but Coole? Was he ever asked to a dinner-party? How often I have wished that he might live long enough to enjoy that communion with idle, charming and cultivated women which Balzac in one of his dedications calls 'the chief consolation of genius'!

XV

In Paris Synge once said to me, 'We should unite stoicism, asceticism and ecstasy. Two of them have often come together, but the three never.'

XVI

I believe that some thing I said may have suggested 'I asked if I got sick and died'. S—— had frequently attacked his work while admitting him a man of genius.

He attacked it that he might remain on good terms with the people about him. When Synge was in hospital to be operated upon, S—— was there too as a patient, and I told Synge that whenever I spoke of his illness to any man that man said, 'And isn't it sad about S——?' until I could stand it no longer and burst out with 'I hope he will die', and now, as someone said, I was 'being abused all over the town as without heart'. I had learned that people were calling continually to inquire how S—— was, but hardly anybody called to ask for Synge. Two or three weeks later Synge wrote this poem. Had my words set his mind running on the thought that fools flourish, more especially as I had prophesied that S—— would flourish, and in my mood at the moment it seemed that for S—— to be operated on at the same time with Synge was a kind of insolence? S——'s illness did, indeed, win for him so much sympathy that he came out to lucrative and honourable employment, and now when playing golf he says with the English accent he has acquired of late, to some player who needs a great man's favour, 'I know him well, I will say a word in that quarter'.

The Irish weekly papers notice Synge's death with short and for the most part grudging notices. There was an obscure Gaelic League singer who was a leader of the demonstration against the *Playboy*. He died on the same day. *Sinn Fein* notices both deaths in the same article and gives three-fourths of it to the rioter. For Synge it has but grudging words, as was to be expected.

Molly tells me that Synge went to see Stephen McKenna and his wife before going into hospital and said good-bye with 'You will never see me again'.

XVII

CELEBRATIONS

1. He was one of those unmoved souls in whom there is a perpetual 'Last Day', a perpetual trumpeting and coming up for judgment.

2. He did not speak to men and women, asking judgment, as lesser writers do; but knowing himself part of judgment he was silent.

3. We pity the living and not such dead as he. He has gone upward out of his ailing body into the heroical fountains. We are parched by time.

4. He had the knowledge of his coming death and was cheerful to the end, even joking a little when that end had all but come. He had no need of our sympathies. It was as though we and the things about us died away from him and not he from us.

XVIII

DETRACTIONS

He had that egotism of the man of genius which Nietzsche compares to the egotism of a woman with child. Neither I nor Lady Gregory had ever a compliment from him. After *Hyacinth* Lady Gregory went home the moment the curtain fell, not waiting for the congratulation of friends, to get his supper ready. He

was always ailing and weakly. All he said of the triumphant *Hyacinth* was, 'I expected to like it better'. He had under charming and modest manners, in almost all things of life, a complete absorption in his own dream. I have never heard him praise any writer, living or dead, but some old French farce-writer. For him nothing existed but his thought. He claimed nothing for it aloud. He never said any of those self-confident things I am enraged into saying, but one knew that he valued nothing else. He was too confident for self-assertion. I once said to George Moore, 'Synge has always the better of you, for you have brief but ghastly moments during which you admit the existence of other writers; Synge never has'. I do not think he disliked other writers—they did not exist. One did not think of him as an egotist. He was too sympathetic in the ordinary affairs of life and too simple. In the arts he knew no language but his own.

I have often envied him his absorption as I have envied Verlaine his vice. Can a man of genius make that complete renunciation of the world necessary to the full expression of himself without some vice or some deficiency? You were happy or at least blessed, 'blind old man of Scio's rocky isle'.

XIX

Two plays last night, *Time*, a play of suggestion, *Cross-roads*, a logical play. We accepted this last play because of its central idea, a seeming superstition of its

creator, a promise of a new attitude towards life, of something beyond logic. In the four morning papers *Time* is cursed or ignored and *Cross-roads* given great praise, but praise that is never for the central idea, and the only critic who speaks of that idea misunderstands it completely. State a logical proposition and the most commonplace mind can complete it. Suggestion is richest to the richest and so grows unpopular with a democracy like this. They misunderstood Robinson's idea, luckily for his popularity, and so turned all into commonplace. They allow their minds to dwell so completely on the logic that they do not notice what, as it were, swims upon it or juts up from its river-bed. That is how they combine religion with a journalism which accepts all the implications of materialism. A thought that stirs me in *Time* is that 'only women and great artists love time, others sell it', but what is Blake's 'naked beauty displayed', visible audible wisdom, to the shopkeeping logicians? How can they love time or anything but the day's end?

XX

To-day Molly told me that Synge often spoke of his coming death, indeed constantly for a year past, and tried hard to finish *Deirdre*. Sometimes he would get very despondent, thinking he could not finish it, and then she would act it for him and he would write a little more, and then he would despond again, and so the acting would begin again.

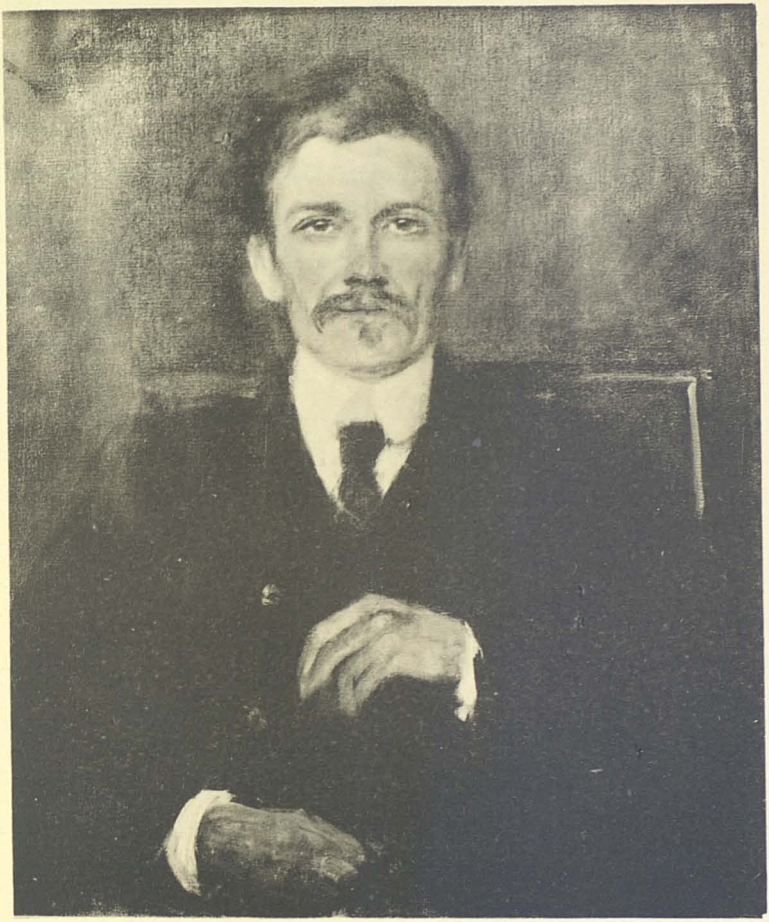
My sister Lily says that the ship Lolly saw on the

night of Synge's death was not like a real ship, but like the *Shadowy Waters* ship on the Abbey stage, a sort of allegorical thing. There was also a girl in a bright dress, but she seemed to vanish as the ship ran ashore; all about the girl, and indeed everything, was broken and confused until the bow touched the shore in bright sunlight.

XXI

I see that between *Time*, suggestion, and *Cross-roads*, logic, lies a difference of civilisation. The literature of suggestion belongs to a social order when life conquered by being itself and the most living was the most powerful, and not to a social order founded upon argument. Leisure, wealth, privilege were created to be a soil for the most living. The literature of logic, the most powerful and the most empty, conquering all in the service of one metallic premise, is for those who have forgotten everything but books and yet have only just learnt to read. They fill their minds with deductions, as they fill their empty houses, where there is nothing of the past, with machine-made furniture. I used to think that the French and Irish democracies follow, as John O'Leary used to say, a logical deduction to its end, no matter what suffering it brings, from a resemblance in the blood. I now believe that they do this because they have broken from the past, from the self-evident truths, from 'naked beauty displayed'. The English logicians may be as ignorant but they are timid.

Robinson should become a celebrated dramatist if this theatre lasts long enough. He does not argue like



John Millington Synge

From the painting by J. B. Yeats, R.H.A.
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the imitators of Ibsen, though his expression of life is as logical, hence his grasp on active passion. Passion is logical when bent on action. In the drama of suggestion there must be sufficient loosening and slackening for meditation and the seemingly irrelevant, or else a Greek chorus, and neither is possible without rich leisurely minds in the audience, lovers of Father Time, men who understand Faust's last cry to the passing moment.

