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VIRGINIA WOOLF

Moments of Being

EDITED
WITH AN INTRODUCTION
AND NOTES
by JEANNE SCHULKIND

SECOND EDITION

A HARVEST BOOK
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Preface to the Second Edition

The British Library has recently acquired a seventy-seven page typescript by Virginia Woolf which came to light in 1980. Written in 1940, this hitherto unknown material provides the missing link between the typescript and the manuscript which were brought together as "A Sketch of the Past", the most substantial and significant of the autobiographical writings in *Moments of Being* (see Editor's Note, p. 61). It represents, moreover, a sufficiently valuable contribution to warrant a new edition.

The British Library typescript contains twenty-seven pages of entirely new material (pp. 107-25 below) in which Virginia Woolf describes her father, Leslie Stephen, and the ambivalence of her relationship to him which her recent reading of Freud had caused her to reassess. Her mature, analytic account illuminates one of the most important influences on her development both as an individual and as a writer, and provides a valuable corrective to the earlier version which, because it is partial, is also misleading.

The typescript, a reworked and more polished version of the manuscript transcribed on pages 107-37 in the first edition, gives this new version greater stylistic coherence than the earlier one. Furthermore, a number of passages of particular interest, such as Virginia Woolf's reflections on her methods of writing and on the nature of consciousness, are expanded and clarified.

Acknowledgements

This book was made possible by the consent and co-operation of the University of Sussex Library, the British Library, and the owners of the copyright in Virginia Woolf's writings, Quentin Bell and Angelica Garnett. Professor Bell and his wife, Olivier, were characteristically generous in giving aid whenever it was needed; they also provided me with much indispensable information and often saved me from error, for which I am most grateful. The courtesy of the staffs of both libraries mentioned above has also been greatly appreciated.

I would like to thank the publishers of Virginia Woolf's writings for permission to quote from them in my Introduction, and Mrs Lola Szladits for making possible the presentation of a complete text of "Old Bloomsbury" by giving permission to use material from the Berg Collection.

Editor's Note

This collection of autobiographical writings by Virginia Woolf brings together unpublished material selected from the Woolf archives at the British Library and the University of Sussex Library. The latter archive, known as the 'Monks House Papers', belonged to Leonard Woolf. When he persuaded Quentin Bell to write the authorized biography of Virginia Woolf he placed the papers at the disposal of Professor Bell who quoted brief passages from them in the biography. After the death of Leonard Woolf the papers passed, through the generosity of the executrix of the estate, Mrs Trekkie Parsons, to The University of Sussex.

The decision to publish material which would have been extensively revised by Virginia Woolf and most of which—unlike the essays published posthumously by Leonard Woolf—was never intended for publication, was not taken without the most careful consideration. The undeniable interest and value of these memoirs, however, left those involved in the decision with no doubts. Publication which would make readily available to a wide audience material that so richly illuminates the vision and sensibility of a writer whose contribution to the history of English literature was so profoundly individual could not but be worthwhile. These memoirs have a unique place in the documentation of her life and art.

It was Virginia Woolf's practice to write out one or more rough drafts of a work and then to type out complete revisions, sometimes as many as eight or nine. The material in this collection is in various stages of revision but with the exception of the first memoir the scripts bear signs of 'work in progress', notwithstanding that the last three selections were in fact read by Virginia Woolf to the audiences for whom they were intended. Corrections, additions, deletions, sometimes hastily made and incomplete, are scattered throughout the work and in some cases whole passages are revised within the text. No attempt has been made in this edition to present a record of these textual revisions and variations. To have done so would have greatly impaired the enjoyment of most readers. For anyone seriously interested in studying this aspect of Virginia Woolf's memoirs, the material is available at the University of Sussex Library and the British Library. However, the desire to present a

readable text has at no point been allowed to take precedence over what must be the commitment of primary importance, that of following faithfully Virginia Woolf's last intentions regarding the material as far as they are known or can be reasonably surmised, or to state the reason for not doing so and to indicate doubt where it exists. It is hoped that the 'editorial machinery' will not be unpleasantly obtrusive to the general reader—and Editor's Notes to the individual texts have been provided to minimize this danger—but that it is in evidence has at least the advantage of keeping before the reader the fact that these texts were not prepared for publication by Virginia Woolf, and hence they should not be judged by the same criteria as would be applied to texts published during her lifetime.

Because the selections that follow are in different stages of revision it has occasionally been necessary to adapt editorial practice to deal with specific problems. When this has been done, mention has been made in the appropriate preface. With that exception, the following editorial principles have been applied to the texts uniformly.

Deletions made by Virginia Woolf have not been included unless they are necessary for the sense of the passage and no substitute has been provided. In such cases the deleted words have been enclosed in square brackets. Partial deletions, which are not uncommon, have been silently completed. In those few cases where Virginia Woolf added a word or a phrase but failed to make the deletion necessary to accommodate the addition, the oversight has been silently corrected. For example, in "Old Bloomsbury", the first version of one passage reads: "True, we still had Thursday evenings as before. But they were always strained and ended generally in dismal failure." Virginia Woolf then added 'often' before 'ended' but failed to delete 'generally': Where an addition has made it necessary to alter the grammatical form of a word, the change has been listed in the Appendix. Deletions which are of interest have been noted.

Just as some of Virginia Woolf's deletions were incomplete, so were some of her additions and corrections. When it was impossible to incorporate them into the text without serious disruption to the thought they have been omitted and noted. In those instances where a word or phrase was added by Virginia Woolf in such a way as to make it clear that it was merely being considered as an alternative, the later version has been used except where the first is clearly preferable. In very few instances indeed is any point of significance involved; however, alternative readings have been noted if they are

of interest or if there is doubt as to the choice Virginia Woolf would have made.

In early drafts, Virginia Woolf's practice regarding punctuation, spelling and capitalization was highly erratic and she often used abbreviations which never appeared in her published work. On occasion, obvious oversights coupled with typing mistakes and incomplete or hastily made corrections have resulted in a profusion of errors; at others, the careful attention to these matters which characterizes her published works is evident. It was Virginia Woolf's practice to submit her work to her husband, Leonard, for revision of these details and he, in publishing her posthumous works, did not hesitate, as he writes in the editorial preface to *The Death of the Moth*,* 'to punctuate' the essays and correct 'obvious verbal mistakes'. Although the liberties that Leonard Woolf would have been justified in taking could not be similarly justified by anyone else, his practice has at least served as a general guideline for the kinds of corrections which have been made in the present text; for it is equally clear that in the case of these memoirs—unlike that of the Diary or the Letters—Virginia Woolf would most certainly have made the spelling, punctuation and capitalization conform to standard usage, except where a nuance was involved, had she decided to publish them.

Hence punctuation has been altered to conform to Virginia Woolf's own practice in her published works. Hyphens, italics, question marks, full stops, double quotes for dialogue, apostrophes for possessives and contractions have been added where appropriate; 'and' has been substituted for the ampersand; abbreviations and numbers have been written out where it was her practice to do so. Apart from these uncontroversial examples, punctuation has been altered only to avoid ambiguity, to correct obvious oversights, or to conform to a pattern established in a sentence or passage which was momentarily overlooked. No attempt has been made to make Virginia Woolf's idiosyncratic and highly expressive punctuation conform in other respects to conventional usage. When, for example, an exclamation point occurs in the middle of a sentence, it is retained if it is appropriate to the sense of the passage. All typing errors have been corrected. Spelling and capitalization have been regularized to conform to common usage unless a nuance is involved.

The sense or the grammar of a sentence has occasionally necessitated the addition of a word which has been enclosed in brackets.

* The Hogarth Press; London, 1942.

However, more than one word in brackets without a note indicates words deleted by Virginia Woolf as explained above. All doubtful readings and illegible words have been noted except in those few cases where a legible and acceptable alternative is available.

The individual prefaces contain a brief description of the subject matter of the memoir in order to avoid cumbersome annotations of the text; the date and circumstances of writing; and a description of the typescript or manuscript on which the edited text is based as well as any unusual problems.

For the sake of brevity, the initials 'VW' and 'LW', for Virginia and Leonard Woolf respectively, have been used in the footnotes. The manuscripts and typescripts (ms and ts) are referred to by their Library reference numbers, for example, 'MH/A.5a', except that after the initial mention, the 'MH' (Monks House) has been omitted because all the papers come from that collection. The two-volume biography by Quentin Bell* is referred to simply as 'QB' followed by the appropriate volume and page numbers. The Letters, edited by Nigel Nicolson, assisted by Joanne Trautmann, are referred to as '*Letters*', followed by the appropriate volume number. No attempt has been made to be exhaustive in the identification of persons mentioned in the memoirs. In those cases where the individual was of minor or passing significance to Virginia Woolf, or significant because of being representative of a type, as the context makes clear, identification has not generally been made. Quentin Bell's biography is available for those interested in such details; also the six volumes of *Letters*, as mentioned above, and the five-volume *Diary of Virginia Woolf*, edited by Olivier Bell, assisted by Andrew McNeillie. The period in general and 'Bloomsbury' in particular are amply documented.

Introduction

This collection of autobiographical writings, although diverse, nevertheless reveals the remarkable unity of Virginia Woolf's art, thought and sensibility. The beliefs and values that underlie her work are shown in these pages to be an outgrowth of the sensibility which marked her responses to the world, from the very beginning, with a distinctive quality. The need to express this vision was perhaps the chief impetus behind the experiments with structures, techniques and style which place Virginia Woolf's novels among the most highly innovative and personal contributions in the history of the genre. These memoirs also reveal the unusual degree to which Virginia Woolf wove the facts of her life—the people, the incidents, the emotions—into the fabric of her fiction, thus testifying to the firm artistic control she exercised over that material in creating works, having the coherence and inner necessity which distinguish the highest artistic achievement.

The first selection, "Reminiscences", begun in 1907, eight years before the publication of Virginia Woolf's first novel, *The Voyage Out*,¹⁹¹⁵ belongs to the period of her apprenticeship. At that time, she regularly assigned herself literary exercises which often took the form of short descriptive essays to be shown only to a few intimates and as much, one suspects, for their reactions and judgements as for their amusement. "Reminiscences" was intended as a 'life' of her sister Vanessa, but it is in fact a memoir of the childhood and adolescence they shared. The second item of the collection, "A Sketch of the Past", was written at the end of her career and was clearly intended to provide relief from particularly taxing literary commitments and from the deepening gloom of the second world war. The two selections are juxtaposed here because they concern the same period of Virginia Woolf's life, that is, the early years before the move to Bloomsbury.

The three pieces that follow were papers delivered between 1920 and 1936 to the Memoir Club, a group of close friends of long standing who gathered at intervals to read memoirs in which they were committed to complete candour. The intimate character of the Memoir Club is evident in the tone that pervades the three papers and contrasts sharply with that of the other selections, different as

they are from one another. The order in which the papers were written coincides with the chronological order of the events described; the first paper takes up where the preceding selection, "A Sketch of the Past", ends. The first two papers, "22 Hyde Park Gate" and "Old Bloomsbury", were written in the early 1920s when Virginia Woolf was on the threshold of artistic maturity and about to create for the novel new forms and techniques so admirably adapted to the expression of her highly personal vision. The last selection of the present volume, "Am I a Snob?", was written in the late 1930s and is, if a state of mind can be pinned down to a period, concerned chiefly with events of that decade.

The diversity of purpose which characterizes these memoirs—written for different audiences and occasions and spanning a career that lasted almost four decades—might well have resulted in an absence of coherence, a random heaping together of fragments of a life. Yet the fragments do arrange themselves into a meaningful order; a pattern emerges which expresses Virginia Woolf's view of the self generally, and herself in particular, in ways that a conventional autobiography could not have done.

That self was an elusive will o' the wisp, always just ahead on the horizon, flickering and insubstantial, yet enduring. She believed the individual identity to be always in flux, every moment changing its shape in response to the forces surrounding it: forces which were invisible emerge, others sink silently below the surface, and the past, on which the identity of the present moment rests, is never static, never fixed like a fly in amber, but as subject to alteration as the consciousness that recalls it. As she writes in "A Sketch of the Past", when she thinks she may have discovered a possible form for the memoirs: "That is, to make them include the present—at least enough of the present to serve as platform to stand upon. It would be interesting to make the two people, I now, I then, come out in contrast. And further, this past is much affected by the present moment. What I write today I should not write in a year's time."*

Thus, in "A Sketch of the Past", this belief in the ceaseless transformation of personality is formally expressed in the juxtaposition of the present self and the past self. Virginia Woolf's present self is conveyed in the fragments of her daily life that preface each entry and in the reflective, mature consciousness which is continually

* p. 75.

searching and probing the past for meanings that could not have been evident to the self who had the experience. The collection taken as a whole, composed as it is of material written at such widely different stages in her life and in her development as a writer, also dramatizes this point of view by filtering the past through a succession of present selves. Even the last selection, "Am I a Snob?", which deals more with contemporary events than any of the other selections, leads back to Hyde Park Gate, albeit through a side entrance. In short, the collection emphasizes the active interpenetration of past and present that continually results in fresh arrangements of that elusive identity which is 'the subject of these memoirs'.

In the first selection, for example, Julia Stephen, Virginia's mother, is an enigmatic, revered, perhaps slightly resented, certainly distant figure who, though dead some dozen years, remains for the daughter a powerful, almost obsessive presence, but is not after all very credible. When Virginia Woolf writes again of Julia in "A Sketch of the Past", long after the cathartic experience of writing *To the Lighthouse*, she does so with perception and understanding gained partly, no doubt, through abandoning the unwitting subterfuge of reverence and honestly confronting her feelings towards her mother in all their ambivalence and complexity. As a result, both Julia Stephen and Virginia Woolf are much more fully realized; the slightly implausible, superficial identities created in the first memoir now reveal nuances and depths of meaning which were barely suggested in the earlier sketch. A similar increase in honesty and perception can be seen in the two portraits of Leslie Stephen. In the first sketch, Virginia Woolf's harsh but muted resentment of her father after Stella's death is at least partly responsible for the distorted and incomplete view of him and of their relationship. One would not easily sense the intensity of her feeling for him, so skilfully is it concealed. This emerges only in the later memoir written after her reading of Freud had led her to a greater understanding and acceptance of her feelings towards her father. Here shading is added to the spare lines of the sketch, creating around Leslie Stephen a psychological space in which he achieves a convincing existence. In frankly acknowledging the vehemence of her anger against him she is free to acknowledge the depth of her love and affection for him.

If life then is 'a bowl which one fills and fills and fills', each new experience added to the existing ones displaces them ever so slightly

and alters their previous meaning by forcing them into new combinations. The present moment is enriched by the past but the past is also enriched by the present. This view of the self which emphasizes simultaneously the change and continuity of the individual identity is of central importance in Virginia Woolf's fiction; it lies behind her attitudes to the characters she creates—Mrs Dalloway, for example, Mr and Mrs Ramsay, the six characters of *The Waves*, Mrs Swithin—endowing them with the elusiveness and complexity of figures in the real world. Her characters are marked by the infinite variability which she admired in Mme. de Sévigné: "And then something she says rouses us. We add it to her character, so that the character grows and changes, and she seems like a living person, inexhaustible."* There is a roominess about so many of Virginia Woolf's characters, a sense of mystery and of the inexplicable; they are rarely enclosed in precise outlines.