Florence Farr once said to me, 'If we could say to ourselves, with sincerity, "This passing moment is as good as any I shall ever know", we would die upon the instant, or be united to God'. Desire would have ceased, and logic the feet of desire.

XXII

April 5.

Walked home from Gurteen Dhas with D—— and walked through the brick-kilns of Egypt. He states everything in a slightly argumentative form and the soul is starved by the absence of self-evident truth. Good conversation unrolls itself like the spring or like the dawn; whereas effective argument, mere logical statement, founds itself on the set of facts or of experiences common to two or more. Each hides what is new or rich.

XXIII

The element which in men of action corresponds to style in literature is the moral element. Books live almost entirely because of their style, and the men of

action who inspire movements after they are dead are those whose hold upon impersonal emotion and law lifts them out of immediate circumstance. Mitchel wrote better prose than Davis, Mangan better poetry, D'Arcy Magee better popular verse, Fintan Lalor saw deeper into a political event, O'Connell had more power and Meagher more eloquence, but Davis alone has influenced generations of young men, though Mitchel's narrower and more faulty nature has now and again competed with him. Davis showed this moral element not merely in his verse—I doubt if that could have had great effect alone—but in his action, in his defence, for instance, of the rights of his political opponents of the Royal Irish Academy. His verses were but an illustration of principles shown in action. Men are dominated by self-conquest; thought that is a little obvious or platitudinous if merely written, becomes persuasive, immortal even, if held to amid the hurry of events. The self-conquest of the writer who is not a man of action is style.

Mitchel's influence comes mainly, though not altogether, from style, that also a form of power, an energy of life. It is curious that Mitchel's long martyred life, supported by style, has had less force than that of a man who died at thirty, was never in the hulks, did not write very well, and achieved no change of the law.

The act of appreciation of any great thing is an act of self-conquest. This is one reason why we distrust the serene moralist who has not approved his principles in some crisis. He would be troubled, broken

even, if he had made that conquest. Yet the man who has proved himself in a crisis may be serene in words, for his battle was not in contemplation where words are combatants.

XXIV

Last night my sister told me that this book of Synge's (his poems) was the only book they began to print on a Friday. They tried to avoid this but could not, and it is not at all well printed. Do all they could, it would not come right.

XXV

Molly Allgood has just told me of three pre-visions. Some years ago, when the Company were in England on that six weeks' tour, she, Synge and D—— were sitting in a tea-shop, she was looking at Synge, and suddenly the flesh seemed to fall from his face and she saw but a skull. She told him this and it gave him a great shock, and since then she had not allowed images to form before her eyes of themselves, as they often used to do. Synge was well at the time. Again last year, but before the operation and at a time when she had no fear, she dreamed that she saw him in a coffin being lowered into a grave, and a 'strange sort of cross' was laid over the coffin. (The Company sent a cross of flowers to his funeral and it was laid upon the grave.) She told this also to Synge and he was troubled by it. Then some time after the operation she dreamed that she saw him in a boat. She was on the shore, and he

waved his hand to her and the boat went away. She longed to go to him but could not.

XXVI

March 11,
STRATFORD-ON-AVON.

Some weeks ago C—— wrote to me that it was a phase of M——'s madness to believe himself in heaven. All the great poets of other times were there, and he was helping to prepare for the reception of Swinburne. The angels were to stand in groups of three. And now I have just heard that Swinburne is dead.

XXVII

Dined with Ricketts and Shannon. Ricketts spoke of the grief Synge's death gave him—the ending of all that work. We talked of the disordered and broken lives of modern men of genius and the so different lives of the Italian painters. He said in those days men of genius were cared for, but now the strain of life is too heavy, no one thinks of them till some misfortune comes—madness or death. He then spoke, as he often does, of the lack of any necessary place for the arts in modern life and said, 'After all, the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel was the Pope's ceiling'. Later he said in comment upon some irascible act of Hugh Lane's, 'Everybody who is doing anything for the world is very disagreeable, the agreeable people are those for whom the world is doing something'.

XXVIII

Our modern public arts, architecture, plays, large decorations, have too many different tastes to please. Some taste is sure to dislike and to speak its dislike everywhere, and then because of the silence of the rest—partly from apathy, partly from dislike of controversy, partly from the difficulty of defence, as compared with the ease of attack—there is general timidity. All creation requires one mind to make and one mind of enjoyment. The theatre can at rare moments create this one mind of enjoyment, and once created, it is like the mind of an individual in solitude, immeasurably bold—all is possible to it. The only building received with enthusiasm during my time has been the Catholic Cathedral of Westminster—religion or the politics of religion created that one mind.

XXIX

I asked Molly if any words of hers made Synge write 'I asked if I got sick and died' and she said, 'He used often to joke about death with me and one day he said, "Will you go to my funeral?" and I said, "No, for I could not bear to see you dead and the others living." '

XXX

Went to S——'s the other night—everybody either too tall or too short, crooked or lop-sided. One woman had an excited voice, an intellect without self-possession, and there was a man with a look of a wood-kern,

who kept bringing the conversation back and back to Synge's wrong-doing in having made a girl in *The Playboy* admire a man who had hamstrung 'mountain ewes'. He saw nothing else to object to but that one thing. He declared that the English would not give Home Rule because they thought Ireland cruel, and no Irishman should write a sentence to make them go on thinking that. There arose before my mind an image of this man arguing about Ireland with an endless procession of second-rate men. At last I said, 'When a country produces a man of genius he never is what it wants or believes it wants; he is always unlike its idea of itself. In the eighteenth century Scotland believed itself religious, moral and gloomy, and its national poet Burns came not to speak of these things but to speak of lust and drink and drunken gaiety. Ireland, since the Young Irelanders, has given itself up to apologetics. Every impression of life or impulse of imagination has been examined to see if it helped or hurt the glory of Ireland or the political claim of Ireland. A sincere impression of life became at last impossible, all was apologetics. There was no longer an impartial imagination, delighting in whatever is naturally exciting. Synge was the rushing up of the buried fire, an explosion of all that had been denied or refused, a furious impartiality, an indifferent turbulent sorrow. His work, like that of Burns, was to say all the people did not want to have said. He was able to do this because Nature had made him incapable of a political idea.' The wood-kern made no answer, did not understand a word I said, perhaps; but for the rest of the

evening he kept saying to this person or to that person that he objected to nothing but the passage about the 'mountain ewes'.

XXXI

July 8.

I dreamed this thought two nights ago: 'Why should we complain if men ill-treat our Muses, when all that they gave to Helen while she still lived was a song and a jest?'

XXXII

September 20.

An idle man has no thought, a man's work thinks through him. On the other hand a woman gets her thought through the influence of a man. A man is to her what work is to a man. Man is a woman to his work and it begets his thoughts.

XXXIII

The old playwrights took old subjects, did not even arrange the subject in a new way. They were absorbed in expression, that is to say in what is most near and delicate. The new playwrights invent their subjects and dislike anything customary in the arrangement of the fable, but their expression is as common as the newspapers where they first learned to write.

XXXIV

October.

I saw *Hamlet* on Saturday night, except for the chief 'Ophelia' scenes, and missed these (for I had to be in

the Abbey) without regret. Their pathos, as they are played, has always left me cold. I came back for Hamlet at the graveside: there my delight always begins anew. I feel in *Hamlet*, as so often in Shakespeare, that I am in the presence of a soul lingering on the storm-beaten threshold of sanctity. Has not that threshold always been terrible, even crime-haunted? Surely Shakespeare, in those last seeming idle years, was no quiet country gentleman, enjoying, as men like Dowden think, the temporal reward of an unvalued toil. Perhaps he sought for wisdom in itself at last, and not in its passionate shadows. Maybe he had passed the threshold, and none the less for Jonson's drinking bout. Certainly one finds here and there in his work praise of country leisure sweetened by wisdom.

XXXV

Am I going against nature in my constant attempt to fill my life with work? Is my mind as rich as in idle days? Is not perhaps the poet's labour a mere rejection? If he seek purity—the ridding of his life of all but poetry—will not inspiration come? Can one reach God by toil? He gives Himself to the pure in heart. He asks nothing but attention.

XXXVI

I have been looking at Venetian costumes of the sixteenth century as pictured in *The Mask*—all fantastic; bodily form hidden or disguised; the women

with long bodices, the men in stuffed doublets. Life had become so learned and courtly that men and women dressed with no thought of bodily activity. If they still fought and hunted, their imagination was not with these things. Does not the same happen to our passions when we grow contemplative and so liberate them from use? They also become fantastic and create the strange lives of poets and artists.

XXXVII *December* 15.

Deirdre of the Sorrows (first performances). I was anxious about this play and on Thursday both Lady Gregory and I felt the strain of our doubts and fears. Would it seem mere disjointed monotony? Would the second act be intelligible? The audience seemed to like it, and I was greatly moved by certain passages in the last act. I thought the quarrel at the graveside with its last phrase, 'And isn't it a poor thing we should miss the safety of the grave, and we trampling its edge?' and Deirdre's cry to the quarrelling Kings, 'Draw a little back with the squabbling of fools', as noble and profound drama as any man has written. On the first night the thought that it was Synge's reverie over death, his own death, made all poignant. 'The filth of the grave', 'death is a poor, untidy thing, though it's a queen that dies', and the like, brought him dying before me. I remembered his extreme gentleness in the last weeks, that air of being done with ambition and conflict. Last night the audience was small—under ten pounds—and less alive than the first night. No one

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spoke of the great passages. Someone thought the quarrel in the last act too harsh. Others picked out those rough peasant words that give salt to his speech, as 'of course adding nothing to the dialogue, and very ugly'. Others objected to the little things in the costuming of the play which were intended to echo these words, to vary the heroic convention with something homely or of the fields. Then as I watched the acting I saw that O'Donovan and Molly (Maire O'Neill) were as passionless as the rest. Molly had personal charm, pathos, distinction even, fancy, beauty, but never passion—never intensity; nothing out of a brooding mind. All was but observation, curiosity, desire to please. Her foot never touched the unchanging rock, the secret place beyond life; her talent showed like that of the others, social, modern, a faculty of comedy. Pathos she has, the nearest to tragedy the comedian can come, for that is conscious of our presence and would have our pity. Passion she has not, for that looks beyond mankind and asks no pity, not even of God. It realises, substantiates, attains, scorns, governs, and is most mighty when it passes from our sight.

XXXVIII

December 16.

Last night Molly had so much improved that I thought she may have tragic power. The lack of power and of clarity which I still find amid great charm and distinction, comes more from lack of construction, through lack of reflection and experience, than from mere lack of emotion. There are passages where she

attempts nothing, or where she allows herself little external comedy impulses, more, I now think, because they are habitual than because she could not bring emotion out of herself. The chief failure is towards the end. She does not show immediately after the death of Naisi enough sense of what has happened, enough normal despair to permit of a gradual development into the wild unearthly feeling of the last speeches, though these last speeches are exquisitely spoken. My unfavourable impression of Friday came in part from the audience, which was heavy and, I thought, bored. Yesterday the audience—the pit entirely full—was enthusiastic and moved, raising once again my hope for the theatre and for the movement.

XXXIX

May 25.

At Stratford-on-Avon *The Playboy* shocked a good many people, because it was a self-improving, self-educating audience, and that means a perverted and commonplace audience. If you set out to educate yourself you are compelled to have an ideal, a model of what you would be; and if you are not a man of genius, your model will be commonplace and prevent the natural impulses of the mind, its natural reverence, desire, hope, admiration, always half unconscious, almost bodily. That is why a simple round of religious duties, things that escape the intellect, is often so much better than its substitute, self-improvement.

XL

September 18,
S.S. 'ZEELAND'

I noticed in the train, as I came to Queenstown, a silent, fairly well-dressed man, who struck me as vulgar. It was not his face, which was quite normal, but his movements. He moved from his head only. His arm and hand, let us say, moved in direct obedience to the head, had not the instinctive motion that comes from a feeling of weight, of the shape of an object to be touched or grasped. There were too many straight lines in gesture and in pose. The result was an impression of vulgar smartness, a defiance of what is profound and old and simple. I have noticed that beginners sometimes move this way on the stage. They, if told to pick up something, show by the movement of their body that their idea of doing it is more vivid than the doing of it. One gets an impression of thinness in the nature. I am watching Miss V—— to find out if her inanimate movements when on the stage come from lack of experience or if she has them in life. I watched her sinking into a chair the other day to see if her body felt the size and shape of the chair before she reached it. If her body does not so feel she will never be able to act, just as she will never have grace of movement in ordinary life. As I write I see through the cabin door a woman feeding a child with a spoon. She thinks of nothing but the child, and every movement is full of expression. It would be beautiful acting. Upon the other hand her talk—she is talking to someone next her—in which she is not interested, is mono-

tonous and thin in cadence. It is a mere purpose in the brain, made necessary by politeness.

XLI

October.

A good writer should be so simple that he has no faults, only sins.

THE BOUNTY OF SWEDEN

1925

THE BOUNTY OF SWEDEN

I

THIRTY YEARS AGO I visited Paris for the first time. The Cabbalist Macgregor Mathers said, 'Write your impressions at once, for you will never see Paris clearly again'. I can remember that I had pleased him by certain deductions from the way a woman at the other end of the café moved her hands over the dominoes. I might have seen that woman in London or in Dublin, but it would not have occurred to me to discover in her every kind of rapacity, the substance of the legendary harpy. 'Is not style', as Synge once said to me, 'born out of the shock of new material?'

I am about to write, as in a kind of diary, impressions of Stockholm which must get whatever value they have from excitement, from the presence before the eyes of what is strange, mobile and disconnected.

II

Early in November a journalist called to show me a printed paragraph saying that the Nobel Prize would probably be conferred upon Herr Mann, the distinguished novelist, or upon myself. I did not know that the Swedish Academy had ever heard my name; tried to escape an interview by talking of Rabindranath Tagore, of his gift to his School of the seven thousand pounds awarded him; almost succeeded in dismissing the whole

Reuter paragraph from my memory. Herr Mann has many readers, is a famous novelist with his fixed place in the world, and, said I to myself, well fitted for such an honour; whereas I am but a writer of plays which are acted by players with a literary mind for a few evenings, and I have altered them so many times that I doubt the value of every passage. I am more confident of my lyrics, or of some few amongst them, but then I have got into the habit of recommending or commending myself to general company for anything rather than my gift of lyric writing, which concerns such a meagre troop.

Every now and then, when something has stirred my imagination, I begin talking to myself. I speak in my own person and dramatise myself, very much as I have seen a mad old woman do upon the Dublin quays, and sometimes detect myself speaking and moving as if I were still young, or walking perhaps like an old man with fumbling steps. Occasionally, I write out what I have said in verse, and generally for no better reason than because I remember that I have written no verse for a long time. I do not think of my soliloquies as having different literary qualities. They stir my interest, by their appropriateness to the men I imagine myself to be, or by their accurate description of some emotional circumstance, more than by any aesthetic value. When I begin to write I have no object but to find for them some natural speech, rhythm and syntax, and to set it out in some pattern, so seeming old that it may seem all men's speech, and though the labour is very great, I

seem to have used no faculty peculiar to myself, certainly no special gift. I print the poem and never hear about it again, until I find the book years after with a page dog-eared by some young man, or marked by some young girl with a violet, and when I have seen that, I am a little ashamed, as though somebody were to attribute to me a delicacy of feeling I should but do not possess. What came so easily at first, and amidst so much drama, and was written so laboriously at the last, cannot be counted among my possessions.

On the other hand, if I give a successful lecture, or write a vigorous, critical essay, there is immediate effect; I am confident that on some one point, which seems to me of great importance, I know more than other men, and I covet honour.

III

Then some eight days later, between ten and eleven at night, comes a telephone message from the *Irish Times* saying that the prize has indeed been conferred upon me; and some ten minutes after that comes a telegram from the Swedish Ambassador; then journalists come for interviews. At half past twelve my wife and I are alone, and search the cellar for a bottle of wine, but it is empty, and as a celebration is necessary we cook sausages. A couple of days pass and a letter from the Ambassador invites me to receive the prize at Stockholm, but a letter from the Swedish Academy offers to send medal, money, and diploma to Dublin.

I question booksellers in vain for some history of

Sweden, or of Swedish literature. Even Gosse's *Studies in the Literature of Northern Europe*, which I read twenty years ago, is out of print, and among my own books there is nothing but the life of Swedenborg, which contains photographs of Swedenborg's garden and garden-house, and of the Stockholm House of Nobles, built in Dutch style, and beautiful, with an ornament that never insists upon itself, and a dignity that has no pomp. It had housed in Swedenborg's day that Upper Chamber of the Swedish Parliament where he had voted and spoken upon finance, after the ennoblement of his family.

IV

My wife and I leave Harwich for Esbjerg in Denmark, on the night of December 6, and find our alarms were needless, for the sea is still and the air warm. The Danish steamboat is about the size of the Dublin-Holyhead mail-boat, but the cabins are panelled in pale birchwood, and when we sit down to supper, the table is covered by an astonishing variety of cold food, most of which we refuse because we do not recognise it, and some, such as eels in jelly, because we do. Our companions are commercial travellers and presently we are recognised, for somebody has a newspaper with my portrait, and a man, who has travelled in Ireland for an exporter of Danish agricultural machinery, talks to us at dinner. He was in Munster for the first part of our Civil War, and when the trains were stopped had found himself in great difficulties, and during parts of his journey had moved at breakneck speed, that his

motor might escape capture by the Insurgents, but our Civil War was no part of his business, and had not stirred his imagination. He had, however, discovered a defect in Irish agriculture that was very much a part. Through lack of warm winter sheds and proper winter food for cattle, the Irish farmers had no winter butter, and so Ireland must import butter from his country. Though, as he said, against Danish interests, he had pointed this out to Irish farmers. 'But you have a Government', they said, 'which looks after these things', and this time he became really excited—'Put that idea out of your head', I told them. 'It was we ourselves who looked after these things, our Government has nothing to do with it.'