This conviction that the outer crust of the self, one's personality, is a finely tuned mechanism, sensitive as a seismograph to the slightest vibration in the social environment, and hence volatile like the flux and multiplicity of experience to which it is exposed, inspired a particular concern in her novels with just those moments when identities are created out of situations and relationships through the chameleon transformations of the responsive personality. Bernard, in *The Waves*, aware of his doffing and donning of carapaces, reflects how: "The tree alone resisted our eternal flux. For I changed and changed; was Hamlet, was Shelley, was the hero, whose name I now forget, of a novel by Dostoevsky; was for a whole term, incredibly, Napoleon; but was Byron chiefly. For many weeks at a time it was my part to stride into rooms and fling gloves and coat on the back of chairs, scowling slightly."† He seeks to crystallize his identity, to put his finger on it and halt the flux: "But now let me ask myself the final question, as I sit over this grey fire, with its naked promontories of black coal, which of these people am I? It depends so much upon the room. When I say to myself, 'Bernard, who comes?'"‡ Susan echoes his thought as she muses: "For there is nothing to lay hold of. I am made and remade continually. Different people draw different words from me."§

* *Collected Essays*, Vol. III, ed. Leonard Woolf (The Hogarth Press; London, 1967), p. 66.

† (The Hogarth Press; London, 1943, new edition), p. 177.

‡ *op. cit.*, p. 58. § *op. cit.*, p. 96.

And so the audiences for which these memoirs were written draw out different sides of Virginia Woolf's personality, and so demonstrate just this facet of her belief in the continuously changing identity in the context of her own life and personality. In "A Sketch of the Past" she puts it this way: "This influence, by which I mean the consciousness of other groups impinging upon ourselves; public opinion; what other people say and think; all those magnets which attract us this way to be like that, or repel us the other and make us different from that; has never been analysed in any of those Lives which I so much enjoy reading, or very superficially. Yet it is by such invisible presences that the 'subject of this memoir' is tugged this way and that every day of his life; it is they that keep him in position . . . if we cannot analyse these invisible presences, we know very little of the subject of the memoir; and again how futile life-writing becomes. I see myself as a fish in a stream; deflected; held in place; but cannot describe the stream."*

These memoirs reveal, by their variously shaded tones, 'other groups impinging' on Virginia Woolf's consciousness, how 'what other people say and think' subtly alters the shape of the self that is presented to the world. In the first memoir, "Reminiscences", there is a self-conscious adoption of a literary 'manner', not unexpected in a writer just learning to gauge the spread of her wings but nonetheless distracting, particularly at those moments when the forced flights of the poetic imagination leave feeling far behind on the ground or the tentative starts into areas of originality are cut short by hasty retreats into the safety of conventional formulas. The self-consciousness, with its hint of vulnerability, no doubt reflects a slight unease regarding her audience. Virginia Woolf had intended the 'life' of Vanessa to be read by her new brother-in-law with whom she was not yet on a completely free and easy footing and by her sister with whom she was conscious of reestablishing relations on a new basis. Indeed, so omnipresent was Clive Bell at this period that she felt she might never see Vanessa alone again.† This situation may partially account for the occasional disconcerting shifts of tone, from an affectionate intimacy to a stilted, formal manner like that

* p. 80.

† In a letter to Violet Dickinson (3 January 1907) she writes: "I did not see Nessa alone, but I realise that that is all over, and I shall never see her alone any more; and Clive is a new part of her, which I must learn to accept." (*Letters*, I, No. 336.)

which Virginia Woolf later associated with the 'Victorian tea table manner'.

"A Sketch of the Past" provides a sharp contrast with its easy, unaffected manner revealing an ego so unaware of itself that it appears almost impersonal. So confident is she now, so much a master of her material, that she need not even be bothered to decide on a form before beginning: "So without stopping to choose my way, in the sure and certain knowledge that it will find itself—or if not it will not matter—I begin: the first memory."* The memoir is characterized by a flowing, ruminative expansiveness; it presents a consciousness which follows its own peculiar byways rather than a pre-ordained route as it ponders the meaning of reality and the mystery of identity.

The Memoir Club contributions expose yet another side of Virginia Woolf. The expanding, reflective self of "A Sketch of the Past" is contracted into a sharper, more definite shape, a well-known and predictable personality confronting a group of old friends who, though intimate, are nonetheless demanding. They expect total frankness, some originality, and certainly they expect to be amused. These requirements are met in full and Virginia Woolf's enjoyment of the informality of the occasion is obvious. Her wit sparkles and not infrequently she adds a playful malice to her flights of candour, as she peers into dark cupboards and under beds, stripping bare the heavy padding of suppression and evasion which characterized Victorian attitudes to sexuality.

The memoirs bring to the surface other invisible forces mentioned in "A Sketch of the Past" which deflect the fish in the stream 'this way and that'—namely 'society [that] changes from decade to decade, and also from class to class.' The worlds described in the memoirs are remarkably varied. With great economy Virginia Woolf describes the pressures exerted by the conventions and beliefs dominant in the late Victorian, upper middle class family life of the Stephens and Duckworths at Hyde Park Gate. The family is set in a broad historical perspective as the disparate forces which contributed to its making are analysed: the literary, free-thinking world of Leslie Stephen and his friends; the puritanical, socially conscious attitudes of the Clapham Sect; the painters and poets at Little Holland House; the 'Society' of the well-connected Duckworths. As the Victorian age passes imperceptibly into the Edwardian the young

* p. 64.

Stephens develop interests which lead them in different directions: Thoby goes to Cambridge, Vanessa has her painting, and Virginia her writing. Then Hyde Park Gate is left behind and 'Bloomsbury' gradually takes shape. Virginia Woolf charts the development of 'Bloomsbury' from its serious, truth-seeking, Cambridge-oriented origins, through its period of notoriety, to what, in some respects at least, was its antithesis, the society of London hostesses such as Margot Asquith and Sibyl Colefax.

The greatest insights afforded by these memoirs into Virginia Woolf's life, her thought and sensibility and the development of her art, are not, however, those brought about thus fortuitously but those which emerge when she consciously sets out to explore the origins of the beliefs and intuitions which shaped and ordered her vision of life and which, as she began to write fiction, gradually came to shape and order that as well.

One such belief is that the individual in his daily life is cut off from 'reality' but at rare moments receives a shock. These shocks or 'moments of being' are not, as she had imagined as a child, simply random manifestations of some malevolent force but 'a token of some real thing behind appearances'. The idea of a privileged moment when a spiritually transcendent truth of either personal or cosmic dimensions is perceived in a flash of intuition is, of course, a commonplace of religious experience and in particular of mystical traditions of thought, as well as a recurrent feature of idealist philosophies from Plato onwards. But in these memoirs Virginia Woolf sets this belief in a uniquely personal context and shows it emerging, almost inevitably, from her own intense and highly individual susceptibility.

In a few words she sets forth that fundamental conviction which underlies the meaning she finds in her own life and that which she creates in her fiction: "From this I reach what I might call a philosophy; at any rate it is a constant idea of mine; that behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we—I mean all human beings—are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art. *Hamlet* or a Beethoven quartet is the truth about this vast mass that we call the world. But there is no Shakespeare, there is no Beethoven; certainly and emphatically there is no God; we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself."*

* p. 72.

Here, so succinctly stated, is the explanation why the search for Mrs Brown'—Virginia Woolf's shorthand for the idea of character in the novel—cannot be purposefully separated from the search for reality, why the subject of the memoir cannot be separated from "the stream". The questions repeatedly posed by the characters of her novels—What is life? What is love? What is reality? Who are you? Who am I?—lead to this one end, the spiritual continuum which embraces all of life, the vision of reality as a timeless unity which lies beneath the appearance of change, separation and disorder that marks daily life. As one of the characters in *The Waves* remarks: "It is Percival . . . who makes us aware that these attempts to say, 'I am this, I am that,' which we make, coming together, like separated parts of one body and soul, are false. Something has been left out from fear. Something has been altered, from vanity. We have tried to accentuate differences. From the desire to be separate we have laid stress upon our faults, and what is particular to us. But there is a chain whirling round, round, in a steel-blue circle beneath."*

The emphasis on the change and continuity of personal identity discussed above applies only to the self that inhabits the finite world of physical and social existence. During moments of being, this self is transcended and the individual consciousness becomes an undifferentiated part of a greater whole. Thus, just as the outer limits of personality are blurred and unstable because of the responsiveness of the self to the forces of the present moment, so the boundaries of the inner self are vague and, at moments, non-existent. For Virginia Woolf, when the self merges with reality, all limits associated with the physical world cease to exist. Mrs Dalloway, so definite and dartlike on the surface, becomes a consciousness transcending all temporal and physical boundaries, merging, through her imaginative, intuitive identification with Septimus Warren Smith, with the impersonal, universal consciousness that lies behind all of those characters in the novel not irrevocably sealed off from reality. In *To the Lighthouse*, there is a picture of Mrs Ramsay, after the children have gone to bed and quiet has descended on the house, sinking slowly but deeply into one of those moments of being characterized by intimations of profound understanding and communion against which a sense of what one is to others seems trivial, transitory and illusory. "All the being and the doing, expansive, glittering, vocal,

* p. 98.

evaporated; and one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others . . . and this self having shed its attachments was free for the strangest adventures. When life sank down for a moment, the range of experience seemed limitless."*

To convey these two levels of being—the surface and the spreading depths—was the challenge taken up by Virginia Woolf the memoir writer as well as by Virginia Woolf the novelist. As she once wrote of De Quincey: "To tell the whole story of a life the autobiographer must devise some means by which the two levels of existence can be recorded—the rapid passage of events and actions; the slow opening up of single and solemn moments of concentrated emotion."† In "A Sketch of the Past" the two levels are interwoven. The moments of being, sometimes charged with revelations of astonishing intensity, are threaded in among scenes, of typical days and occasions, describing the physical environment, the social forces, the family and personal attachments and passions, which shape the outer self.

The moment of intensity may come, as it once did in Virginia Woolf's own experience, from something as apparently trivial as seeing a flower and understanding it as part of a greater whole; such an experience was, for her, one of those moments which she described in the essay on De Quincey that 'transcend in value fifty years'. Such a moment for Virginia Woolf is one of recognition and then revelation—the value of which is independent of the object that is catalyst—and, as such, is very close to Joyce's notion of epiphany. One is reminded of the young Stephen Daedalus solemnly telling his friend Cranly 'that the clock of the Ballast office was capable of epiphany.'‡ The difficulties facing the writer who seeks to convey a value of this order are daunting in a special way; for such a moment has few consequences which can be objectively demonstrated. Furthermore, the experience of the moment of being is so personal, the belief in a transcending order so intuitive, that, as Virginia Woolf herself wrote in describing her 'philosophy': 'it will not bear arguing about; it is irrational'.

* The Hogarth Press; London, 1943. Uniform Edition, p. 99. *To the Lighthouse* was first published in 1927.

† *Collected Essays*, Vol. IV, p. 6.

‡ *Stephen Hero*, ed. T. Spencer, rev. ed. (New English Library; London, 1966), p. 216.

Although Virginia Woolf never believed that these moments of being were reserved for an élite she did believe that they were withheld from some. In both the memoirs and in the novels there are figures around whom precise outlines are drawn, in contrast to the supple, fluid lines which she commonly used to portray character. Such figures are so encrusted with the trivia of daily life, so attached to objects and values which are in the last analysis irrelevant, or so imprisoned by their egocentricity, that they are incapable of cutting themselves free from the material world: George Duckworth, Sibyl Colefax, Margot Asquith, in the memoirs; Hugh Whitbread, Miss Kilman and Charles Tansley in the novels. Reality never penetrates the cotton wool of their daily lives.

Belief in these moments of being both motivated and determined the direction of Virginia Woolf's experiments with the forms of fiction which eventually resulted in her discovery of a method—indeed a variety of methods—for recording the two worlds of being and non-being. Success, however, was only achieved through continuous and exacting experimentation. A comparison of her first two novels, *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*, with *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*, or of the early "Reminiscences" with the later memoir, "A Sketch of the Past", shows vividly the difficulties Virginia Woolf had to overcome before she successfully fused form, method and idea.

In "A Sketch of the Past" she considers, almost parenthetically, how her instinctive way of responding to experience cannot be separated from her literary methods nor from her belief in the pattern of significance behind the apparent contingency of the present moment. "But whatever the reason may be, I find that scene making is my natural way of marking the past. A scene always comes to the top; arranged; representative. This confirms me in my instinctive notion—it is irrational; it will not stand argument—that we are sealed vessels afloat upon what it is convenient to call reality; at some moments, without a reason, without an effort, the sealing matter cracks; in floods reality; that is a scene . . ."* In "A Sketch of the Past", as in most of her fiction, she imposed an order based on these moments of being and conveyed by means of these scenes.

Many of her novels are similarly organized; that is, scenes, characters, images and so on, that might initially appear to have been selected arbitrarily are subsequently revealed to be pieces of the

* p. 142.

hidden pattern. During the day of Mrs Dalloway's party not only do the scenes in the minds of the major characters suggest patterns of significance built up over a lifetime, of which only fragments are brought to the surface, but the sharp differences between Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith, reinforced by the implausible juxtapositions of scenes from their respective lives, are shown, by the revelation of this other reality—to be merely superficial. Similarly, in *To the Lighthouse* two passages of time separated by an interval of ten years and seemingly selected at random are ultimately locked in a pattern of significant moments in the minds of several of the characters.

Implicit in this approach to the past is the role of memory: for the moment of being is most often a 'sledge-hammer blow', a shock; the meaning unfolds after the experience. The decisive role which memory plays in Virginia Woolf's moments of being brings out her affinity with Wordsworth, specifically with his emphasis on 'emotion recollected in tranquillity'. Often, for Virginia Woolf, an experience would only begin to seem real once she had written about it; only then was its import recognized. Apparently she attached importance to the element of reflection involved from an early age: "That is the whole', I said. I was looking at a plant with a spread of leaves; and it seemed suddenly plain that the flower itself was a part of the earth; that a ring enclosed what was the flower; and that was the real flower; part earth; part flower. It was a thought I put away as being likely to be very useful to me later."* Thus memory, itself the test of the enduring quality of the moment of being, is invaluable in extending the dimensions of the moment; memory is the means by which the individual builds up patterns of personal significance to which to anchor his or her life and secure it against the 'lash of the random unheeding flail'. Witness the case of Septimus Warren Smith: when he lost his power to recall the past, he lost his will to survive the present.

Inseparable from this 'scene making' which is characteristic of both the memoirs and the fiction of Virginia Woolf is the 'symbol making' quality of her vision. In *To the Lighthouse*, 'a symbolical outline' transcends the 'real figures of Mr and Mrs Ramsay' as Lily and Mr Bankes approach them: "And suddenly the meaning which, for no reason at all, as perhaps they are stepping out of the Tube or ringing a doorbell, descends on people, making them symbolical,

* p. 71.

making them representative, came upon them, and made them in the dusk standing, looking, the symbols of marriage, husband and wife."* In "A Sketch of the Past", Virginia Woolf describes a similar personal experience of an ordinary object gradually being invested with just such a symbolic meaning. "And the tree outside in the August summer half light was giving me . . . a symbol of his [Jack's] agony; of our sterile agony; was summing it all up. Still the leafless tree is to me the emblem, the symbol, of those summer months."†

Certain images—involving sights, sounds, odours—also appear to have permeated the innermost fibres of her being, so that they too assume a symbolic significance: the waves breaking; the acorn of the blind being drawn across the floor; the nutty smelling gorse; the rooks cawing; the colour of the flowers on her mother's dress. Though these experiences occur on a purely sensual level they have that enduring force for Virginia Woolf which makes them no less moments of being than those flashes of recognition involving understanding.