He asks why the Irish have so little self-reliance, and want the Government to do everything, and I say, 'Were the Danes always self-reliant?' and after a moment's thought, he answers, 'Not till the Bishop established his Schools; we owe everything to his High Schools'. I know something of Bishop Grundtvig and his Schools, for I often hear A. E. or some other at Plunkett House tell how he educated Denmark, by making examinations almost nothing and the personality of the teacher almost everything, and rousing the imagination with Danish literature and history. 'What our peasants need', he had said, 'is not technical training, but mental.'

As we draw near our journey's end, an elderly Swede comes to say 'good-bye', and kisses my wife's hand, bending very low, and the moment he is out of ear-

shot, the Danish commercial traveller says with a disgusted voice, 'No Dane would do that. The Swedes are always imitating the French.'

I see that he does not like Swedes, and I ask what he thinks of Norwegians. 'Rough', he says, 'and they want everything, they want Greenland now.'

V

At Esbjerg I find a young man, a distinguished Danish poet sent by a Copenhagen newspaper, and he and I and my wife dine together. At Copenhagen journalists meet us at the railway station, and others at the hotel, and when I am asked about Ireland I answer always that if the British Empire becomes a voluntary Federation of Free Nations, all will be well, but if it remains as in the past, a domination of one, the Irish question is not settled. That done with, I can talk of the work of my generation in Ireland, the creation of a literature to express national character and feeling but with no deliberate political aim. A journalist who has lived in Finland says, 'Finland has had to struggle with Russian influence to preserve its national culture'. I ask many questions and one journalist says, 'O—Denmark is well educated, and education can reach everybody, as education cannot in big nations like England and America', and he goes on to say that in Denmark 'you may dine at some professor's house, and find that you are sitting next your housemaid, who is among his favourite pupils, and next morning she will be your housemaid again, and too well educated

to presume, or step out of her place'. Another, however, a very distinguished man, will have it that it is 'all wrong, for people who should hardly know what a book is now read books, and even write them. The High Schools have made the intellect of Denmark sentimental.' A little later on he says, 'We may have a Socialist Government one of these days', and I begin to wonder what Denmark will make of that mechanical eighteenth-century dream; we know what half-mediaeval Russia has made of it. Another Dane speaks of the Danish Royal Family as 'bourgeois and sporting, like the English'; but says, when I ask about the Royal Family of Sweden, 'O—such educated and intelligent people'. It is he, I think, who first tells me of Prince Eugene, friend and patron of Swedish artists, and himself an accomplished painter who has helped to decorate the Stockholm Town Hall, 'beginning every day at nine o'clock, and working all day like the rest, and for two years', and how at the opening ceremony he had not stood among the Royal Family, 'but among the artists and workmen', and that it was he who saw to it 'that every artist was given freedom to create as he would'. Another spoke much of Strindberg, and though he called him the 'Shakespeare of Sweden', seemed to approve the Swedish Academy's refusal of recognition; 'they could not endure his quarrels with his friends nor the book about his first wife'.

A train-ferry brings us across some eighteen miles of sea, and so into Sweden, and while we are waiting for the train to start again, I see through a carriage

window many faces, but it is only just as the train starts, when a Swedish interviewer says—for there are interviewers here also—'Did you not see all those people gazing at the Nobel Prize winner?', that I connect those faces with myself.

Away from the lights of the station it is too dark to see anything, but when the dawn breaks, we are passing through a forest.

VI

At the Stockholm station a man introduces himself, and reminds me that I met him in Paris thirty years ago, and asks me to read a pamphlet which he has written in English upon Strindberg, and especially a chapter called 'Strindberg and the Wolves'. The pamphlet comes to the hotel a couple of hours later, and turns out to be an attack upon the Swedish Academy, and an ardent defence of Strindberg. That outrageous, powerful book about his first wife is excused on the ground that it was not written for publication, and was published by an accident. And somebody once met Strindberg in a museum, dressed up according to the taste of one or other of his wives, 'with cuffs upon his pantaloons', by which the pamphlet meant, I imagine, that like 'Mr. Prufrock' he wore 'the bottoms of his trousers rolled.' I had met its writer in the rooms of an American artist, who was of Strindberg's Paris circle, and it was probably there that I had heard for the first time of stage scenery that might decorate a stage, and suggest a scene while attempting nothing that an easel painting can do better. I am pleased to imagine

that the news of it may have come from Strindberg, whom I seem to remember as big and silent. I have always felt a sympathy for that tortured self-torturing man who offered himself to his own soul as Buddha offered himself to the famished tiger. He and his circle were preoccupied with the deepest problems of mankind. He himself, at the time I speak of, was seeking with furnace and athanor for the philosopher's stone.

At my hotel, I find a letter from another of that circle, whom I remember as a fair girl like a willow, beginning with this sentence—'God's blessing be upon your wife and upon yourself through the many holy men and women of this land'.

VII

The diplomas and medals are to be given us by the King at five in the afternoon of December 10th.

The American Ambassador, who is to receive those for an American man of science, unable to be present, and half a dozen men of various nations sit upon the platform. In the body of the Hall every seat is full, and all there are in evening dress, and in the front row are the King, Princess Ingeborg, wife of the King's brother, Prince Wilhelm, Princess Margaretha, and I think another Royalty. The President of the Swedish Academy speaks in English, and I see from the way he stands, from his self-possession, and from his rhythmical utterance, that he is an experienced orator. I study the face of the old King, intelligent and friendly, like some country gentleman who can quote Horace and Catullus,

and the face of the Princess Margaretha, full of subtle beauty, emotional and precise, and impassive with a still intensity suggesting that final consummate strength which rounds the spiral of a shell. One finds a similar beauty in wooden busts taken from Egyptian tombs of the Eighteenth Dynasty, and not again till Gainsborough paints. Is it very ancient and very modern alone or did painters and sculptors cease to notice it until our day?

The Ambassador goes towards the King, descends from the platform by some five or six steps, which end a yard from the King's feet, and having received the diploma and medal, ascends those five or six steps walking backward. He does not go completely backward, but sideways, and seems to show great practice. Then there is music, and a man of science repeats the movement, imitating the Ambassador exactly and easily, for he is young and agile, and then more music, and two men of science go down the steps, side by side, for they have made discoveries that are related to one another, and the prize is divided between them. As it would be impossible for two men to go up backward, side by side, without much practice, one repeats the slanting movement, and the other turns his back on Royalty. Then the British Ambassador receives diploma and medal for two Canadians, but as he came from the body of the hall he has no steps to go up and down. Then more music and my turn comes. When the King has given me my diploma and medal and said, 'I thank you for coming yourself', and I have bowed my thanks, I glance for a moment at the face of the Princess Mar-

garetha, and move backward towards the stair. As I am about to step sideways like the others, I notice that the carpet is not nailed down, and this suddenly concentrates my attention upon the parallel lines made by the two edges of the carpet, and, as though I were hypnotised, I feel that I must move between them, and so straight up backward without any sidelong movement. It seems to me that I am a long time reaching the top, and as the cheering grows much louder when I get there, I must have roused the sympathy of the audience. All is over, and I am able to examine my medal, its charming, decorative, academic design, French in manner, a work of the 'nineties. It shows a young man listening to a Muse, who stands young and beautiful with a great lyre in her hand, and I think as I examine it, 'I was good-looking once like that young man, but my unpractised verse was full of infirmity, my Muse old as it were; and now I am old and rheumatic, and nothing to look at, but my Muse is young. I am even persuaded that she is like those Angels in Swedenborg's vision, and moves perpetually "towards the day-spring of her youth".' At night there is a banquet, and when my turn comes, I speak of Swedenborg, Strindberg, and Ibsen. Then a very beautiful, stately woman introduces herself with this sentence, spoken slowly as though English were unfamiliar, 'What is this new religion they are making up in Paris that is all about the dead?' I wonder who has told her that I know anything of psychical research, for it must be of that she speaks, and I tell her of my own studies. We are going to change the thought of the world, I

say, to bring it back to all its old truths, but I dread the future. Think what the people have made of the political thought of the eighteenth century, and now we must offer them a new fanaticism. Then I stop ashamed, for I am talking habitual thoughts, and not adapting them to her ear, forgetting beauty in the pursuit of truth, and I wonder if age has made my mind rigid and heavy. I deliberately falter as though I could think of nothing more to say, that she may pass upon her smiling road.

VIII

Next day is the entrance of the new Crown Princess, and my wife and I watch it, now from the hotel window, now from the quayside. Stockholm is almost as much channelled by the sea as Venice; and with an architecture as impressive as that of Paris, or of London, it has the better even of Paris in situation. It seems to shelter itself under the walls of a great Palace, begun at the end of the seventeenth century. We come very slowly to realise that this building may deserve its great architectural reputation. The windows, the details of the ornaments, are in a style that has spread everywhere, and I cannot escape from memories of houses at Queen's Gate, and even, it may be, from that of the Ulster Bank at Sligo, which I have hardly seen since my childhood. Was it not indeed a glory and shame of that architecture that we have been able to combine its elements in all sorts of ways and for all sorts of purposes, as if they had come out of a child's box of wooden bricks? Among all these irrelevant as-

sociations, however, I discover at last a vast, dominating, unconfused outline, a masterful simplicity. The Palace is at the other side of the river, and away towards our left runs the river bordered by tall buildings, and above the roofs of the houses, towards our right, rises the tower of the new Town Hall, the glittering pole upon its top sustaining the three crowns of the Swedish Arms. Copenhagen is an anarchy of commercial streets, with fine buildings here and there, but here all seems premeditated and arranged.

Everywhere there are poles with flags, and at the moment when the Crown Prince and Princess leave the railway station for the Palace, the salvos of artillery begin. After every salvo there are echoes, and I feel a quickening of the pulse, an instinctive alarm. I remember firing in Dublin last winter, the sudden noise that drew like echoes from the streets. I have to remind myself that these cannon are fired out of gaiety and good-will. There are great crowds, and I get the impression of a family surrounded by loyalty and affection.

IX

The next night there is a reception at the Palace, and the Nobel Prize winners are among the guests. We wait in a long gallery for our turn to enter the throne-room, and upon the black coats of the civilians, as upon the grey and silver of the Guards, lie the chains of the three Swedish Orders. Among the black-coated men are men of learning, men of letters, men of science,

much of the intellect of Sweden. What model has made all this, one wonders: Goethe's Weimar, or Sweden's own eighteenth-century courts? There may be, must be, faults of commission or omission, but where else could a like assembly be gathered? I who have never seen a court, find myself before the evening is ended moved as if by some religious ceremony, though to a different end, for here it is Life herself that is praised. Presently we walk through lines of sentries, in the costume of Charles XII., the last of Sweden's great military Kings, and then bow as we pass rapidly before the tall seated figures of the Royal Family. They seem to be like stage royalties. Just such handsome men and women would have been chosen by a London manager staging, let us say, some dramatised version of *The Prisoner of Zenda.* One has a general impression of youthful distinction, even the tall, slight figure of the old King seems young. Then we pass from the throne-room into a vast hall hung with Gobelin tapestries, which seem in the distance to represent scenes like those in a Watteau or in a Fragonard. Their green colour by contrast turns the marble pillars above into a dusky silver. At the end of the hall musicians are sitting in a high marble gallery, and in the side galleries are women in white dresses, many very young and handsome. Others upon the level of the floor sit grouped together, making patches of white among the brilliant uniforms and the black coats. We are shepherded to our places, and the musicians play much Swedish music, which I cannot describe, for I know nothing of music. During our first long wait all kinds of pictures

had passed before me in reverie and now my imagination renews its excitement. I had thought how we Irish had served famous men and famous families, and had been, so long as our nation had intellect enough to shape anything of itself, good lovers of women, but had never served any abstract cause, except the one, and that we personified by a woman, and I wondered if the service of woman could be so different from that of a court. I had thought how, before the emigration of our poor began, our gentlemen had gone all over Europe, offering their swords at every court, and that many had stood, just as I, but with an anxiety I could but imagine, for their future hung upon a frown or a smile. I had run through old family fables and histories, to find if any man of my blood had so stood, and had thought that there were men living, meant by nature for that vicissitude, who had served a woman through all folly, because they had found no court to serve. Then my memory had gone back twenty years to that summer when a friend read out to me at the end of each day's work Castiglione's commendations and descriptions of that court of Urbino where youth for certain brief years imposed upon drowsy learning the discipline of its joy, and I remembered a cry of Bembo's made years after, 'Would that I were a shepherd that I might look down daily upon Urbino'. I had repeated to myself what I could remember of Ben Jonson's address to the court of his time, 'Thou art a beautiful and brave spring and waterest all the noble plants of this Island. In thee the whole Kingdom dresseth itself and is ambitious to use thee as her glass. Beware then

thou render men's figures truly and teach them no less to hate their deformities, than to love their forms. . . . Thy servant but not slave, Ben Jonson.'

And now I begin to imagine some equivalent gathering to that about me, called together by the heads of some State where every democratic dream had been fulfilled, and where all men had started level and only merit, acknowledged by all the people, ruled. The majority so gathered, certainly all who had supreme authority, would have reached that age when an English novelist becomes eligible for the Order of Merit. Times of disturbance might indeed carry into power some man of comparative youth, of fifty or sixty years perhaps, but I think of normal times. Here and there one would notice sons and daughters, perhaps even the more dutiful grandsons and granddaughters, but in the eyes of those, though not in their conversation, an acute observer might discover disquiet and a restless longing for the moment when they could slip away to some night-club's compensating anarchy. In the conversation of old and young there would be much sarcasm, great numbers of those tales which we all tell to one another's disadvantage. For all men would display to others' envy the trophies won in their life of struggle.

Then suddenly my thought runs off to that old Gaelic poem made by the nuns of Iona. A Swedish or Danish ship had been cast upon the rocks, and all royalties on board had perished, but one baby. The nuns mothered the baby, and their cradle-song, famous for generations after, repeated over and over, praising

in symbol every great man's child—every tested long-enduring stock—'Daughter of a Queen, granddaughter of a Queen, great-grand-daughter of a Queen, great-great-grand-daughter of a Queen'. Nature, always extravagant, scattering much to find a little, has found no means but hereditary honour to sustain the courage of those who stand waiting for the signal, cowed by the honour and authority of those who lie wearily at the goal. Perhaps, indeed, she created the family with no other object, and may even now mock in her secret way our new ideals—the equality of man, equality of rights,—meditating some wholly different end. Certainly her old arrangements, in all pursuits that gain from youth's recurring sway, or from its training in earliest childhood, surpassed what begins to be a world of old men. The politic Tudor kings and the masterful descendants of Gustavus Vasa were as able as the American presidents, and better educated, and the artistic genius of old Japan continually renewed itself through dynasties of painters. The descendants of Kanoka made all that was greatest in the art of their country from the ninth to the eleventh century, and then it but passed to other dynasties, in whom, as Mr. Binyon says, 'the flower of genius was being continually renewed and revived in the course of many generations'. How serene their art, no exasperation, no academic tyranny, its tradition as naturally observed as the laws of a game or dance. Nor has our individualistic age wholly triumphed in Japan even yet, for it is a few years since a famous player published in his programme his genealogy, running back

through famous players, to some player of the Middle Ages; and one day in the British Museum Print Room, I saw a Japanese at a great table judging Chinese and Japanese pictures. 'He is one of the greatest living authorities', I was told, 'the Mikado's hereditary connoisseur, the fourteenth of his family to hold the post.' May it not have been possible that the use of the mask in acting, and the omission from painting of the cast shadow, by making observation and experience of life less important, and imagination and tradition more, made the arts transmittable and teachable? But my thoughts have carried me far away.

X

Near me stands a man who is moved also by the spectacle of the court, but to a Jacobin frenzy, Swede, Englishman, American, German, what does it matter, seeing that his frenzy is international. I had spoken to him earlier in the day and found him a friendly, even perhaps a cultivated man, and certainly not the kind of man who is deliberately rude; but now, he imagines that an attempt has been made to impose upon him. He speaks his thoughts aloud, silenced occasionally by the music, but persistent in the intervals. While waiting to enter the throne-room, he had been anxious to demonstrate that he was there by accident, drifting irresponsibly, no way implicated, as it were, and having accomplished this demonstration by singing a little catch, 'I'm here because I'm here', had commented abundantly upon all he saw: 'The smaller the nation,

the grander the uniform.' 'Well—they never got those decorations in war', and so on. He was certain that the breastplates of the sentries were made of tin, but added with a meditative voice, as though anxious to be fair, 'The breastplates of the English Horse Guards are also made of tin'.

As we came through the throne-room, I had heard him say, 'One of the royalties smiled, they consider us as ridiculous', and I had commented, entangled in my dream, 'We are ridiculous, we are the learned at whom the little boys laugh in the streets'. And now when, at a pause in the music, the Queen passes down the great hall, pages holding her train, he says in the same loud voice as before, 'Well, a man has not to suffer that indignity', and then upbraids all forms of ceremony, and repeats an incident of his school life to demonstrate his distaste for Bishops.