In the mature fiction, the moments of being are threaded on a 'steel ring'—to borrow a phrase from *The Waves*. The ring exists beyond space and time, beyond the individual. When Mrs Dalloway experiences that reality most intensely, in the moment of identification with Septimus, she adds her moment to the 'steel ring'. She becomes—for that moment—part of the impersonal consciousness which is expressed through intricately woven patterns constructed out of recurring rhythms, symbols, images and phrases, patterns which deliberately violate the laws of probability governing the finite, material world. The ring is the pattern, the hidden order: "a steel ring of clear poetry", which Louis in *The Waves* searches for, "that shall connect the gulls and the women with bad teeth, the church spire and the bobbing billycock hats. . . ."‡

It is not however only the genesis of Virginia Woolf's vision and art which is shown with such clarity in these memoirs but also much of the raw material of her fiction. An appreciation of the fiction by no means requires a knowledge of its autobiographical roots but such knowledge cannot but enrich one's reading of the fiction, giving it a density of association like that which memory gives to the present moment. That Virginia Woolf's personal relationships have generated whole novels has been widely known since the publication

* pp. 114-15.

† p. 141.

‡ p. 92.

of *A Writer's Diary* and Quentin Bell's biography. There is her relationship with her father and mother which lies behind *To the Lighthouse*; her brother Thoby whose memory is honoured in *Jacob's Room* and in the character of Percival in *The Waves*; Kitty Maxse who contributed to the portrait of Mrs Dalloway. The present collection brings to light many sources for minor characters. George Duckworth pondering the question of whether the crest on the post office notepaper would look well picked out in red bears a striking resemblance to Hugh Whitbread in *Mrs Dalloway*, 'carrying a despatch box stamped with the Royal Arms', or 'drafting sentiments in alphabetical order of the highest nobility'. George's 'saintliness', the eagerness with which he always did 'the tactful thing', is woven into Hugh's reputation for being 'indispensable to hostesses'. Virginia Woolf's ruthless attentiveness to George's greed helps to explain the note of vindictiveness in the attack on Hugh's greediness. Lady Bruton's supreme nonchalance as well as her difficulties with the English language recall the portrait of the Marchioness of Bath lounging on her sofa and appealing to her butler: "what's marl, Middleton?"

The extent to which the most minor details in Virginia Woolf's fiction were drawn from specific experiences is perhaps less well known. The story of her father throwing the flower pot at his mother, whether apocryphal or not, is clearly the prototype for the incident in which Mr Ramsay "finding an earwig in his milk at breakfast had sent the whole thing flying through the air on to the terrace outside." The brooch which Minta lost in *To the Lighthouse* was most probably inspired by the one lost by a visitor to Talland House and 'cried' by Charlie Pearce, the town crier. Cam, at loggerheads with James because she insists that a shawl be thrown over the boar's skull, recreates the situation in the Stephen nursery when Virginia and Adrian argued about the fire which Adrian liked but which frightened Virginia if it burned after she had gone to bed. "As a compromise Nurse folded a towel over the fender. . . ." Innumerable incidents in the memoirs reappear in the novels, although almost always in slightly altered forms or new arrangements. But not only incidents, the images too which recur in novel after novel are so often those which seem to have been fixed immutably in Virginia Woolf's early consciousness. Certain sounds form the basis of rhythmic patterns which appear in the novels—for example, the waves breaking on the shore which reverberate throughout the

novel named after them. Other sounds play a less dramatic role, but are not less memorable, such as the sound of the latch on the gate at Talland House which can be heard again as Mrs Dalloway remembers: "For so it had always seemed to her when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now. . . ."

But the material of the fiction, however directly it appears to have been taken from her life, was nevertheless subtly transmuted in the creative process. Bits of one individual or incident are not infrequently found mixed with bits of another, but more significantly, the meaning of the thing created, whether character or incident, is rigorously subordinated to the design of the novel which, once established, generated its own principles of harmony and coherence. Apart from this caution against expecting the autobiographical material to 'explain' the fiction, the memoirs, whose undeniable intrinsic merit enables them to stand richly on their own, cannot but deepen the experience of reading the fiction by rooting it more firmly in the context of Virginia Woolf's life.

REMINISCENCES

Editor's Note

These reminiscences of Julia Stephen, Stella Duckworth and Vanessa Bell, the three figures who stood successively at the heart of the Stephen/Duckworth ménage at 22 Hyde Park Gate, were addressed to the first child of Vanessa and Clive Bell. Julian, however, can only be held responsible in a very remote sense for inspiring this memoir; for, according to Quentin Bell, it was begun before Julian's birth (February 1908) when Virginia was spending the summer holidays of 1907 in Playden, just north of Rye, where the Bells were staying.* The memoir is mentioned in two letters after Julian's birth: one, from Virginia to Clive, written on 15 April 1908, and another from Vanessa to Virginia from Cleeve House, of 20 April 1908.† In the letter to Clive it is clear that Virginia's feeling for Vanessa was a major source of inspiration: "I have been writing Nessa's life; and I am going to send you 2 chapters in a day or two. It might have been so good! As it is, I am too near, and too far; and it seems to be blurred, and I ask myself why write it at all? seeing I never shall recapture what you have, by your side this minute."‡

At the age of twenty-five, Virginia Woolf was very conscious of being an apprentice at her chosen craft. She had been reviewing since the end of 1904 but her own first 'work of imagination' as she called 'Melymbrosia' (published in 1915 as *The Voyage Out*) was only just begun. Of the exercises which she conscientiously assigned herself, descriptions of places visited and the lives of close friends or relations formed an important part.§ She showed these experiments only to a few intimates and on various occasions she declared her intention of rewriting them at set intervals. It is in such a provisional light that the "Reminiscences" should be read.

* QB, I, p. 122.

† In The Berg Collection, the New York Public Library.

‡ *Letters*, I, No. 406.

§ At this period of her life she wrote, for example, "lives" of her intimate friend Violet Dickinson, her Quaker Aunt Caroline Emelia Stephen and her Aunt Mary Fisher. The 'Life' of Violet is in the Berg Collection ("Friendship's Gallery") but the comic lives of the two aunts have not come to light. See *Letters*, I, No. 199.

A SKETCH OF THE PAST

Editor's Note

"A Sketch of the Past" covers some of the same ground as the preceding memoir but from such a different angle of vision that there is not, in a significant sense, any repetition. Virginia Woolf is near sixty when she begins this memoir. The present moment—1939–1940—is the platform on which she stands to explore the meaning behind certain indelibly printed experiences of her childhood and the figures who dominated that world. The first memories lead her, through the central figure of her mother, to St Ives, Cornwall, and Talland House where the Stephens spent their summer holidays from 1882 to 1897. This idyllic 'country' world is countered by descriptions of life in London, of the young Stephens growing up at 22 Hyde Park Gate enmeshed in a large network of relations and friends at the very nub of which is always Julia Stephen. Once again the shattering effect of her death is described and the reordering of family life around the eldest daughter, Stella, begins. Virginia's first mental illness occurs at this time but it is mentioned only in an earlier, rejected version, [MH/A.5c. The new arrangement of family life is first disturbed by Stella's marriage to Jack Hills and then destroyed by her death a bare three months later. The tensions within the household which hardly seemed to exist in Julia's lifetime and which were glossed over during Stella's reign become more pronounced: the serious, open-minded Stephen girls are forced to submit to George Duckworth's plans for their advancement, to enter 'Society' with its glitter, emptiness and rigid conventions; the young Stephens are silently antagonistic to the ageing Leslie Stephen who is increasingly deaf, increasingly isolated from reality and, at times, rudely tyrannical to his daughters. The outside world begins to exert a greater influence on the lives of the Stephens and the memoir loses on a typical day, around 1900, in this Victorian upper middle class family.

"A Sketch of the Past" was begun by Virginia Woolf on 18 April 1939, as relief from the exacting labours imposed by the writing of the biography of Roger Fry. The last entry is dated 17 November 1940, some four months before her death. The text that follows is based on two separate typescripts, one in the University of Sussex

Library (MH/A.5d) and the other in the British Library (BL 61973). They were clearly intended to run consecutively. Had this memoir been completed, it would undoubtedly have been considerably revised and extended.

A.5a consists of seventy pages typed by Virginia Woolf with corrections by her in black ink and soft lead pencil and by Leonard Woolf in blue ink. Leonard Woolf's corrections involve punctuation, spelling, clarification of Virginia's manuscript additions and the sorting out of the more obscure typing errors. These corrections have been retained when they conform to the principles set forth in the introductory 'Editor's Note'.

BL 61973 is a seventy-seven page typescript contained in a multi grip folder (from which it has been removed) labelled by Virginia Woolf "Sketch of the Past I" and numbered 70-147. Page 132 is missing. It is corrected in both pen and pencil by Virginia Woolf and further emended and elucidated by Leonard Woolf in pen and pencil. The first ten pages which are dated 'June 19th 1940' are typed on a different machine to the main body of the work. The Woolfs, who lived during the war at Monks House, were, according to Olivier Bell, in London at Mecklenburgh Square for three days, 17-20 June 1940. The British Library typescript is a much reworked and improved revision of MH/A.5d manuscript which was transcribed in the original edition of *Moments of Being* (on pages 107-37). The first twenty-seven pages (numbered 70-96), however, represent entirely new material for which there is no known manuscript version, apart from an eight-page manuscript fragment in the Berg Collection, "The tea table was the centre of Victorian life . . ." Two of the entries have dates prior to those of the related manuscript entries yet there is no doubt that the typescript is the later version as it incorporates many marginal notes in the manuscript and is far more polished in every respect. In most cases, Virginia Woolf did not trouble to delete material which she proceeded directly to rework. Such passages have been omitted in the present edition except when they clarify her thought or are themselves of interest. In such cases the reworked material has been included in a footnote. The relevant section of MH/A.5d has been inserted within brackets for the missing page in BL 61973, as has the last paragraph from MH/A.5d which contains material not reworked in the typescript.

Apart from A.5d, other items in the Monks House Papers are connected with the present text: A.5b; A.5c; A.5e; and A.13a. Their

value lies chiefly in the insight they afford into Virginia Woolf's working methods. The most interesting of them is A.5c, a twenty-one page manuscript, a part of which is an earlier version of a section of A.5a. On occasion it has proved useful in resolving obscurities in the latter. The remainder of the material of A.5c consists of lists of names, events and ideas to be developed later or brief sketches of other figures related to the Stephens which were not included in the 'a' revision. These items taken together with the more carefully revised 'a' typescript, the less revised 'd' manuscript, and the British Library typescript, represent a cross-section of various stages through which a work of Virginia Woolf's might characteristically pass—from the rough notes and first tentative sketches to a draft approaching the final stage of preparation—with, of course, the important exception of the complete typed revisions of which there might be many.

A Sketch of the Past

Two days ago—Sunday 16th April 1939 to be precise—Nessa said that if I did not start writing my memoirs I should soon be too old. I should be eighty-five, and should have forgotten—witness the unhappy case of Lady Strachey.* As it happens that I am sick of writing Roger's life, perhaps I will spend two or three mornings making a sketch.† There are several difficulties. In the first place, the enormous number of things I can remember; in the second, the number of different ways in which memoirs can be written. As a great memoir reader, I know many different ways. But if I begin to go through them and to analyse them and their merits and faults, the mornings—I cannot take more than two or three at most—will be gone. So without stopping to choose my way, in the sure and certain knowledge that it will find itself—or if not it will not matter—I begin: the first memory.

This was of red and purple flowers on a black ground—my mother's dress; and she was sitting either in a train or in an omnibus, and I was on her lap. I therefore saw the flowers she was wearing very close; and can still see purple and red and blue, I think, against the black; they must have been anemones, I suppose. Perhaps we were going to St Ives; more probably, for from the light it must have been evening, we were coming back to London. But it is more convenient artistically to suppose that we were going to St Ives, for that will lead to my other memory, which also seems to be my first memory, and in fact it is the most important of all my memories. If life has a base that it stands upon, if it is a bowl that one fills and fills and fills—then my bowl without a doubt stands upon this memory. It is of lying half asleep, half awake, in bed in the nursery at St Ives. It is of hearing the waves breaking, one, two, one, two, and sending a splash of water over the beach; and then breaking, one, two, one, two, behind a yellow blind. It is of hearing the

* Lady Strachey, mother of Lytton, died at the age of eighty-nine, in 1928. In old age she wrote "Some Recollections of a Long Life" which were very short—less than a dozen pages in *Nation and Athenaeum*. This may indicate, as Michael Holroyd has suggested, that by the early 1920s she had forgotten more than she remembered.

† VW was at work on *Roger Fry: A Biography* (The Hogarth Press; London, 1940).

blind draw its little acorn across the floor as the wind blew the blind out. It is of lying and hearing this splash and seeing this light, and feeling, it is almost impossible that I should be here; of feeling the purest ecstasy I can conceive.

I could spend hours trying to write that as it should be written, in order to give the feeling which is even at this moment very strong in me. But I should fail (unless I had some wonderful luck); I dare say I should only succeed in having the luck if I had begun by describing Virginia herself.

Here I come to one of the memoir writer's difficulties—one of the reasons why, though I read so many, so many are failures. They leave out the person to whom things happened. The reason is that it is so difficult to describe any human being. So they say: "This is what happened"; but they do not say what the person was like to whom it happened. And the events mean very little unless we know first to whom they happened. Who was I then? Adeline Virginia Stephen, the second daughter of Leslie and Julia Prinsep Stephen, born on 25th January 1882, descended from a great many people, some famous, others obscure; born into a large connection, born not of rich parents, but of well-to-do parents, born into a very communicative, literate, letter writing, visiting, articulate, late nineteenth century world; so that I could if I liked to take the trouble, write a great deal here not only about my mother and father but about uncles and aunts, cousins and friends. But I do not know how much of this, or what part of this, made me feel what I felt in the nursery at St Ives. I do not know how far I differ from other people. That is another memoir writer's difficulty. Yet to describe oneself truly one must have some standard of comparison; was I clever, stupid, good looking, ugly, passionate, cold—? Owing partly to the fact that I was never at school, never competed in any way with children of my own age, I have never been able to compare my gifts and defects with other people's. But of course there was one external reason for the intensity of this first impression: the impression of the waves and the acorn on the blind; the feeling, as I describe it sometimes to myself, of lying in a grape and seeing through a film of semi-transparent yellow—it was due partly to the many months we spent in London. The change of nursery was a great change. And there was the long train journey; and the excitement. I remember the dark; the lights; the stir of the going up to bed.

But to fix my mind upon the nursery—it had a balcony; there

was a partition, but it joined the balcony of my father's and mother's bedroom. My mother would come out onto her balcony in a white dressing gown. There were passion flowers growing on the wall; they were great starry blossoms, with purple streaks, and large green buds, part empty, part full.

If I were a painter I should paint these first impressions in pale yellow, silver, and green. There was the pale yellow blind; the green sea; and the silver of the passion flowers. I should make a picture that was globular; semi-transparent. I should make a picture of curved petals; of shells; of things that were semi-transparent; I should make curved shapes, showing the light through, but not giving a clear outline. Everything would be large and dim; and what was seen would at the same time be heard; sounds would come through this petal or leaf—sounds indistinguishable from sights. Sound and sight seem to make equal parts of these first impressions. When I think of the early morning in bed I also hear the caw of rooks falling from a great height. The sound seems to fall through an elastic, gummy air; which holds it up; which prevents it from being sharp and distinct.* The quality of the air above Talland House seemed to suspend sound, to let it sink down slowly, as if it were caught in a blue gummy veil. The rooks cawing is part of the waves breaking—one, two, one, two—and the splash as the wave drew back and then it gathered again, and I lay there half awake, half asleep, drawing in such ecstasy as I cannot describe.