As I leave the Palace, a man wearing orders stops for a moment to say, 'I am the Headmaster of a big school, I was the Prince's tutor, and I am his friend'.

XI

For the next two or three days we visit picture galleries, the gallery of the National Museum, that of Prince Eugene, that of Baron Thiel. At the National Museum pictures have been taken down and lean against the wall, that they may be sent to London for an exhibition of Swedish art. Someone, exaggerating the influence in London of the Nobel Prize winner, asks me to write something to get people to go and

see it, and I half promise, but feel that I have not the necessary knowledge. I know something of the French Impressionism that gave their painters their first impulse, but almost nothing of German or Austrian, and I have seen that of Sweden for the first time. At a first glance Impressionism seems everywhere the same, with differences of power but not of sight or mind, and one has to live with it and make many comparisons, I think, to write more than a few sentences. The great myth-makers and mask-makers, the men of aristocratic mind, Blake, Ingres in the 'Perseus', Puvis de Chavannes, Rossetti before 1870, Watts when least a moralist, Gustave Moreau at all times, Calvert in the woodcuts, the Charles Ricketts of 'The Danaides', and of the earlier illustrations of *The Sphinx*, have imitators, but create no universal language. Administrators of tradition, they seem to copy everything, but in reality copy nothing, and not one of them can be mistaken for another, but Impressionism's gift to the world was precisely that it gave, at a moment when all seemed sunk in convention, a method as adaptable as that box of architectural Renaissance bricks. It has suddenly taught us to see and feel, as everybody that wills can see and feel, all those things that are as wholesome as rain and sunlight, to take into our hearts with an almost mystical emotion whatsoever happens without forethought or premeditation. It is not, I think, any accident that their art has coincided everywhere with a new sympathy for crowds, for the poor and the unfortunate. Certainly it arrived in these Scandinavian countries just at the moment when an

intellectual awaking of the whole people was beginning, for I always read, or am told, that whatever I inquire about began with the 'eighties, or was the outcome of some movement of that time.

When I try to define what separates Swedish Impressionism from French, I notice that it has a stronger feeling for particular places. Monet will paint a group of trees by a pond in every possible light, changing his canvas every twenty minutes, and only returning to a canvas when the next day's clock brings up the same light, but then it is precisely the light that interests him, and interests the buyers of those almost scientific studies. Nobody will buy because it is a pond under his window, or that he passed in his boyhood on his way to school. I noticed in some house where I lunched two pictures of the Stockholm river, painted in different lights by Eugene Janson, and in the National Museum yet another with a third effect of light, but much as the light pleased his imagination, one feels that he cared very much for the fact before him, that he was never able to forget for long that he painted a well-loved, familiar scene. I am constantly reminded of my brother, who continually paints from memory the people and houses of the village where he lived as a child; but the people of Rosses will never care about his pictures, and these painters paint for all educated Stockholm. They have found an emotion held in common, and are no longer, like the rest of us, solitary spectators. I get the impression that their work rouses a more general interest than that of other painters, is less confined to small groups of connoisseurs; I notice in the book-

sellers' shops that there seems to be some little paper-covered pamphlet, full of illustrations, for every notable painter of the school, dead or living, and the people I meet ask constantly what I think of this painter or that other, or somebody will say, 'This is the golden age of painting'. When I myself try to recall what I have seen, I remember most clearly a picture of a white horse on the seashore, with its tints separated by little lines, that give it a general effect of mosaic, and certain portraits by Ernst Josephson, which prove that their painter was entirely preoccupied with the personality of the sitter, light, colour, design, all subordinate to that. An English portrait-painter is sometimes so preoccupied with the light that one feels he would have had equal pleasure in painting a bottle and an apple. But a preference after so brief a visit may be capricious, having some accidental origin.

XII

On Thursday I give my official lecture to the Swedish Royal Academy. I have chosen 'The Irish Theatre' for my subject, that I may commend all those workers, obscure or well-known, to whom I owe much of whatever fame in the world I may possess. If I had been a lyric poet only, if I had not become through this theatre the representative of a public movement, I doubt if the English committees would have placed my name upon that list from which the Swedish Academy selects its prize-winner. They would not have acknowledged a thought so irrelevant, but

those dog-eared pages, those pressed violets, upon which the fame of a lyric poet depends at the last, might without it have found no strong voice. I have seen so much beautiful lyric poetry pass unnoticed for years, and indeed at this very moment a little book of exquisite verse lies upon my table, by an author who died a few years ago, whom I knew slightly, and whose work I ignored, for chance had shown me only that part of it for which I could not care.

On my way to the lecture hall I ask an Academician what kind of audience I will have, and he replies, 'An audience of women, a fit audience for a poet'; but there are men as well as women. I had thought it would be difficult to speak to an audience in a language they had learnt at school, but it is exceedingly easy. All I say seems to be understood, and I am conscious of that sympathy which makes a speaker forget all but his own thoughts, and soliloquise aloud. I am speaking without notes and the image of old fellow-workers comes upon me as if they were present, above all of the embittered life and death of one, and of another's laborious, solitary age, and I say, 'When your King gave me medal and diploma, two forms should have stood, one at either side of me, an old woman sinking into the infirmity of age and a young man's ghost. I think when Lady Gregory's name and John Synge's name are spoken by future generations, my name, if remembered, will come up in the talk, and that if my name is spoken first their names will come in their turn because of the years we worked together. I think that both had been well pleased to have stood beside me at the great reception at your

Palace, for their work and mine has delighted in history and tradition.' I think as I speak these words of how deep down we have gone, below all that is individual, modern and restless, seeking foundations for an Ireland that can only come into existence in a Europe that is still but a dream.

XIII

On Friday we visit the great Town Hall, which is the greatest work of Swedish art, a master-work of the Romantic movement. The Royal Palace had taken ninety years to build, and been the organising centre of the art of its time, and this new magnificence, its narrow windows opening out upon a formal garden, its tall tower rising from the quayside, has taken ten years. It, too, has been an organising centre, but for an art more imaginative and amazing. Here there is no important French influence, for all that has not come out of the necessities of site and material, no matter in what school the artist studied, carries the mind backward to Byzantium. I think of but two comparable buildings, the Pennsylvania terminus in New York, and the Catholic Cathedral at Westminster, but the Pennsylvania terminus, noble in austerity, is the work of a single mind, elaborating a suggestion from a Roman Bath, a mind that—supported by the American deference to authority—has been permitted to refuse everything not relevant to a single dominating idea. The starting-hours of the trains are upon specially designed boards, of a colour that makes them harmonise with the general design, and all other advertise-

ments are forbidden, even in the stations that the trains pass immediately after leaving or before entering the terminus. The mood of severity must be prolonged or prepared for. The Catholic Cathedral is of a greater magnificence in general design, but being planted in a country where public opinion rules and the subscribers to every fund expect to have their way, is half ruined by ignoble decoration, the most ignoble of all planned and paid for by my countrymen. The Town Hall of Stockholm, upon the other hand, is decorated by many artists, working in harmony with one another and with the design of the building as a whole, and yet all in seeming perfect freedom. In England and Ireland public opinion compels the employment of the worst artists, while here the authority of a Prince and the wisdom of a Socialist Minister of culture, and the approval of the most educated of all nations, have made possible the employment of the best. These myth-makers and mask-makers worked as if they belonged to one family, and the great walls where the roughened surface of the bricks, their carefully varied size and tint, takes away all sense of mechanical finish; the mosaic-covered walls of the 'Golden Room'; the paintings hung upon the walls of the committee-rooms; the fresco paintings upon the greater surfaces with their subjects from Swedish mythology; the wrought iron and the furniture, where all suggests history, and yet is full of invention; the statuary in marble and in bronze, now mythological in subject, now representations of great Swedes, modelled naked as if they had come down from some Roman heaven; all that suggestion of

novelty and of an immeasurable past; all that multitude and unity, could hardly have been possible, had not love of Stockholm and belief in its future so filled men of different minds, classes, and occupations that they almost attained the supreme miracle, the dream that has haunted all religions, and loved one another. No work comparable in method or achievement has been accomplished since the Italian cities felt the excitement of the Renaissance, for in the midst of our individualistic anarchy, growing always, as it seemed, more violent, have arisen once more subordination, design, a sense of human need.