The next memory—all these colour-and-sound memories hang together at St Ives—was much more robust; it was highly sensual. It was later. It still makes me feel warm; as if everything were ripe; humming; sunny; smelling so many smells at once; and all making a whole that even now makes me stop—as I stopped then going down to the beach; I stopped at the top to look down at the gardens. They were sunk beneath the road. The apples were on a level with one's head. The gardens gave off a murmur of bees; the apples were red and gold; there were also pink flowers; and grey and silver leaves. The buzz, the croon, the smell, all seemed to press voluptuously against some membrane; not to burst it; but to hum round one such a complete rapture of pleasure that I stopped, smelt; looked. But again I cannot describe that rapture. It was rapture rather than ecstasy.

* VW has written 'made it seem to fall from a great height' above 'prevents . . . distinct.'

The strength of these pictures—but sight was always then so much mixed with sound that picture is not the right word—the strength anyhow of these impressions makes me again digress. Those moments—in the nursery, on the road to the beach—can still be more real than the present moment. This I have just tested. For I got up and crossed the garden. Percy was digging the asparagus bed; Louie was shaking a mat in front of the bedroom door.* But I was seeing them through the sight I saw here—the nursery and the road to the beach. At times I can go back to St Ives more completely than I can this morning. I can reach a state where I seem to be watching things happen as if I were there. That is, I suppose, that my memory supplies what I had forgotten, so that it seems as if it were happening independently, though I am really making it happen. In certain favourable moods, memories—what one has forgotten—come to the top. Now if this is so, is it not possible—I often wonder—that things we have felt with great intensity have an existence independent of our minds; are in fact still in existence? And if so, will it not be possible, in time, that some device will be invented by which we can tap them? I see it—the past—as an avenue lying behind; a long ribbon of scenes, emotions. There at the end of the avenue still, are the garden and the nursery. Instead of remembering here a scene and there a sound, I shall fit a plug into the wall; and listen in to the past. I shall turn up August 1890. I feel that strong emotion must leave its trace; and it is only a question of discovering how we can get ourselves again attached to it, so that we shall be able to live our lives through from the start.

But the peculiarity of these two strong memories is that each was very simple. I am hardly aware of myself, but only of the sensation. I am only the container of the feeling of ecstasy, of the feeling of rapture. Perhaps this is characteristic of all childhood memories; perhaps it accounts for their strength. Later we add to feelings much that makes them more complex; and therefore less strong; or if not less strong, less isolated, less complete. But instead of analysing this, here is an instance of what I mean—my feeling about the looking-glass in the hall.

There was a small looking-glass in the hall at Talland House. It had, I remember, a ledge with a brush on it. By standing on tiptoe I could see my face in the glass. When I was six or seven perhaps, I

* The gardener and daily help, respectively, at Monks House, the country home of the Woolfs in Rodmell, Sussex from 1919.

got into the habit of looking at my face in the glass. But I only did this if I was sure that I was alone. I was ashamed of it. A strong feeling of guilt seemed naturally attached to it. But why was this so? One obvious reason occurs to me—Vanessa and I were both what was called tomboys; that is, we played cricket, scrambled over rocks, climbed trees, were said not to care for clothes and so on. Perhaps therefore to have been found looking in the glass would have been against our tomboy code. But I think that my feeling of shame went a great deal deeper. I am almost inclined to drag in my grandfather—Sir James, who once smoked a cigar, liked it, and so threw away his cigar and never smoked another. I am almost inclined to think that I inherited a streak of the puritan, of the Clapham Sect.* At any rate, the looking-glass shame has lasted all my life, long after the tomboy phase was over. I cannot now powder my nose in public. Everything to do with dress—to be fitted, to come into a room wearing a new dress—still frightens me; at least makes me shy, self-conscious, uncomfortable. “Oh to be able to run, like Julian Morrell, all over the garden in a new dress”, I thought not many years ago at Garsington; when Julian undid a parcel and put on a new dress and scampered round and round like a hare.† Yet femininity was very strong in our family. We were famous for our beauty—my mother’s beauty, Stella’s beauty, gave me as early as I can remember, pride and pleasure. What then gave me this feeling of shame, unless it were that I inherited some opposite instinct? My father was spartan, ascetic, puritanical. He had I think no feeling for pictures; no ear for music; no sense of the sound of words. This leads me to think that my—I would say ‘our’ if I knew enough about Vanessa, Thoby and Adrian—but how little we know even about brothers and sisters—this leads me to think that my natural love for beauty was checked by some ancestral dread. Yet this did not prevent me from feeling ecstasies and raptures spontaneously and intensely and without any shame or the least sense of guilt, so long as they were disconnected with my own body. I thus detect another element in the shame which I had in being caught looking at myself in the glass in the hall. I must have been ashamed or afraid of my own body. Another memory, also of the hall, may help to explain

* In marrying Jane Catherine Venn, James Stephen had allied himself with the very heart of the Clapham Sect.

† Julian Morrell was the daughter of Ottoline and Philip Morrell; Garsington Manor was their house in Oxfordshire.

this. There was a slab outside the dining room door for standing dishes upon. Once when I was very small Gerald Duckworth lifted me onto this, and as I sat there he began to explore my body. I can remember the feel of his hand going under my clothes; going firmly and steadily lower and lower. I remember how I hoped that he would stop; how I stiffened and wriggled as his hand approached my private parts. But it did not stop. His hand explored my private parts too. I remember resenting, disliking it—what is the word for, so dumb and mixed a feeling? It must have been strong, since I still recall it. This seems to show that a feeling about certain parts of the body; how they must not be touched; how it is wrong to allow them to be touched; must be instinctive. It proves that Virginia Stephen was not born on the 25th January 1882, but was born many thousands of years ago; and had from the very first to encounter instincts already acquired by thousands of ancestresses in the past.

And this throws light not merely on my own case, but upon the problem that I touched on the first page; why it is so difficult to give any account of the person to whom things happen. The person is evidently immensely complicated. Witness the incident of the looking-glass. Though I have done my best to explain why I was ashamed of looking at my own face I have only been able to discover some possible reasons; there may be others; I do not suppose that I have got at the truth; yet this is a simple incident; and it happened to me personally; and I have no motive for lying about it. In spite of all this, people write what they call ‘lives’ of other people; that is, they collect a number of events, and leave the person to whom it happened unknown. Let me add a dream; for it may refer to the incident of the looking-glass. I dreamt that I was looking in a glass when a horrible face—the face of an animal—suddenly showed over my shoulder. I cannot be sure if this was a dream, or if it happened. Was I looking in the glass one day when something in the background moved, and seemed to me alive? I cannot be sure. But I have always remembered the other face in the glass, whether it was a dream or a fact, and that it frightened me.

These then are some of my first memories. But of course as an account of my life they are misleading, because the things one does not remember are as important; perhaps they are more important. If I could remember one whole day I should be able to describe, superficially at least, what life was like as a child. Unfortunately, one only remembers what is exceptional. And there seems to be no

reason why one thing is exceptional and another not. Why have I forgotten so many things that must have been, one would have thought, more memorable than what I do remember? Why remember the hum of bees in the garden going down to the beach, and forget completely being thrown naked by father into the sea? (Mrs Swanwick says she saw that happen.)*

This leads to a digression, which perhaps may explain a little of my own psychology; even of other people's. Often when I have been writing one of my so-called novels I have been baffled by this same problem; that is, how to describe what I call in my private shorthand—"non-being". Every day includes much more non-being than being. Yesterday for example, Tuesday the 18th of April, was [as] it happened a good day; above the average in "being". It was fine; I enjoyed writing these first pages; my head was relieved of the pressure of writing about Roger; I walked over Mount Misery† and along the river; and save that the tide was out, the country, which I notice very closely always, was coloured and shaded as I like—there were the willows, I remember, all plummy and soft green and purple against the blue. I also read Chaucer with pleasure; and began a book—the memoirs of Madame de la Fayette—which interested me. These separate moments of being were however embedded in many more moments of non-being. I have already forgotten what Leonard and I talked about at lunch; and at tea; although it was a good day the goodness was embedded in a kind of nondescript cotton wool. This is always so. A great part of every day is not lived consciously. One walks, eats, sees things, deals with what has to be done; the broken vacuum cleaner; ordering dinner; writing orders to Mabel; washing; cooking dinner; bookbinding. When it is a bad day the proportion of non-being is much larger. I had a slight temperature last week; almost the whole day was non-being. The real novelist can somehow convey both sorts of being. I think Jane Austen can; and Trollope; perhaps Thackeray and Dickens and Tolstoy. I have never been able to do both. I tried—in *Night and Day*; and in *The Years*. But I will leave the literary side alone for the moment.

* Mrs Swanwick was the only daughter of Oswald and Eleanor Sickert. In her autobiography, *I Have Been Young* (London, 1935), she recalls having known Leslie Stephen at St Ives: "We watched with delight his naked babies running about the beach or being towed into the sea between his legs, and their beautiful mother."

† Two cottages on the down between Southease and Piddinghoe known locally as Mount Misery

As a child then, my days, just as they do now, contained a large proportion of this cotton wool, this non-being. Week after week passed at St Ives and nothing made any dint upon me. Then, for no reason that I know about, there was a sudden violent shock; something happened so violently that I have remembered it all my life. I will give a few instances. The first: I was fighting with Thoby on the lawn. We were pommelling each other with our fists. Just as I raised my fist to hit him, I felt: why hurt another person? I dropped my hand instantly, and stood there, and let him beat me. I remember the feeling. It was a feeling of hopeless sadness. It was as if I became aware of something terrible; and of my own powerlessness. I slunk off alone, feeling horribly depressed. The second instance was also in the garden at St Ives. I was looking at the flower bed by the front door; "That is the whole", I said. I was looking at a plant with a spread of leaves; and it seemed suddenly plain that the flower itself was a part of the earth; that a ring enclosed what was the flower; and that was the real flower; part earth; part flower. It was a thought I put away as being likely to be very useful to me later. The third case was also at St Ives. Some people called Valpy had been staying at St Ives, and had left. We were waiting at dinner one night, when somehow I overheard my father or my mother say that Mr Valpy had killed himself. The next thing I remember is being in the garden at night and walking on the path by the apple tree. It seemed to me that the apple tree was connected with the horror of Mr Valpy's suicide. I could not pass it. I stood there looking at the grey-green creases of the bark—it was a moonlit night—in a trance of horror. I seemed to be dragged down, hopelessly, into some pit of absolute despair from which I could not escape. My body seemed paralysed.

These are three instances of exceptional moments. I often tell them over, or rather they come to the surface unexpectedly. But now that for the first time I have written them down, I realise something that I have never realised before. Two of these moments ended in a state of despair. The other ended, on the contrary, in a state of satisfaction. When I said about the flower "That is the whole," I felt that I had made a discovery. I felt that I had put away in my mind something that I should go back [to], to turn over and explore. It strikes me now that this was a profound difference. It was the difference in the first place between despair and satisfaction. This difference I think arose from the fact that I was quite unable to deal

with the pain of discovering that people hurt each other, that a man I had seen had killed himself. The sense of horror held me powerless. But in the case of the flower I found a reason; and was thus able to deal with the sensation. I was not powerless. I was conscious—if only at a distance—that I should in time explain it. I do not know if I was older when I saw the flower than I was when I had the other two experiences. I only know that many of these exceptional moments brought with them a peculiar horror and a physical collapse; they seemed dominant; myself passive. This suggests that as one gets older one has a greater power through reason to provide an explanation; and that this explanation blunts the sledge-hammer force of the blow. I think this is true, because though I still have the peculiarity that I receive these sudden shocks, they are now always welcome; after the first surprise, I always feel instantly that they are particularly valuable. And so I go on to suppose that the shock-receiving capacity is what makes me a writer. I hazard the explanation that a shock is at once in my case followed by the desire to explain it. I feel that I have had a blow; but it is not, as I thought as a child, simply a blow from an enemy hidden behind the cotton wool of daily life; it is or will become a revelation of some order; it is a token of some real thing behind appearances; and I make it real by putting it into words. It is only by putting it into words that I make it whole; this wholeness means that it has lost its power to hurt me; it gives me, perhaps because by doing so I take away the pain, a great delight to put the severed parts together. Perhaps this is the strongest pleasure known to me. It is the rapture I get when in writing I seem to be discovering what belongs to what; making a scene come right; making a character come together. From this I reach what I might call a philosophy; at any rate it is a constant idea of mine; that behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we—I mean all human beings—are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art. *Hamlet* or a Beethoven quartet is the truth about this vast mass that we call the world. But there is no Shakespeare, there is no Beethoven; certainly and emphatically there is no God; we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself. And I see this when I have a shock.

This intuition of mine—it is so instinctive that it seems given to me, not made by me—has certainly given its scale to my life ever since I saw the flower in the bed by the front door at St Ives. If I

were painting myself I should have to find some—rod, shall I say—something that would stand for the conception. It proves that one's life is not confined to one's body and what one says and does; one is living all the time in relation to certain background rods or conceptions. Mine is that there is a pattern hid behind the cotton wool. And this conception affects me every day. I prove this, now, by spending the morning writing, when I might be walking, running a shop, or learning to do something that will be useful if war comes. I feel that by writing I am doing what is far more necessary than anything else.

All artists I suppose feel something like this. It is one of the obscure elements in life that has never been much discussed. It is left out in almost all biographies and autobiographies, even of artists. Why did Dickens spend his entire life writing stories? What was his conception? I bring in Dickens partly because I am reading *Nicholas Nickleby* at the moment; also partly because it struck me, on my walk yesterday, that these moments of being of mine were scaffolding in the background; were the invisible and silent part of my life as a child. But in the foreground there were of course people; and these people were very like characters in Dickens. They were caricatures; they were very simple; they were immensely alive. They could be made with three strokes of the pen, if I could do it. Dickens owes his astonishing power to make characters alive to the fact that he saw them as a child sees them; as I saw Mr Wolstenholme; C. B. Clarke, and Mr Gibbs.

I name these three people because they all died when I was a child. Therefore they have never been altered. I see them exactly as I saw them then. Mr Wolstenholme was a very old gentleman who came every summer to stay with us. He was brown; he had a beard and very small eyes in fat cheeks; and he fitted into a brown wicker beehive chair as if it had been his nest. He used to sit in this beehive chair smoking and reading. He had only one characteristic—that when he ate plum tart he spurted the juice through his nose so that it made a purple stain on his grey moustache. This seemed enough to cause us perpetual delight. We called him 'The Woolly One'. By way of shading him a little I remember that we had to be kind to him because he was not happy at home; that he was very poor, yet once gave Thoby half a crown; that he had a son who was drowned in Australia; and I know too that he was a great mathematician. He never said a word all the time I knew him. But he still

seems to me a complete character; and whenever I think of him I begin to laugh.

Mr Gibbs was perhaps less simple. He wore a tie ring; had a bald, benevolent head; was dry; neat; precise; and had folds of skin under his chin. He made father groan—"why can't you go—why can't you go?" And he gave Vanessa and myself two ermine skins, with slits down the middle out of which poured endless wealth—streams of silver. I also remember him lying in bed, dying; husky; in a night shirt; and showing us drawings by Retzsch.* The character of Mr Gibbs also seems to me complete and amuses me very much.

As for C. B. Clarke, he was an old botanist; and he said to my father "All you young botanists like *Osmunda*." He had an aunt aged eighty who went for a walking tour in the New Forest. That is all—that is all I have to say about these three old gentlemen. But how real they were! How we laughed at them! What an immense part they played in our lives!

One more caricature comes into my mind; though pity entered into this one. I am thinking of Justine Nonon. She was immensely old. Little hairs sprouted on her long bony chin. She was a hunchback; and walked like a spider, feeling her way with her long dry fingers from one chair to another. Most of the time she sat in the arm-chair beside the fire. I used to sit on her knee; and her knee jogged up and down; and she sang in a hoarse cracked voice "Ron ron ron—et plon plon plon—" and then her knee gave and I was tumbled onto the floor. She was French; she had been with the Thackerays. She only came to us on visits. She lived by herself at Shepherd's Bush; and used to bring Adrian a glass jar of honey. I got the notion that she was extremely poor; and it made me uncomfortable that she brought this honey, because I felt she did it by way of making her visit acceptable. She said too: "I have come in my carriage and pair"—which meant the red omnibus. For this too I pitied her; also because she began to wheeze; and the nurses said she would not live much longer; and soon she died. That is all I know about her; but I remember her as if she were a completely real person, with nothing left out, like the three old men.

* Friedrich Retzsch (1779–1857), a German engraver widely known in Germany and England. The ts has 'Ketsch' which is obviously a typing error.

and May . . . I write the date, because I think that I have discovered a possible form for these notes. That is, to make them include the present—at least enough of the present to serve as platform to stand upon. It would be interesting to make the two people, I think now, I then, come out in contrast. And further, this past is much affected by the present moment. What I write today I should not write in a year's time. But I cannot work this out; it had better be left to chance, as I write by fits and starts by way of a holiday from Roger. I have no energy at the moment to spend upon the horrid labour that it needs to make an orderly and expressed work of art; where one thing follows another and all are swept into a whole. Perhaps one day, relieved from making works of art, I will try to compose this.

But to continue—the three old men and the one old woman are complete, as I was saying, because they died when I was a child. They none of them lived on to be altered as I altered—as others, like the Stillmans or the Lushingtons, lived on and were added to and filled and left finally incomplete. The same thing applies to places. I cannot see Kensington Gardens as I saw it as a child because I saw it only two days ago—on a chill afternoon, all the cherry trees lurid in the cold yellow light of a hail storm. I know that it was very much larger in 1890 when I was seven than it is now. For one thing, it was not connected with Hyde Park. Now I walk from one to the other. We drive in our car; and leave it by the new kiosk. But then there was the Broad Walk, the Round Pond, and the Flower Walk. Then—I will try to get back to then—there were two gates, one opposite Gloucester Road, the other opposite Queen's Gate. At each gate sat an old woman. The Queen's Gate old woman was an elongated, emaciated figure with a goat-like face, yellow and pockmarked. She sold nuts and boot-laces, I think. And Kitty Maxse said of her: "Poor things, it's drink that makes them like that." She always sat, and wore a shawl and had to me a faint, obliterated, debased likeness to Granny; whose face was elongated too, but she wore a very soft shawl, like tapioca pudding, over her head, and it was fastened by an amethyst brooch set in pearls. The other old woman was round and squat. To her was attached a whole wobbling balloon of air-balls. She held this billowing, always moving, most desirable mass by one string. They glowed in my eyes always red and purple, like the flower my mother wore; and they were always billowing in the air. For a penny, she would detach one from the bellying soft mass, and I

would dance away with it. She too wore a shawl and her face was puckered, as the air-balls puckered in the nursery if they survived to be taken home. I think Nurse and Sooney were on speaking terms with her; but I never heard what she said. Anemones, the blue and purple bunches that are now being sold, always bring back that quivering mound of air-balls outside the gate of Kensington Gardens.

Then we went up the Broad Walk. The Broad Walk had a peculiar property—when we took our first walk there after coming back from St Ives, we always abused it; it was not a hill at all, we said. By degrees as the weeks passed the hill became steeper and steeper until by the summer it was a hill again. The swamp—as we called the rather derelict ground behind the Flower Walk—had to Adrian and myself at least the glamour of the past on it. When Nessa and Thoby were very small, that is to say, it had been, they told us, a real swamp; they had found the skeleton of a dog there. And it must have been covered with reeds and full of pools, we thought, for we believed that the dog had been starved and drowned. In our day it had been drained, though it was still muddy. But it had a past always to us. And we compared it, of course, with Halestown bog* near St Ives. Halestown bog where the *Osmunda* grew; and those thick ferns with bulbous roots that had trees marked on them, if you cut them across. I brought some home every autumn to make into pen holders. It was natural always to compare Kensington Gardens with St Ives, always of course to the disadvantage of London. That was one of the pleasures of scrunching the shells with which now and then the Flower Walk was strewn. They had little ribs on them like the shells on the beach. On the other hand the crocodile tree was itself; and is still there—the tree on the Speke Monument path;† which has a great root exposed; and the root is polished, partly by the friction of our hands, for we used to scramble over it.

As we walked, to beguile the dulness [of] innumerable winter walks we made up stories, long long stories that were taken up at the same place and added to each in turn. There was the Jim Joe and Harry Hoe story; about three brothers who had herds of animals and adventures—I have forgotten what. But there again, the Jim Joe and Harry Hoe story was a London story; and inferior to the Talland House garden story about Beccage and Hollywinks; spirits

* Halse Town bog which the Stephens always called 'Halestown bog'.

† The red granite obelisk in Kensington Gardens dedicated to the memory of the explorer John Hanning Speke.

of evil who lived on the rubbish heap; and disappeared through a hole in the escallonia hedge—as I remember telling my mother and Mr Lowell.* Walks in Kensington Gardens were dull. Non-being made up a great proportion of our time in London. The walks—twice every day in Kensington Gardens—were so monotonous. Speaking for myself, non-being lay thick over those years. Past the thermometer we went—sometimes it was below the little freezing bar but not often save in the great 1894–5 winter when we skated every day; when I dropped my watch and the rough man gave it me; and asked for money; and a kind lady offered three coppers; and he said he would only take silver; and she shook her head and faded away—past the thermometer we went, past the gate-keeper in his green livery and his gold laced hat, up the Flower Walk, round the pond. We sailed boats of course. There was the great day when my Cornish lugger sailed perfectly to the middle of the pond and then with my eyes upon it, amazed, sank suddenly; "Did you see that?" my father cried, coming striding towards me. We had both seen it and both were amazed. To make the wonder complete, many weeks later in the spring, I was walking by the pond and a man in a flat-boat was dredging the pond of duckweed, and to my unspeakable excitement, up he brought my lugger in his dredging net; and I claimed it; and he gave it me, and I ran home with this marvellous story to tell. Then my mother made new sails; and my father rigged it, and I remember seeing him fixing the sails to the yard-arm after dinner; and how interested he became and said, with his little snort, half laughing, something like "Absurd—what fun it is doing this!"

I could collect a great many more floating incidents—scenes in Kensington Gardens; how if we had a penny we went to the white house near the palace and bought sweets from the smooth-faced, pink-cheeked woman in a grey cotton dress who used then to keep a sweet shop there; how on one day of the week we bought *Tit-Bits* and read the jokes—I liked the Correspondence best—sitting on the grass, breaking our chocolate into "Frys" as we called them, for a penny slab was divided into four; how we knocked into a lady racing our go-cart round a steep corner, and her sister scolded us violently; how we tied Shag to a railing, and some children told the Park Keeper that we were cruel—but the stories were not then very

* James Russell Lowell, the poet and critic, American Ambassador to the Court of St James 1880–85, and friend of Leslie Stephen, was Virginia's godfather.

exciting; though they helped to break up the eternal round of Kensington Gardens.

What then has remained interesting? Again those moments of being. Two I always remember. There was the moment of the puddle in the path; when for no reason I could discover, everything suddenly became unreal; I was suspended; I could not step across the puddle; I tried to touch something . . . the whole world became unreal. Next, the other moment when the idiot boy sprang up with his hand outstretched mewling, slit-eyed, red-rimmed; and without saying a word, with a sense of the horror in me, I poured into his hand a bag of Russian toffee. But it was not over, for that night in the bath the dumb horror came over me. Again I had that hopeless sadness; that collapse I have described before; as if I were passive under some sledge-hammer blow; exposed to a whole avalanche of meaning that had heaped itself up and discharged itself upon me, unprotected, with nothing to ward it off, so that I huddled up at my end of the bath, motionless. I could not explain it; I said nothing even to Nessa sponging herself at the other end.

Looking back, then, at Kensington Gardens, though I can recover incidents, many more than I have patience to describe, I cannot recover, save by fits and starts, the focus, the proportions of the external world. It seems to me that a child must have a curious focus; it sees an air-ball or a shell with extreme distinctness; I still see the air-balls, blue and purple, and the ribs on the shells; but these points are enclosed in vast empty spaces. How large for instance was the space beneath the nursery table! I see it still as a great black space with the table-cloth hanging down in folds on the outskirts in the distance; and myself roaming about there, and meeting Nessa. "Have black cats got tails?" she asked, and I said "NO", and was proud because she had asked me a question. Then we roamed off again into that vast space. The night nursery was vast too. In winter I would slip in before bed to take a look at the fire. I was very anxious to see that the fire was low, because it frightened me if it burnt after we went to bed. I dreaded that little flickering flame on the walls; but Adrian liked it; and to make a compromise, Nurse folded a towel over the fender; but I could not help opening my eyes, and there often was the flickering flame; and I looked and looked and could not sleep; and in order to have company, said "What did you say, Nessa?" although she was asleep, to wake her and to hear someone's voice. These were early

years; for later, when Thoby had gone to school, leaving Nessa to take his monkey Jacko to bed with her, no sooner was the door shut than we began story-telling. The story always began thus: "Clémont* dear child, said Mrs Dilke," and it went on to tell wild stories of the Dilke family† and Miss Rosalba the governess; how they dug under the floor and discovered sacks of gold; and held great feasts and ate fried eggs "with plenty of frizzling", for the wealth of the Dilkes in real life compared with our own moderate means impressed us. We noticed how many new clothes Mrs Dilke wore; how seldom my mother bought a new dress.

Many bright colours; many distinct sounds; some human beings, caricatures; comic; several violent moments of being, always including a circle of the scene which they cut out: and all surrounded by a vast space—that is a rough visual description of childhood. This is how I shape it; and how I see myself as a child, roaming about, in that space of time which lasted from 1882 to 1895. A great hall I could liken it to; with windows letting in strange lights; and murmurs and spaces of deep silence. But somehow into that picture must be brought, too, the sense of movement and change. Nothing remained stable long. One must get the feeling of everything approaching and then disappearing, getting large, getting small, passing at different rates of speed past the little creature; one must get the feeling that made her press on, the little creature driven on as she was by growth of her legs and arms, driven without her being able to stop it, or to change it, driven as a plant is driven up out of the earth, up until the stalk grows, the leaf grows, buds swell. That is what is indescribable, that is what makes all images too static, for no sooner has one said this was so, than it was past and altered. How immense must be the force of life which turns a baby, who can just distinguish a great blot of blue and purple on a black background, into the child who thirteen years later can feel all that I felt on May 5th 1895—now almost exactly to a day, forty-four years ago—when my mother died.

This shows that among the innumerable things left out in my sketch I have left out the most important—those instincts, affections,

* In a paper written by Vanessa Bell for the Memoir Club ("Notes on Virginia's Childhood, a Memoir", ed. Richard Schaubek, Jr.: Frank Hallman; New York, 1974) 'Clémont' is spelled 'Clémenté'.

† Next door neighbours.

passions, attachments—there is no single word for them, for they changed month by month—which bound me, I suppose, from the first moment of consciousness to other people. If it were true, as I said above, that the things that ceased in childhood, are easy to describe because they are complete, then it should be easy to say what I felt for my mother, who died when I was thirteen. Thus I should be able to see her completely undisturbed by later impressions, as I saw Mr Gibbs and C. B. Clarke. But the theory, though true of them, breaks down completely with her. It breaks down in a curious way, which I will explain, for perhaps it may help to explain why I find it now so curiously difficult to describe both my feeling for her, and her herself.

Until I was in the forties—I could settle the date by seeing when I wrote *To the Lighthouse*, but am too casual here to bother to do it—the presence of my mother obsessed me.* I could hear her voice, see her, imagine what she would do or say as I went about my day's doings. She was one of the invisible presences who after all play so important a part in every life. This influence, by which I mean the consciousness of other groups impinging upon ourselves; public opinion; what other people say and think; all those magnets which attract us this way to be like that, or repel us the other and make us different from that; has never been analysed in any of those Lives which I so much enjoy reading, or very superficially.

Yet it is by such invisible presences that the "subject of this memoir" is tugged this way and that every day of his life; it is they that keep him in position. Consider what immense forces society brings to play upon each of us, how that society changes from decade to decade; and also from class to class; well, if we cannot analyse these invisible presences, we know very little of the subject of the memoir; and again how futile life-writing becomes. I see myself as a fish in a stream; deflected; held in place; but cannot describe the stream.

To return to the particular instance which should be more definite and more capable of description than for example the influence on me of the Cambridge Apostles,† or the influence of the

* *To the Lighthouse* was begun in 1925 and published in 1927 when VW was forty-five.

† The popular name for the semi-secret 'Cambridge Conversazione Society' which was founded in the 1820s. All the young men who formed the nucleus of 'old Bloomsbury' belonged to it, except Clive Bell and Thoby Stephen.

Galsworthy, Bennett, Wells school of fiction, or the influence of the Vote, or of the War—that is, the influence of my mother. It is perfectly true that she obsessed me, in spite of the fact that she died when I was thirteen, until I was forty-four. Then one day walking round Tavistock Square I made up, as I sometimes make up my books, *To the Lighthouse*; in a great, apparently involuntary, rush.* One thing burst into another. Blowing bubbles out of a pipe gives the feeling of the rapid crowd of ideas and scenes which blew out of my mind, so that my lips seemed syllabling of their own accord as I walked. What blew the bubbles? Why then? I have no notion. But I wrote the book very quickly; and when it was written, I ceased to be obsessed by my mother. I no longer hear her voice; I do not see her.

I suppose that I did for myself what psycho-analysts do for their patients. I expressed some very long felt and deeply felt emotion. And in expressing it I explained it and then laid it to rest. But what is the meaning of "explained" it? Why, because I described her and my feeling for her in that book, should my vision of her and my feeling for her become so much dimmer and weaker? Perhaps one of these days I shall hit on the reason; and if so, I will give it, but at the moment I will go on, describing what I can remember, for it may be true that what I remember of her now will weaken still further. (This note is made provisionally, in order to explain in part why it is now so difficult to give any clear description of her.)

Certainly there she was, in the very centre of that great Cathedral space which was childhood; there she was from the very first. My first memory is of her lap; the scratch of some beads on her dress comes back to me as I pressed my cheek against it. Then I see her in her white dressing gown on the balcony; and the passion flower with the purple star on its petals. Her voice is still faintly in my ears—decided, quick; and in particular the little drops with which her laugh ended—three diminishing ahs... "Ah—ah—ah..." I sometimes end a laugh that way myself. And I see her hands, like Adrian's, with the very individual square-tipped fingers, each finger with a waist to it, and the nail broadening out. (My own are the same size all the way, so that I can slip a ring over my thumb.) She had three rings; a diamond ring, an emerald ring, and an opal ring. My eyes used to fix themselves upon the lights in the opal as it moved across the page of the lesson book when she taught us, and I was glad

* 52 Tavistock Square was the London home of the Woolfs from 1924 to 1939.

that she left it to me (I gave it to Leonard). Also I hear the tinkle of her bracelets, made of twisted silver, given her by Mr Lowell, as she went about the house; especially as she came up at night to see if we were asleep, holding a candle shaded; this is a distinct memory, for, like all children, I lay awake sometimes and longed for her to come. Then she told me to think of all the lovely things I could imagine. Rainbows and bells . . . But besides these minute separate details, how did I first become conscious of what was always there—her astonishing beauty? Perhaps I never became conscious of it; I think I accepted her beauty as the natural quality that a mother—she seemed typical, universal, yet our own in particular—had by virtue of being our mother. It was part of her calling. I do not think that I separated her face from that general being; or from her whole body. Certainly I have a vision of her now, as she came up the path by the lawn at St Ives; slight, shapely—she held herself very straight. I was playing. I stopped, about to speak to her. But she half turned from us, and lowered her eyes. From that indescribably sad gesture I knew that Philips, the man who had been crushed on the line and whom she had been visiting, was dead. It's over, she seemed to say. I knew, and was awed by the thought of death. At the same time I felt that her gesture as a whole was lovely. Very early, through nurses or casual visitors, I must have known that she was thought very beautiful. But that pride was snobbish, not a pure and private feeling; it was mixed with pride in other people's admiration. It was related to the more definitely snobbish pride caused in me by the nurses who said one night talking together while we ate our supper: "They're very well connected . . ."