XIV

On Saturday I see at the Royal Theatre a performance of my *Cathleen ni Houlihan.* The old father and mother are excellent and each performance differs but little from an exceedingly good Abbey performance, except for certain details of scene, and for differences of interpretation, made necessary by the change of audience. Lines spoken by Cathleen ni Houlihan just before she leaves the cottage always move an Irish audience powerfully for historical reasons, and so the actress begins at much the same emotional level as those about her, and then works up to a climax upon these lines. But here they could have no special appeal, so she strikes a note of tragedy at once, and does not try for a strong climax. The management had sent to the West of Ireland for photographs of scenery, and the landscape, seen through the open door, has an appropriateness and grandeur our poverty-stricken

Abbey has never attained. Upon the other hand the cottage and costume of the peasants suggest a richer peasantry than ours. The management has, I think, been misled by that one-hundred-pound dowry, for in Sweden, where the standard of living is high, a farmer would probably have thought it more necessary to feed his family and himself, and to look after his daughter's education, than to save one hundred pounds for her dowry. This affects the acting. The peasants are permitted to wear a light buckle-shoe indoors, whereas they would in reality have gone barefooted, or worn heavy working boots. Almost the first thing a new actor at the Abbey has to learn is to walk as if he wore those heavy boots, and this gives awkwardness and slowness to his movements. I do not point this out as an error in the Swedish production, for a symbolic play like *Cathleen* should, in most cases, copy whatever environment is most familiar to the audience. It is followed by *She Stoops to Conquer*, and by comparison our Abbey performance of that play seems too slow. Goldsmith's play is not in Sweden, I should think, the established classic that it is with us, and so a Swedish producer is less reverent. He discovers quickly that there are dull places and unrealities, that it is technically inferior to Molière, and that we may not discover this also, prefers a rattling pace.

XV

Everybody has told us that we have not seen Stockholm at its best because we have not seen it with the trees all white and the streets deep in snow. When

snow has fallen it has melted immediately, and there is central heating everywhere. While we are packing for our journey a young American poet comes to our room, and introduces himself. 'I was in the South of France', he says, 'and I could not get a room warm enough to work in, and if I cannot get a warm room here I will go to Lapland.'

THE IRISH DRAMATIC MOVEMENT

A Lecture delivered to the Royal Academy of Sweden

YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS, ladies and gentlemen, I have chosen as my theme the Irish Dramatic Movement, because when I remember the great honour that you have conferred upon me, I cannot forget many known and unknown persons. Perhaps the English committees would never have sent you my name if I had written no plays, no dramatic criticism, if my lyric poetry had not a quality of speech practised upon the stage, perhaps even—though this could be no portion of their deliberate thought—if it were not in some degree the symbol of a movement. I wish to tell the Royal Academy of Sweden of the labours, triumphs and troubles of my fellow-workers.

The modern literature of Ireland, and indeed all that stir of thought which prepared for the Anglo-Irish war, began when Parnell fell from power in 1891. A disillusioned and embittered Ireland turned from parliamentary politics; an event was conceived; and the race began, as I think, to be troubled by that event's long gestation. Dr. Hyde founded the Gaelic League, which was for many years to substitute for political argument a Gaelic grammar, and for political meetings village gatherings, where songs were sung and stories told in the Gaelic language. Meanwhile I had begun a movement in English, in the language in which modern Ireland thinks and does its business; founded certain societies where clerks, working men, men of

all classes, could study the Irish poets, novelists and historians who had written in English, and as much of Gaelic literature as had been translated into English. But the great mass of our people, accustomed to interminable political speeches, read little, and so from the very start we felt that we must have a theatre of our own. The theatres of Dublin had nothing about them that we could call our own. They were empty buildings hired by the English travelling companies, and we wanted Irish plays and Irish players. When we thought of these plays we thought of everything that was romantic and poetical, because the nationalism we had called up—the nationalism every generation had called up in moments of discouragement—was romantic and poetical. It was not, however, until I met in 1896 Lady Gregory, a member of an old Galway family, who had spent her life between two Galway houses, the house where she was born, the house into which she married, that such a theatre became possible. All about her lived a peasantry who told stories in a form of English which has much of its syntax from Gaelic, much of its vocabulary from Tudor English, but it was very slowly that we discovered in that speech of theirs our most powerful dramatic instrument, not indeed until she herself began to write. Though my plays were written without dialect and in English blank verse, I think she was attracted to our movement because their subject-matter differed but little from the subject-matter of the country stories. Her own house has been protected by her presence, but the house where she was born was burned down by incendiaries some few months ago,

and there has been like disorder over the greater part of Ireland. A trumpery dispute about an acre of land can rouse our people to monstrous savagery, and if in their war with the English auxiliary police they were shown no mercy, they showed none: murder answered murder. Yet their ignorance and violence can remember the noblest beauty. I have in Galway a little old tower, and when I climb to the top of it I can see at no great distance a green field where stood once the thatched cottage of a famous country beauty, the mistress of a small local landed proprietor. I have spoken to old men and women who remembered her, though all are dead now, and they spoke of her as the old men upon the wall of Troy spoke of Helen, nor did man and woman differ in their praise. One old woman of whose youth the neighbours cherished a scandalous tale said of her, 'I tremble all over when I think of her'; and there was another on the neighbouring mountain who said, 'The sun and the moon never shone on anybody so handsome, and her skin was so white that it looked blue, and she had two little blushes on her cheeks'. And there were men that told of the crowds that gathered to look at her upon a fair day, and of a man 'who got his death swimming a river', that he might look at her. It was a song written by the Gaelic poet Raftery that brought her such great fame, and the cottages still sing it, though there are not so many to sing it as when I was young:—

> O star of light and O sun in harvest,
> O amber hair, O my share of the world,

It is Mary Hynes, the calm and easy woman,
Has beauty in her body and in her mind.

It seemed as if the ancient world lay all about us with its freedom of imagination, its delight in good stories, in man's force and woman's beauty, and that all we had to do was to make the town think as the country felt; yet we soon discovered that the town would only think town thoughts.

In the country you are alone with your own violence, your own ignorance and heaviness, and with the common tragedy of life, and if you have any artistic capacity you desire beautiful emotion; and, certain that the seasons will be the same always, care not how fantastic its expression. In the town, where everybody crowds upon you, it is your neighbour not yourself that you hate, and if you are not to embitter his life and your own life, perhaps even if you are not to murder him in some kind of revolutionary frenzy, somebody must teach reality and justice. You will hate that teacher for a while, calling his books and plays ugly, misdirected, morbid, or something of that kind, but you must agree with him in the end. We were to find ourselves in a quarrel with public opinion that compelled us against our own will and the will of our players to become always more realistic, substituting dialect for verse, common speech for dialect.

I had told Lady Gregory that I saw no likelihood of getting money for a theatre and so must put away that hope, and she promised to find the money among her friends. Her neighbour, Mr. Edward Martyn, paid

for our first performances; and our first players came from England; but presently we began our real work with a company of Irish amateurs. Somebody had asked me at a lecture, 'Where will you get your actors?' and I had said, 'I will go into some crowded room, put the name of everybody in it on a different piece of paper, put all those pieces of paper into a hat and draw the first twelve'. I have often wondered at that prophecy, for though it was spoken probably to confound and confuse a questioner it was very nearly fulfilled. Our two best men actors were not indeed chosen by chance, for one was a stage-struck solicitors' clerk and the other a working man who had toured Ireland in a theatrical company managed by a negro. I doubt if he had learned much in it, for its methods were rough and noisy, the negro whitening his face when he played a white man, but, so strong is stage convention, blackening it when he played a black man. If a player had to open a letter on the stage I have no doubt that he struck it with the flat of his hand, as I have seen players do in my youth, a gesture that lost its meaning generations ago when blotting-paper was substituted for sand. We got our women, however, from a little political society which described its object as educating the children of the poor, or, according to its enemies, teaching them a catechism that began with this question, 'What is the origin of evil?' and the answer, 'England'.

And they came to us for patriotic reasons and acted from precisely the same impulse that had made them teach, and yet two of them proved players of genius,

Miss Allgood and Miss 'Maire O'Neill'. They were sisters, one all simplicity, her mind shaped by folk song and folk story; the other sophisticated, lyrical and subtle. I do not know what their thoughts were as that strange new power awoke within them, but I think they must have suffered from a bad conscience, a feeling that the patriotic impulse had gone, that they had given themselves up to vanity or ambition. Yet I think it was that first misunderstanding of themselves made their peculiar genius possible, for had they come to us with theatrical ambitions they would have imitated some well-known English player and sighed for well-known English plays. Nor would they have found their genius if we had not remained for a long time obscure like the bird within its shell, playing in little halls, generally in some shabby out-of-the-way street. We could experiment and wait, with nothing to fear but political misunderstanding. We had little money and at first needed little, twenty-five pounds given by Lady Gregory and twenty pounds by myself and a few pounds picked up here and there. And our theatrical organisation was preposterous, players and authors all sitting together and settling by vote what play should be performed and who should play it. It took a series of disturbances, weeks of argument during which no performance could be given, before Lady Gregory and John Synge and I were put in control. And our relations with the public were even more disturbed. One play was violently attacked by the patriotic Press because it described a married peasant woman who had a lover, and when we published the

old Aran folk tale upon which it was founded the Press said the tale had reached Aran from some decadent author of pagan Rome. Presently Lady Gregory wrote her first comedy. My verse plays were not long enough to fill an evening and so she wrote a little play on a country love story in the dialect of her neighbourhood. A countryman returns from America with a hundred pounds and discovers his old sweetheart married to a bankrupt farmer. He plays cards with the farmer, and by cheating against himself gives him the hundred pounds. The company refused to perform it because they said to admit an emigrant's return with a hundred pounds would encourage emigration. We produced evidence of returned emigrants with much larger sums, but were told that only made the matter worse. Then after interminable argument had worn us all out Lady Gregory agreed to reduce the sum to twenty, and the actors gave way. That little play was sentimental and conventional, but her next discovered her genius. She too had desired to serve, and that genius must have seemed miraculous to herself. She was in middle life, and had written nothing but a volume of political memoirs and had no interest in the theatre.