But apart from her beauty, if the two can be separated, what was she herself like? Very quick; very direct; practical; and amusing, I say at once offhand. She could be sharp, she disliked affectation. "If you put your head on one side like that, you shan't come to the party," I remember she said to me as we drew up in a carriage in front of some house. Severe; with a background of knowledge that made her sad. She had her own sorrow waiting behind her to dip into privately. Once when she had set us to write exercises I looked up from mine and watched her reading—the Bible perhaps; and, struck by the gravity of her face, told myself that her first husband had been a clergyman and that she was thinking, as she read what he had read of him. This was a fable on my part; but it shows that she looked very sad when she was not talking.

But can I get any closer to her without drawing upon all those descriptions and anecdotes which after she was dead imposed themselves upon my view of her? Very quick; very definite; very bright; and behind the active, the sad, the silent. And of course she is central. I suspect the word "central" gets closest to the general feeling I had of living so completely in her atmosphere that one never got far enough away from her to see her as a person. (That is one reason why I see the Gibbses and the Beadles and the Clarkes so much more distinctly.) She was the whole thing; Talland House was full of her; Hyde Park Gate was full of her. I see now, though the sentence is hasty, feeble and inexpressive, why it was that it was impossible for her to leave a very private and particular impression upon a child. She was keeping what I call in my shorthand the panoply of life—that which we all lived in common—in being. I see now that she was living on such an extended surface that she had not time, nor strength, to concentrate, except for a moment if one were ill or in some child's crisis, upon me, or upon anyone—unless it were Adrian. Him she cherished separately; she called him 'My Joy'. The later view, the understanding that I now have of her position must have its say; and it shows me that a woman of forty with seven children, some of them needing grown-up attention, and four still in the nursery; and an eighth, Laura, an idiot, yet living with us; and a husband fifteen years her elder, difficult, exacting, dependent on her; I see now that a woman who had to keep all this in being and under control must have been a general presence rather than a particular person to a child of seven or eight. Can I remember ever being alone with her for more than a few minutes? Someone was always interrupting. When I think of her spontaneously she is always in a room full of people; Stella, George and Gerald are there; my father, sitting reading with one leg curled round the other, twisting his lock of hair; "Go and take the crumb out of his beard," she whispers to me; and off I trot. There are visitors, young men like Jack Hills who is in love with Stella; many young men, Cambridge friends of George's and Gerald's; old men, sitting round the tea table talking—father's friends, Henry James, Symonds,* (I see him peering up at me on the broad staircase at St Ives with his drawn yellow face and a tie made of a yellow cord

* John Addington Symonds, man of letters, was the father of Katherine who married the artist Charles Furse and Margaret (Madge) who married William Wyamar Vaughan.

with two plush balls on it); Stella's friends—the Lushingtons, the Stillmans; I see her at the head of the table underneath the engraving of Beatrice given her by an old governess and painted blue; I hear jokes; laughter; the clatter of voices; I am teased; I say something funny; she laughs; I am pleased; I blush furiously; she observes; someone laughs at Nessa for saying that Ida Milman is her B.F.; Mother says soothingly, tenderly, "Best friend, that means."† I see her going to the town with her basket; and Arthur Davies goes with her; I see her knitting on the hall step while we play cricket; I see her stretching her arms out to Mrs Williams when the bailiffs took possession of their house and the Captain stood at the window bawling and shying jugs, basins, chamber pots onto the gravel—"Come to us, Mrs Williams"; "No, Mrs Stephen," sobbed Mrs Williams, "I will not leave my husband."—I see her writing at her table in London and the silver candlesticks, and the high carved chair with the claws and the pink seat; and the three-cornered brass ink pot; I wait in agony peeping surreptitiously behind the blind for her to come down the street, when she has been out late the lamps are lit and I am sure that she has been run over. (Once my father found me peeping; questioned me; and said rather anxiously but reprovingly, "You shouldn't be so nervous, Jinny.") And there is my last sight of her; she was dying; I came to kiss her and as I crept out of the room she said: "Hold yourself straight, my little Goat." . . . What a jumble of things I can remember, if I let my mind run, about my mother; but they are all of her in company; of her surrounded; of her generalised; dispersed, omnipresent, of her as the creator of that crowded merry world which spun so gaily in the centre of my childhood. It is true that I enclosed that world in another made by my own temperament; it is true that from the beginning I had many adventures outside that world; and often went far from it; and kept much back from it; but there it always was, the common life of the family, very merry, very stirring, crowded with people; and she was the centre; it was herself. This was proved on May 5th 1895. For after that day there was nothing left of it. I leant out of the nursery window the morning she died. It was about six, I suppose. I saw Dr Seton walk away up the street with his head bent and his hands clasped behind his back. I saw the pigeons floating and settling. I got a feeling of calm, sadness, and finality. It was a beautiful blue spring morning, and very still. That brings back the feeling that everything had come to an end.

May 15th 1939. The drudgery of making a coherent life of Roger once more become intolerable, and so I turn for a few day's respite to May 1895. The little platform of present time on which I stand is, so far as the weather is concerned, damp and chilly. I look out at my skylight—over the litter of *Athenaeum* articles, Fry letters—strewn with the sand that comes from the house that is being pulled down next door—I look up and see, as if reflecting it, a sky the colour of dirty water. And the inner landscape is much of a piece. Last night Mark Gertler* dined here and denounced the vulgarity, the inferiority of what he called "literature"; compared with the integrity of painting. "For it always deals with Mr and Mrs Brown," he said—with the personal, the trivial, that is; a criticism which has its sting and its chill, like the May sky. Yet if one could give a sense of my mother's personality one would have to be an artist. It would be as difficult to do that, as it should be done, as to paint a Cézanne.

One of the few things that is certain about her is that she married two very different men. If one looks at her not as a child, of seven or eight, but as a woman now older than she was when she died, there is something to take hold of in that fact. She was not so rubbed out and featureless, not so dominated by the beauty of her own face, as she has since become—and inevitably. For what reality can remain real of a person who died forty-four years ago† at the age of forty-nine, without leaving a book, or a picture, or any piece of work—apart from the three children who now survive and the memory of her that remains in their minds? There is the memory; but there is nothing to check that memory by; nothing to bring it to ground with.

There are however these two marriages; and they show that she was capable of falling in love with two very different men; one, to put it in a nutshell, the pink of propriety; the other, the pink of intellectuality. She could span them both. This must serve me by way of foot rule, in trying to measure her character.

The elements of that character, though, are formed in twilight. She was born, I think, in 1848;‡ I think in India; the daughter of Dr Jackson and his half-French wife. Not very much education

* The artist who committed suicide in this same year, 23 June 1939.

† VW mistakenly typed '43 years ago'.

‡ Julia was born in 1846, not in 1848.

came her way. An old governess—was she Mademoiselle Rose? did she give her the picture of Beatrice that hung in the dining room at Talland House?—taught her French, which she spoke with a very good accent; and she could play the piano and was musical. I remember that she kept De Quincey's *Opium Eater* on her table, one of her favourite books; and for a birthday present she chose all the works of Scott which her father gave her in the first edition—some remain; others are lost. For Scott she had a passion. She had an instinctive, not a trained mind. But her instinct, for books at least, seems to me to have been strong, and I liked it, for she gave a jump, I remember, when reading *Hamlet* aloud to her I misread 'sliver' 'silver'—she jumped as my father jumped at a false quantity when we read Virgil with him. She was her mother's favourite daughter of the three; and as her mother was an invalid even as a child she was used to nursing; to waiting on a sick bed. They had a house at Well Walk during the Crimean War; for there was an anecdote about watching the soldiers drill on the Heath. But her beauty at once came to the fore, even as a little girl; for there was another anecdote—how she could never be sent out alone, but must have Mary with her, to protect her from admiring looks: to keep her unconscious of that beauty—and she was, my father said, very little conscious of it. It was due to this beauty, I suspect, that she had that training which was much more important than any she had from governesses—the training of life at Little Holland House. She was a great deal at Little Holland House as a child, partly, I imagine, because she was acceptable to the painters, and the Prinseps—Aunt Sara and Uncle Thoby must have been proud of her.*

Little Holland House was her world then. But what was that world like? I think of it as a summer afternoon world. To my thinking Little Holland House is an old white country house, standing in a large garden. Long windows open onto the lawn. Through them comes a stream of ladies in crinolines and little straw hats; they are attended by gentlemen in peg-top trousers and whiskers. The date is round about 1860. It is a hot summer day. Tea tables with great bowls of strawberries and cream are scattered about the lawn. They

* Julia's Aunt Sara, one of the seven Pattle sisters, married Thoby Prinsep. They settled in Little Holland House, Kensington, where they entertained in a highly eccentric fashion an aristocracy of intellect in which the painters—Holman Hunt, Burne-Jones and above all, G. F. Watts who was long a resident—played a dominant role.

are "presided over" by some of the six lovely sisters;* who do not wear crinolines, but are robed in splendid Venetian draperies; they sit enthroned, and talk with foreign emphatic gestures—my mother too gesticulated, throwing her hands out—to the eminent men (afterwards to be made fun of by Lytton);† rulers of India, statesmen, poets, painters. My mother comes out of the window wearing that striped silk dress buttoned at the throat with a flowing skirt that appears in the photograph.‡ She is of course "a vision" as they used to say; and there she stands, silent, with her plate of strawberries and cream; or perhaps is told to take a party across the garden to Signior's studio.§ The sound of music also comes from those long low rooms where the great Watts pictures hang; Joachim playing the violin; also the sound of a voice reading poetry—Uncle Thoby would read his translations from the Persian poets. How easy it is to fill in the picture with set pieces that I have gathered from memoirs—to bring in Tennyson in his wideawake; Watts in his smock frock; Ellen Terry dressed as a boy; Garibaldi in his red shirt—and Henry Taylor turned from him to my mother—"the face of one fair girl was more to me"—so he says in a poem. But if I turn to my mother, how difficult it is to single her out as she really was; to imagine what she was thinking, to put a single sentence into her mouth! I dream; I make up pictures of a summer's afternoon.

But the dream is based upon one fact. Once when we were children, my mother took us to Melbury Road; and when we came to the street that had been built on the old garden she gave a little spring forward, clapped her hands, and cried "That was where it was!" as if a fairyland had disappeared. Thus I think it is true that Little Holland House was a summer afternoon world to her. As a fact too I know that she adored her Uncle Thoby. His walking stick, with a hole in the top through which a tassel must have hung, a beautiful eighteenth-century looking cane, always stood at the head of her bed at Hyde Park Gate. She was a hero worshipper, simple, uncritical, enthusiastic. She felt for Uncle Thoby, my father said, much more than she felt for her own father—"old Dr Jackson";

* Although there were seven Pattle sisters, no one ever spoke of Julia (Cameron) as beautiful. However, F. W. Maitland in *The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen* (London, 1906) makes the same error when referring to Maria Pattle as "one of six sisters" (p. 317n).

† Strachey.

‡ Efforts to trace this photograph have been unsuccessful.

§ The studio of G. F. Watts.

"respectable"; but, for all his good looks and the amazing mane of white hair that stood out like a three-cornered hat round his head, he was a commonplace prosaic old man; boring people with his stories of a famous poison case in Calcutta; excluded from this poetical fairyland; and no doubt out of temper with it. My mother had no romance about him; but she derived from him, I suspect, the practicality, the shrewdness, which were among her qualities.

Little Holland House then was her education. She was taught there to take such part as girls did then in the lives of distinguished men; to pour out tea; to hand them their strawberries and cream; to listen devoutly, reverently to their wisdom; to accept the fact that Watts was the great painter; Tennyson the great poet; and to dance with the Prince of Wales. For the sisters, with the exception of my grandmother who was devout and spiritual, were worldly in the thoroughgoing Victorian way. Aunt Virginia, it is plain, put her own daughters, my mother's first cousins, through tortures compared with which the boot or the Chinese shoe is negligible, in order to marry one to the Duke of Bedford, the other to Lord Henry Somerset. (That is how we came to be, as the nurses said, so "well connected".) But here again I am dipping into memoirs, and leaving Julia Jackson, the real person, on one side. The only certainties I can lay hands on in those early years are that two men proposed to her (or to her parents on her behalf); one was Holman Hunt; the other Woolner, a sculptor.* Both proposals were made and refused when she was scarcely out of the nursery. I know too that she went once wearing a hat with grey feathers to a river party where Anny Thackeray† was; and Nun (that is Aunt Caroline, father's sister) saw her standing alone; and was amazed that she was not the centre of a bevy of admirers; "Where are they?" she asked Anny Thackeray; who said, "Oh they don't happen to be here today"—a little scene which makes me suspect that Julia aged seventeen or eighteen was aloof; and shed a certain silence round her by her very beauty.

That little scene is dated; she cannot have been more than

* Hunt and Thomas Woolner were founder members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

† Anne Thackeray was the elder daughter of the novelist W. M. Thackeray and sister of Leslie Stephen's first wife. She married her cousin, Richmond Ritchie.

man; because she married when she was nineteen.* She was in love with him; met Herbert Duckworth; fell head over ears in love with him; he was with her, and so they married. That is all I know, perhaps all that anyone now knows, of the most important thing that ever happened to her. How important it was is proved by the fact that when he died four years later she was "as unhappy as it is possible for a human being to be". That was her own saying; it came to me from Kitty Maxse. "I have been as unhappy and as happy as it is possible for a human being to be." Kitty remembered it, because though she was very intimate with my mother, this was the only time in all their friendship that she ever spoke of what she had felt for Herbert Duckworth.

What my mother was like when she was as happy as anyone can be, I have no notion. Not a sound or a scene has survived from those four years. They were well off; lived in Bryanston Square; he practised not very seriously at the Bar; (once they went on circuit; and a friend said to him, "I spent the whole morning in Court looking at a beautiful face"—Herbert's wife); George was born; then Stella; and Gerald was about to be born when Herbert Duckworth died. They were staying with the Vaughans at Upton;† he stretched to pick a fig for my mother; an abscess burst; and he died in a few hours. Those are the only facts I know about those four happy years.

If it were possible to know what Herbert himself was like, some ray of light might fall from him upon my mother. But, like all very handsome men who die tragically, he left not so much a character behind him as a legend. Youth and death shed a halo through which it is difficult to see a real face—a face one might see today in the street or here in my studio. To Aunt Mary—my mother's sister, likely thus to share some of her feelings—he was "Oh darling, a beam of light . . . like no one I have ever met . . . When Herbert Duckworth smiled . . . when Herbert Duckworth came into the room . . ." here she broke off, shook her head quickly from side to side and screwed her face up, as if he were ineffable; no words could describe him. And in this spasmodic way she gave an echo of what must have been my mother's feeling; only hers was much deeper, and stronger. He must have been to her the perfect man; heroic; handsome;

* She was twenty-one when she married Herbert Duckworth.

† Julia's sister, Adeline, married Henry Halford Vaughan. Upton Castle, in Pembrokeshire, was rented by the Vaughans.

magnanimous; "the great Achilles, whom we knew"—it seems natural to quote Tennyson—and also genial, lovable, simple, and also her husband; and her children's father. It was thus natural to her when she was a girl to love the simple, the genial, the normal ordinary type of man, in preference to the queer, the uncouth artistic, the intellectual, whom she had met and who had wished to marry her. Herbert was the perfect type of public school boy and English gentleman, my father said. She chose him; and how completely he satisfied her is proved by the collapse, the complete collapse into which she fell when he died. All her gaiety, all her sociability left her. She was as unhappy as it is possible for anyone to be. There is very little known of the years that were thus stamped. Only that saying, and Stella once told me that she used to lie upon his grave at Orchardleigh. As she was undemonstrative that seems a superlative expression of her grief.

What is known, and is much more remarkable, is that during those eight years spent, so far as she had time over from her children and house, 'doing good', nursing, visiting the poor, she lost her faith. This hurt her mother, a deeply religious woman, to whom she was devoted, and thus must have been a genuine conviction; something arrived at as the result of solitary and independent thinking. It proves that there was more in her than simplicity; enthusiasm; romance; and thus makes sense of her two incongruous choices: Herbert and my father. There was a complexity in her; great simplicity and directness combined with a sceptical, a serious spirit. Probably it was that combination that accounted for the great impression she made on people; the positive impression. Her character was sharpened by the mixture of simplicity and scepticism. She was sociable yet severe; very amusing; but very serious; extremely practical but with a depth in her . . . "She was a mixture of the Madonna and a woman of the world," is Miss Robins's description.*

The certain fact at any rate is that when at last she was left alone—"Oh the torture of never being left alone!" is a saying of hers, reported I forget by whom, that refers to her widowhood, and the fuss that friends and family made—when she was alone at last in Hyde Park Gate, she began to think out her position; and for this reason perhaps read something my father had written. She liked it (he says in the 'Mausoleum Book'), when she was not sure that she liked him. It is thus permissible to think of her sitting in the creeper-

* Elizabeth Robins, the actress, had been a friend of Julia's.

led drawing room at Hyde Park Gate in her widow's dress, alone, when the children had gone to bed, with a copy of the *Fortnightly*, trying to reason out the case for agnosticism. From that she would go on to think of Leslie Stephen, the gaunt bearded man who lived up the street, married to Minny Thackeray. He was in every way the opposite of Herbert Duckworth; but there was something in his mind that interested her. One evening she called on the Leslie Stephens, [and] found them sitting over the fire together; a happy married pair, with one child in the nursery, and another to be born soon. She sat talking; and then went home, envying them their happiness and comparing it with her own loneliness. Next day Minny died suddenly. And about two years later she married the gaunt bearded widower.*

"How did father ask you to marry him?" I once asked her, with my arm slipped in hers as we went down the twisted stairs into the dining room. She gave her little laugh, half surprised, half shocked. She did not answer. He asked her in a letter; and she refused him. Then one night when he had given up all thought of it, and had been dining with her, and asking her advice about a governess for Laura, she followed him to the door and said "I will try to be a good wife to you."

Perhaps there was pity in her love; certainly there was devout admiration for his mind; and so she spanned the two marriages with the two different men; and emerged from that corridor of the eight silent years to live fifteen years more;† to bear four children; and [to] die early on the morning of the 5th of May 1895. George took us down to say goodbye. My father staggered from the bedroom as we came. I stretched out my arms to stop him, but he brushed past me, crying out something I could not catch; distraught. And George led me in to kiss my mother, who had just died.

May 28th 1939. Led by George with towels wrapped round us and given each a drop of brandy in warm milk to drink, we were taken into the bedroom. I think candles were burning; and I think the sun was coming in. At any rate I remember the long looking-glass; with the drawers on either side; and the washstand; and the great bed on

* Minny died in 1875; Leslie Stephen married Julia in 1878.

† After her marriage to Leslie Stephen, Julia lived seventeen years.

which my mother lay. I remember very clearly how even as I was taken to the bedside I noticed that one nurse was sobbing, and a desire to laugh came over me, and I said to myself as I have often done at moments of crisis since, "I feel nothing whatever". Then I stooped and kissed my mother's face. It was still warm. She [had] only died a moment before. Then we went upstairs into the day nursery

Perhaps it was the next evening that Stella took me into the bedroom to kiss mother for the last time. She had been lying on her side before. Now she was lying straight in the middle of her pillows. Her face looked immeasurably distant, hollow and stern. When I kissed her, it was like kissing cold iron. Whenever I touch cold iron the feeling comes back to me—the feeling of my mother's face, iron cold, and granulated. I started back. Then Stella stroked her cheek, and undid a button on her nightgown. "She always liked to have it like that," she said. When she came up to the nursery later she said to me, "Forgive me. I saw you were afraid." She had noticed that I had started. When Stella asked me to forgive her for having given me that shock, I cried—we had been crying off and on all day—and said, "When I see mother, I see a man sitting with her." Stella looked at me as if I had frightened her. Did I say that in order to attract attention to myself? Or was it true? I cannot be sure, for certainly I had a great wish to draw attention to myself. But certainly it was true that when she said: "Forgive me," and thus made me visualize my mother, I seemed to see a man sitting bent on the edge of the bed.

"It's nice that she shouldn't be alone", Stella said after a moment's pause.

Of course the atmosphere of those three or four days before the funeral was so melodramatic, histrionic and unreal that any hallucination was possible. We lived through them in hush, in artificial light. Rooms were shut. People were creeping in and out. People were coming to the door all the time. We were all sitting in the drawing room round father's chair sobbing. The hall reeked of flowers. They were piled on the hall table. The scent still brings back those days of astonishing intensity. But I have one memory of great beauty. A telegram had been sent to Thoby at Clifton. He was to arrive in the evening at Paddington. George and Stella whispered together in the hall, about who was to go and meet him. To my relief, Stella overcame some objection on George's part, and said,

but I think it would do her good to go"; and so I was taken in a cab with George and Nessa to meet Thoby at Paddington. It was sunset, and the great glass dome at the end of the station was blazing with light. It was glowing yellow and red and the iron girders made a pattern across it. I walked along the platform gazing with rapture at this magnificent blaze of colour, and the train slowly steamed into the station. It impressed and exalted me. It was so vast and so fiery red. The contrast of that blaze of magnificent light with the shrouded and curtained rooms at Hyde Park Gate was so intense. Also it was partly that my mother's death unveiled and intensified; made me suddenly develop perceptions, as if a burning glass had been laid over what was shaded and dormant. Of course this quickening was spasmodic. But it was surprising—as if something were becoming visible without any effort. To take another instance—I remember going into Kensington Gardens about that time. It was a hot spring evening, and we lay down—Nessa and I—in the long grass behind the Flower Walk. I had taken *The Golden Treasury* with me. I opened it and began to read some poem. And instantly and for the first time I understood the poem (which it was I forget). It was as if it became altogether intelligible; I had a feeling of transparency in words when they cease to be words and become so intensified that one seems to experience them; to foretell them as if they developed what one is already feeling. I was so astonished that I tried to explain the feeling. "One seems to understand what it's about"; I said awkwardly. I suppose Nessa has forgotten; no one could have understood from what I said the queer feeling I had in the hot grass, that poetry was coming true. Nor does that give the feeling. It matches what I have sometimes felt when I write. The pen gets on the scent.

But though I remember so distinctly those two moments—the arch of glass burning at the end of Paddington Station and the poem I read in Kensington Gardens, those two clear moments are almost the only clear moments in the muffled dulness that then closed over us. With mother's death the merry, various family life which she had held in being shut for ever. In its place a dark cloud settled over us; we seemed to sit all together cooped up, sad, solemn, unreal, under a haze of heavy emotion. It seemed impossible to break through. It was not merely dull; it was unreal. A finger seemed laid on one's lips.

I see us now, all dressed in unbroken black, George and Gerald in

black trousers, Stella with real crape deep on her dress, Nessa and myself with slightly modified crape, my father black from head to foot—even the notepaper was so black bordered that only a little space for writing remained—I see us emerging from Hyde Park Gate on a fine summer afternoon and walking in procession hand in hand, for we were always taking hands—I see us walking—I rather proud of the solemn blackness and the impression it must make—into Kensington Gardens; and how golden the laburnum shone. And then we sat silent under the trees. The silence was stifling. A finger was laid on our lips. One had always to think whether what one was about to say was the right thing to say. It ought to be a help. But how could one help? Father used to sit sunk in gloom. If he could be got to talk—and that was part of our duty—it was about the past. It was about “the old days”. And when he talked, he ended with a groan. He was getting deaf, and his groans were louder than he knew. Indoors he would walk up and down the room, gesticulating, crying that he had never told mother how he loved her. Then Stella would fling her arms round him and protest. Often one would break in upon a scene of this kind. And he would open his arms and call one to him. We were his only hope, his only comfort, he would say. And there kneeling on the floor one would try—perhaps only to cry.

Stella of course bore the brunt. She grew whiter and whiter in her unbroken black dress. She would sit at her table with the black edged notepaper before her writing, answering letters of sympathy. There was a photograph of mother in front of her; and sometimes she would cry, as she wrote. As the summer wore on, visitors came, sympathetic women, old friends. They were admitted to the back drawing room, where father sat like the Queen in Shakespeare—“here I and sorrow sit”—with the Virginia Creeper hanging a curtain of green over the window, so that the room was like a green cave. We in the front room sat crouched, hearing muffled voices, ready for the visitor to emerge with tears on tear-stained cheeks. The shrouded, cautious, dulled life took the place of all the chatter and laughter of the summer. There were no more parties; no more young men and women laughing. No more flashing visions of white summer dresses and hansoms dashing off to private views and dinner parties, none of that natural life and gaiety which my mother had created. The grown-up world into which I would dash for a moment and pick off some joke or little scene and dash back again upstairs to the nursery was ended. There were none of those snatched moments

that were so amusing and for some reason so soothing and yet exciting when one ran downstairs to dinner arm in arm with mother; or chose the jewels she was to wear. There was none of that pride when one said something that amused her, or that she thought very remarkable. How excited I used to be when the ‘Hyde Park Gate News’ was laid on her plate on Monday morning, and she liked something I had written!* Never shall I forget my extremity of pleasure—it was like being a violin and being played upon—when I found that she had sent a story of mine to Madge Symonds; it was so imaginative, she said; it was about souls flying round and choosing bodies to be born into.

The tragedy of her death was not that it made one, now and then and very intensely, unhappy. It was that it made her unreal; and us solemn, and self-conscious. We were made to act parts that we did not feel; to fumble for words that we did not know. It obscured, it dulled. It made one hypocritical and immeshed in the conventions of sorrow. Many foolish and sentimental ideas came into being. Yet there was a struggle, for soon we revived, and there was a conflict between what we ought to be and what we were. Thoby put this into words. One day before he went back to school, he said: “It’s silly going on like this . . .”, sobbing, sitting shrouded, he meant. I was shocked at his heartlessness; yet he was right, I know; and yet how could we escape?

It was Stella who lifted the canopy again. A little light crept in

June 20th 1939. I was thinking as I crossed the Channel last night of Stella; in a very jerky disconnected way, with people quarrelling outside the door; the boat train arriving; chains clanking; and the steamer giving those sudden stertorous snorts. And as the first morning after a broken night is distracted and broken, instead of beginning Roger again, as I ought, I will write down some of my distracted and disconnected thoughts; to serve, should the time come, for notes.

How many people are there still able to think about Stella on the 20th June 1939? Very few. Jack died last Christmas. George and

* The ‘Hyde Park Gate News’ appeared weekly, as far as is known, from 9 February 1891 until April 1895. The paper was at first the joint venture of Virginia and Thoby but gradually it became almost entirely Virginia’s responsibility. See QB, I, pp. 28–32.

Gerald a year or two ago; Kitty Maxse and Margaret Massingberd have been dead many years now. Susan Lushington and Lisa Stillman are still alive; but how they live and where, I know not. Perhaps thus I think of her less disconnectedly and more truly than anyone now living, save for Vanessa and Adrian; and perhaps old Sophie Farrell.* Of her childhood I know practically nothing. She was the only daughter of the handsome barrister Herbert Duckworth, but as he died when she was three or four, she did not remember him, or those years when her mother was as happy as anyone can be. I think, from stray anecdotes and from what I noticed myself, that when she came to consciousness as a child the unhappy years were at their height. That would account for some qualities in Stella. Her first memories were of a very sad widowed mother, who "went about doing good"—Stella wished to have that on the tombstone—visiting the slums, visiting too the Cancer Hospital in the Brompton Road. Our Quaker Aunt told me that this was her habit; for she said how one case there had "shocked her". Thus Stella as a child lived in the shade of that widowhood; saw that beautiful crape-veiled figure daily; and perhaps took then the ply that was so marked—that attitude of devotion, almost canine in its touching adoration, to her mother; that passive, suffering affection; and also that complete unquestioning dependence.

They were sun and moon to each other; my mother the positive and definite; Stella the reflecting and satellite. My mother was stern to her. All her devotion was given to George who was like his father; and her care was for Gerald, born posthumously and very delicate. Stella she treated severely; so much so that before their marriage my father ventured a protest. She replied that it might be true; she was hard on Stella because she felt Stella "part of myself". A pale silent child I imagine her; sensitive; modest; uncomplaining; adoring her mother, thinking only how she could help her, and without any ambition or even character of her own. And yet she had character. Very gentle, very honest, and in some way individual—so she made her own impression on people. Friends, like Kitty Maxse, the brilliant, the sparkling, loved her with a real laughing tenderness for her own sake. Her charm was great; it came partly from this modesty, from this honesty, from this perfectly simple

* Sophie Farrell was the Stephens' cook at 22 Hyde Park Gate and at 46 Gordon Square, Bloomsbury. After Vanessa's marriage she went with Virginia and Adrian to 29 Fitzroy Square and later to George Duckworth.

unostentatious unselfishness; it came too from her lack of pose, her lack of snobbery; and from the genuineness, from something that was—could I put my finger on it—perfectly herself, individual. This unnamed quality—the sensitiveness to real things—was queer in the sister of George and Gerald, who were so opaque and conventional; who had so innate a respect for the conventions and respectabilities. By some odd fling in her birth, she had escaped all taint of Duckworth philistinism; she had none of their shrewd middle-class complacency. Instead of their little brown eyes that were so greedy and twinkling, hers were very large and rather a pale blue. They were dreamy, candid eyes. She was without their instinctive worldliness. She was lovely too, in a far vaguer, less perfect way than my mother. She reminded me always of those large white flowers—elder-blossom, cow parsley, that one sees in the fields in June. Perhaps my mother's laughing nickname—'Old Cow'—suggests the cow parsley. Or again, a white faint moon in a blue sky suggests her. Or those large white roses that have many petals and are semi-transparent. She had beautiful fair hair, growing in horns over her forehead; and no colour in her face at all. As for teaching—she had perhaps a governess; went to classes; was taught the violin by Arnold Dolmetsch and played in Mrs Marshall's orchestra. But there was a stoppage in her mind, a gentle impassivity about books and learning. As Jack told me after her death, she thought herself so stupid as to be almost wanting; and said that the rheumatic fever she had as a child had (I remember the word) 'touched' her. But again, what was remarkable considering the Duckworth strain—so boorish, so rustic, so philistine—is that however simple she was in brain, she was not, as George's sister might so well have been, a cheery ordinary English upper middle class girl with rosy cheeks and bright brown eyes. She was herself. She remains quite distinct in my mind. What is odd is that I cannot compare her either in character or face with anyone else. What she would have looked like now in a room full of other people I cannot imagine; or how she would have talked. I have never seen anyone who reminded me of her; and that is true too of my mother. They do not blend in the world of the living at all.