Nobody reading to-day her *Seven Short Plays* can understand why one of them, now an Irish classic, *The Rising of the Moon*, could not be performed for two years because of political hostility. A policeman discovers an escaped Fenian prisoner and lets him free, because the prisoner has aroused with some old songs the half-forgotten patriotism of his youth. The players would not perform it because they said it was an

unpatriotic act to admit that a policeman was capable of patriotism. One well-known leader of the mob wrote to me, 'How can the Dublin mob be expected to fight the police if it looks upon them as capable of patriotism?' When performed at last the play was received with enthusiasm, but only to get us into new trouble. The chief Unionist Dublin newspaper denounced us for slandering His Majesty's forces, and Dublin Castle denied to us a privilege which we had shared with the other Dublin theatres of buying, for stage purposes, the cast-off clothes of the police. Castle and Press alike knew that the police had frequently let off political prisoners, but 'that only made the matter worse'. Every political party had the same desire to substitute for life, which never does the same thing twice, a bundle of reliable principles and assertions. Nor did religious orthodoxy like us any better than political; my *Countess Cathleen* was denounced by Cardinal Logue as an heretical play, and when I wrote that we would like to perform 'foreign masterpieces' a Nationalist newspaper declared that 'a foreign masterpiece is a very dangerous thing'. The little halls where we performed could hold a couple of hundred people at the utmost and our audience was often not more than twenty or thirty, and we performed but two or three times a month, and during our periods of quarrelling not even that. But there was no lack of leading articles, we were from the first a recognised public danger. Two events brought us victory: a friend gave us a theatre, and we found a strange man of genius, John Synge. After a particularly angry leading article I had come in front

of the curtain and appealed to the hundred people of the audience for their support. When I came down from the stage an old friend, Miss Horniman, from whom I had been expecting a contribution of twenty pounds, said, 'I will find you a theatre'. She found and altered for our purpose what is now the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, and gave us a small subsidy for a few years.

I had met John Synge in Paris in 1896. Somebody had said, 'There is an Irishman living on the top floor of your hotel; I will introduce you'. I was very poor, but he was much poorer. He belonged to a very old Irish family and, though a simple courteous man, remembered it and was haughty and lonely. With just enough to keep him from starvation and not always from half-starvation, he had wandered about Europe, travelling third-class or upon foot, playing his fiddle to poor men on the road or in their cottages. He was the man that we needed, because he was the only man I have ever known incapable of a political thought or of a humanitarian purpose. He could walk the roadside all day with some poor man without any desire to do him good or for any reason except that he liked him. He was to do for Ireland, though more by his influence on other dramatists than by his direct influence, what Robert Burns did for Scotland. When Scotland thought herself gloomy and religious, Providence restored her imaginative spontaneity by raising up Robert Burns to commend drink and the devil. I did not, however, see what was to come when I advised John Synge to go to a wild island off the Galway coast and study its

life because that life 'had never been expressed in literature'. He had learned Gaelic at College and I told him that, as I would have told it to any young man who had learned Gaelic and wanted to write. When he found that wild island he became happy for the first time, escaping, as he said, 'from the nullity of the rich and the squalor of the poor'. He had bad health, he could not stand the island hardship long, but he would go to and fro between there and Dublin.

Burns himself could not have more shocked a gathering of Scots clergy than did he our players. Some of the women got about him and begged him to write a play about the rebellion of '98, and pointed out very truthfully that a play on such a patriotic theme would be a great success. He returned at the end of a fortnight with a scenario upon which he had toiled in his laborious way. Two women take refuge in a cave, a Protestant woman and a Catholic, and carry on an interminable argument about the merits of their respective religions. The Catholic woman denounces Henry VIII. and Queen Elizabeth, and the Protestant woman the Inquisition and the Pope. They argue in low voices, because one is afraid of being ravished by the rebels and the other by the loyal soldiers. But at last either the Protestant or the Catholic says that she prefers any fate to remaining any longer in such wicked company and climbs out. The play was neither written nor performed, and neither then nor at any later time could I discover whether Synge understood the shock that he was giving. He certainly did not foresee in any way the trouble that his greatest play brought on us all.

When I had landed from a fishing yawl on the middle of the island of Aran, a few months before my first meeting with Synge, a little group of islanders, who had gathered to watch a stranger's arrival, brought me to 'the oldest man upon the island'. He spoke but two sentences, speaking them very slowly: 'If any gentleman has done a crime we'll hide him. There was a gentleman that killed his father and I had him in my house six months till he got away to America.' It was a play founded on that old man's story Synge brought back with him. A young man arrives at a little public-house and tells the publican's daughter that he has murdered his father. He so tells it that he has all her sympathy, and every time he retells it, with new exaggerations and additions, he wins the sympathy of somebody or other, for it is the countryman's habit to be against the law. The countryman thinks the more terrible the crime, the greater must the provocation have been. The young man himself, under the excitement of his own story, becomes gay, energetic and lucky. He prospers in love, comes in first at the local races, and bankrupts the roulette tables afterwards. Then the father arrives with his head bandaged but very lively, and the people turn upon the impostor. To win back their esteem he takes up a spade to kill his father in earnest, but, horrified at the threat of what had sounded so well in the story, they bind him to hand over to the police. The father releases him and father and son walk off together, the son, still buoyed up by his imagination, announcing that he will be master henceforth. Picturesque, poetical, fantastical, a

masterpiece of style and of music, the supreme work of our dialect theatre, his *Playboy* roused the populace to fury. We played it under police protection, seventy police in the theatre the last night, and five hundred, some newspaper said, keeping order in the streets outside. It is never played before any Irish audience for the first time without something or other being flung at the players. In New York a currant cake and a watch were flung, the owner of the watch claiming it at the stage door afterwards. The Dublin audience has, however, long since accepted the play. It has noticed, I think, that everyone upon the stage is somehow lovable and companionable, and that Synge has described, through an exaggerated symbolism, a reality which he loved precisely because he loved all reality. So far from being, as they had thought, a politician working in the interests of England, he was so little a politician that the world merely amused him and touched his pity. Yet when Synge died in 1909 opinion had hardly changed, we were playing to an almost empty theatre and were continually denounced. Our victory was won by those who had learned from him courage and sincerity but belonged to a different school. Synge's work, the work of Lady Gregory, my own *Cathleen ni Houlihan* and my *Hour-Glass* in its prose form, are characteristic of our first ambition. They bring the imagination and speech of the country, all that poetical tradition descended from the Middle Ages, to the people of the town. Those who learned from Synge had often little knowledge of the country and always little interest in its dialect. Their plays are frequently attacks upon

obvious abuses, the bribery at the appointment of a dispensary Doctor, the attempts of some local politician to remain friends with all parties. Indeed the young Ministers and party politicians of the Free State have had, I think, some of their education from our plays. Then, too, there are many comedies which are not political satires though they are concerned with the life of the politics-ridden people of the town. Of these Mr. Lennox Robinson's are the best known; his *White-headed Boy* has been played in England and America. Of late it has seemed as if this school were coming to an end, for the old plots are repeated with slight variations and the characterisation grows mechanical. It is too soon yet to say what will come to us from the melodrama and tragedy of the last four years, but if we can pay our players and keep our theatre open something will come. We are burdened with debt, for we have come through war and civil war and audiences grow thin when there is firing in the streets. We have, however, survived so much that I believe in our luck, and think that I have a right to say my lecture ends in the middle or even, perhaps, at the beginning of the story. But certainly I have said enough to make you understand why, when I received from the hands of your King the great honour your Academy has conferred upon me, I felt that a young man's ghost should have stood upon one side of me and at the other a living woman sinking into the infirmity of age. Indeed I have seen little in this last week that would not have been memorable and exciting to Synge and to Lady Gregory, for Sweden has achieved more than we have hoped

for our own country. I think most of all, perhaps, of that splendid spectacle of your court, a family beloved and able that has gathered about it not the rank only but the intellect of its country. No like spectacle will in Ireland show its work of discipline and of taste, though it might satisfy a need of the race no institution created under the influence of English or American democracy can satisfy.

THE END

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