She was nineteen when I was six or seven; and as a girl could not then go about London alone, I used as a small child to be sent with her, as chaperone. Among my earliest memories is the memory of going out with her perhaps to shop, or to pay some call: and, the

errand done, she would take me to a shop and give me a glass of milk and biscuits sprinkled with sugar on a marble table. And sometimes we went in hansoms. But she lived, of course, downstairs in the drawing room; pouring out tea; and there were many young men, it seemed when one dashed in for a second, sitting round her. Vaguely we knew that Arthur Studd was in love with her; and Ted Sanderson; and I think Richard Norton; and Jim Stephen.* That great figure with the deep voice and the wild eyes would come to the house looking for her, with his madness on him; and would burst into the nursery and spear the bread on his swordstick and at one time we were told to go out by the back door and if we met Jim we were to say that Stella was away.

19th July 1939. I was forced to break off again, and rather suspect that these breaks will be the end of this memoir.

I was thinking about Stella as we crossed the Channel a month ago. I have not given her a thought since. The past only comes back when the present runs so smoothly that it is like the sliding surface of a deep river. Then one sees through the surface to the depths. In those moments I find one of my greatest satisfactions, not that I am thinking of the past; but that it is then that I am living most fully in the present. For the present when backed by the past is a thousand times deeper than the present when it presses so close that you can feel nothing else, when the film on the camera reaches only the eye. But to feel the present sliding over the depths of the past, peace is necessary. The present must be smooth, habitual. For this reason—that it destroys the fullness of life—any break—like that of house moving—causes me extreme distress; it breaks; it shallows; it turns the depth into hard thin splinters. As I say to L[eonard]: “What’s there real about this? Shall we ever live a real life again?” “At Monks House,” he says. So I write this, taking a morning off from the word filing and fitting that my life of Roger means—I write this partly in order to recover my sense of the present by getting the past to shadow this broken surface. Let me then, like a child advancing with bare feet into a cold river, descend again into that stream.

... Jim Stephen was in love with Stella. He was mad then. He

* James Kenneth Stephen, second son of James Fitzjames Stephen, brother of Leslie.

was in the exalted stage of his madness. He would dash up in a hansom; leave my father to pay it. The hansom had been driving him about London all day. The man wanted perhaps a sovereign. It was paid. For ‘dear Jim’ was a great favourite. Once, as I say, he dashed up [to] the nursery and speared the bread. Another time, off we went to his room in De Vere Gardens and he painted me on a small bit of wood. He was a great painter for a time. I suppose madness made him believe he was all powerful. Once he came in at breakfast, “Savage* has just told me I’m in danger of dying or going mad”, he laughed. And soon he ran naked through Cambridge; was taken to an asylum; and died. This great mad figure with his broad shoulders and very clean cut mouth, and the deep voice and the powerful face—and the very blue eyes—this mad man would recite poetry to us; “The Burial of Sir John Moore”, I remember; and he always brings to mind some tormented bull; and also Achilles—Achilles on his pressed bed lolling roars out a deep applause. He was in love with Stella—incongruously enough. And we had orders to tell him, if we met him in the street, that she was away, staying with the Lushingtons at Pypots. There was a great mystery about love then.

Jim was one of her lovers. The other—that is, the most important—was Jack Hills. It was at St Ives that she refused him; late one night we heard her sobbing through the attic wall. He had gone at once. A refusal in those days was catastrophic. It meant a complete breach. Human relations, at least between the sexes, were carried on as relations between countries are now—with ambassadors, and treaties. The parties concerned met on the great occasion of the proposal. If this were refused, a state of war was declared. That explains why she cried so bitterly. For she had done something of great practical as well as emotional importance. He went off at once—to Norway to fish; later perhaps they met in a completely formal way at parties. Negotiations were kept faintly alive through my mother; an interpreter was necessary. All this procedure gave love its solemnity. Feelings were banked up; silence interposed; there was in every family a code, a religious code, that penetrated, somehow or other, to the children. It was secret; but we guessed.

Thus, when my mother died, Stella was left without any negotiator, for my father did not fill the part. He must have come back—it

* Dr George Savage, later Sir George, was an old friend of the Stephen family. He was also Virginia’s specialist.

proves how deep the feeling was to admit such a return—the night before my mother died. It was desperate but not hopeless.*

June 8th 1940. I have just found this sheaf of notes, thrown away into my waste-paper basket. I had been tidying up; and had cast all my life of Roger into that large basket, and with it, these sheets too. Now I am correcting the final page proofs of Roger; and it was to refresh myself from that antlike meticulous labour that I determined to look for these pages. Shall I ever finish these notes—let alone make a book from them? The battle is at its crisis; every night the Germans fly over England; it comes closer to this house daily. If we are beaten then—however we solve that problem, and one solution is apparently suicide (so it was decided three nights ago in London among us)—book writing becomes doubtful. But I wish to go on, not to settle down in that dismal puddle.

Jack Hills, I was saying, came back the night before my mother died, which shows that though the negotiations had been broken off, there must have been a connection, or how could he have come that night of great crisis? We were in the back drawing room, and there was the tea tray, for we had a curious habit of drinking tea about nine o'clock. The silver hot water jug which I still possess—but it has a hole in it—had a handle that grew hot. Aunt Mary, summoned from Brighton, picked it up and put it down quickly.† “Only Mrs Stephen and Stella can manage that”, said Jack Hills with the queer sad little smile that went with the little joke. And I remember that he said ‘Stella’. And since he was there, that last night, the affair must have been in being—sufficiently so to make it possible for him to be with us in intimacy. That was the 4th May, 1895.

The next thing I remember is the night at Hindhead (August 22nd 1896)—the black and silver night of mysterious voices, the night when father packed us off to bed early; and we heard voices in

* The source of the ambiguity of this passage can be traced to an earlier ms version (A-5c, p. 4, l.22—p. 5, l.3) which reads: “Thus, when my mother died, Stella was left without any negotiator in this affair of marriage; & Jack Hills came to the house on a very queer footing. He must have come the night my mother died. For I remember the doctors had gone; it was desperate but not hopeless; it was after dinner; & Aunt Mary poured out coffee. (Stella being in the bedroom.)”

† Aunt Mary (née Jackson), Julia’s elder sister who married Herbert Fisher and had seven sons and four daughters.

garden; and saw Stella and Jack passing; and disappearing; and the tramp came; and Thoby countered him; and Nessa and I sat up in our bedroom waiting; and Stella never came; and at last in the morning she came and told us that she was engaged; and I whispered, “Did mother know?” and she murmured, “Yes”. And next morning at breakfast there was excitement and emotion and gloom. Adrian cried; and Jack kissed him; and father said lightly but seriously: “We must all be happy, because Stella is happy”—a command which, poor man, he could not himself obey. But Jack Hills? He had been at Eton with George. He stands in my mind’s picture gallery for a type—and a desirable type; the English country gentleman type, I might call it, by way of running a line round it; and I add, it is a type I have seldom been intimate with; perhaps no one is ever intimate with the country gentleman type; yet for nine years I was intimate with Jack Hills; a reason perhaps why we became so completely separate later; it was impossible to begin again formally after that intimacy. And the country gentleman came to the surface and separated us.

Can I quickly fill in that outline? To begin then, he was the son of a commonplace little round man—Judge Hills—‘Buzzy’ he was called in the family—and like a bluebottle, buzzing, I still remember him; short, jocular, in knickerbockers, giving us Russian toffee up at Corby. Buzzy had once written a sonnet that had been taken for Shakespeare’s, and liked to make little facetious jokes with young ladies—I remember Susan Lushington “didn’t know which way to look”, she said, when he chaffed her about a husband—“I seemed to be sitting on a tripod and looking into the future”, Buzzy said, having archly used the word husband when it should have been father—Buzzy lived chiefly in Egypt, and Mrs Hills—Anna her name was—lived mostly alone at Corby. She was a hard, worldly woman, tightly dressed in black satin in London; up at Corby, a county lady, collecting Chelsea enamel snuff boxes, with ambitions to be the friend of intellectual men. She detested women; she got on very well with Andrew Lang. He stayed there often; and she described a party when the local dentist came in a frock coat—“all the other men looking so picturesque in knickerbockers.” And she said: “I was in mourning for nine people at Easter”; also, looking at horses in the paddock, “That makes the second pair”; also she stressed “under housemaid” to impress us that she had several; and dwelt on the noble descent of the Curwens, to whom they were

related; and went weekly to Naworth with a wreath to lay on Christopher Howard's grave. It was handed in at the carriage; like a picnic basket—the weekly wreath. And I still see her in shiny black satin and feathered Victorian hat bending over the grave in Naworth burial ground; and Susan whispering in agitation “Suppose Lady Carlisle or one of them should come out and catch us!” These recollections spring from that dreary and terrifying week at Corby after Stella's death in the autumn of 1897. They leased Corby from the Howards; the lion stood with his tail perfectly straight on top of the roof. The river dashed through the grounds; and there I saw Jack catch a salmon; for the first time after those desperate months he looked triumphant; and worn as he [had] come to look, I was struck by his sudden exultation as the line tautened and he held the fish there in the river. We saw it afterwards in the game larder; and Mrs Hills asked: “Has he those little creatures on him?” It was a proof of freshness, I think, if you found lice on a salmon. Tuddenham, the keeper, who stood by us on the bank, said: “He's hooked him.”

To return to Anna Hills. She hated women. But I doubt that she was sexually ambitious. I think all she wanted was to rule a little court of well brushed, mildly well-known males; in the decorous, snobbish Victorian manner. She was thankful, I remember she told us, that she had no daughters; and it was plain she detested having us two rather gawky girls to stay. “Your hair's parted awry”, she said, fixing me with her little black eyes. Fortunately she had three sons; and they were sent to Eton and Oxford. She liked the soft sweet voiced Eustace with his drawl, and his pleasant manners, and his gentle ways, far the best. Jack and she were on very distant terms. Thus it was natural that when he was living alone in Ebury Street, very hard up, very hard worked, stammering, and lonely, that he came to my mother for sympathy. They were very intimate. Indeed Kitty Maxse said, discussing my mother and her masterful ways once: “For instance, how could Mrs Hills have liked it—Jack treating your mother as if she were his?” He was, roughly speaking, affectionate, honest, domestic, and a perfect gentleman. He was a real [countryman] too; not a fake; a passionate countryman. He rode very well; he fished very well; and there was too a vein of poetry in him. Once when we met years later he told me he read every book of new poetry that came out; and thought the young poets (then Siegfried Sassoon; Robert Graves; and de la Mare)

any bit as good as the old. He read philosophy too; Nettleship, the Oxford philosopher, had been a kind of god to him. “He was like Christ”, I remember his saying, in his emphatic sententious way, as he tried very laboriously to explain Nettleship's philosophy; he lent me the book; it was at Warboys that I remember him explaining Plato to me and Nessa and Marny Vaughan.* Gerald, who sat beneath the window, sneered later: “Well, how did the Sunday prayer meeting go off?” But he was not, compared with my own friends, anything but a simple, primitive-minded man. Unlike them, however—was it for this I liked him, yet could never be altogether at my ease with him?—he was an all-round man; without any gift that dominated, he did a great many different things. He was a Gunner. “I have heard of him standing on one foot, driving three horses”, Ethel Dilke wrote when the engagement was public, “and I've no doubt he does other things as well.” He was a good solicitor. Doggedly he worked his way high up into the firm of Roper and Whateley; of Whateley he used to tell many stories: “a disgusting man, but in some ways the ablest man I have ever known. He was a great fisherman—so they say. And I like his fishing books.” Politics came later. He was also very deft with his hands. But as I heard my mother tell my father once, he was ‘nothing out of the way’ intellectually. His appearance was in keeping with this rough sketch. He had beautiful brown eyes, a nose with an obstinate knob at the end of it; curious wrinkles, like a dachshund's, round his retreating chin. (He was of course very fond of dogs.) He stammered, and his stammer made his very positive statements—“A duck must have water”—all the more positive when at last he got them out. We laughed at him and could imitate him as time went on. He was scrupulously clean; he washed all over ever so many times a day, and was scrupulously well dressed, as a Victorian city solicitor; also as a countryman. The word ‘scrupulous’ suggests itself when I think of Jack Hills. He was scrupulously honest, honourable, in the Eton and Balliol sense, but there was more to his scrupulosity than that. He it was who first spoke to me openly and deliberately about sex—in Fitzroy Square, with the green carpet and the red Chinese curtains.† He opened my eyes on purpose, as I think, to the part

* Margaret, one of the Vaughan cousins whom the young Stephens saw frequently.

† 29 Fitzroy Square, Bloomsbury, where Virginia and Adrian moved after Vanessa's marriage to Clive Bell in 1907.

played by sex in the life of the ordinary man. He shocked me a little, wholesomely. He told me that young men talked incessantly of women; and 'had' them incessantly. "But are they—" I hesitated for a word and then ventured "honourable?" He laughed, "of course—of course", he assured me. Sexual relations had nothing to do with honour. Having women was a mere trifle in a man's life, he explained, and made not a jot of difference to their honourableness—to their reputation with other men. I was incredibly, but only partially, innocent. I knew nothing about ordinary men's lives, and thought all men, like my father, loved one woman only, and were 'dishonourable' if unchaste, as much as women; yet, at the same time I had known since I was sixteen or so, all about sodomy, through reading Plato. That was Jack's honesty; and it differed from George's or Gerald's. Neither of them would have spoken to any girl as cleanly, humorously, openly, about sex. That quality penetrated to us as children, and he brought too, country life into our distinguished literary, book-loving world. He taught us to sugar trees; he gave us his copy of Morris's *Butterflies and Moths*,* over which I spent many hours, hunting up our catches among all those pictures of hearts and darts and setaceous Hebrew characters.† For I had the post of name finder in our Entomological Society; and was scolded severely by Thoby, I remember, for slackness. At dinner one night Gerald disclosed, with his teasing and treacherous laughter, how we had a store of dying insects in old tooth-powder jars at the bottom of the well. Greatly to our relief instead of scolding and forbidding, mother and, I think, father recognised our mania; and put it on a legal basis; bought us nets and setting boards, and indeed she went with Walter Headlam‡ down to the St Ives public house and bought us rum. How strange a scene—my mother buying rum. She would go round the sugar after we were in bed.

But to return to Jack—when Stella accepted him, we approved,

* Francis Orpen Morris (1810–93) wrote popular books on natural history. He published *A History of British Butterflies* (London, 1853) and *A History of British Moths* in four volumes (1859–70) but no book with the title *Butterflies and Moths*.

† These are the vernacular names of common British moths. VW's ts has 'harts and darts and sequacious Hebrew characters'.

‡ Walter Headlam, Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, distinguished Hellenist and minor poet, was an old friend of the Stephen family with whom Virginia carried on a flirtation after the marriage of Vanessa. He died in 1908.

our republic, which, though rapidly losing shape, was still in being after mother's death. The marriage would have been, I think, every happy marriage. It should have borne many children. And still she might have been alive. Certainly he was passionately in love; he at first passively. And it was through that engagement that I had my first vision—so intense, so exciting, so rapturous was it that the word vision applies—my first vision then of love between man and woman. It was to me like a ruby; the love I detected that winter of their engagement, glowing, red, clear, intense. It gave me a conception of love; a standard of love; a sense that nothing in the whole world is so lyrical, so musical, as a young man and a young woman in their first love for each other. I connect it with respectable engagements; unofficial love never gives me the same feeling. "My Love's like a red, red rose, that's newly sprung in June"—that was the feeling they gave; the feeling that has always come back, when I hear of 'an engagement'; not when I hear of 'an affair'. It derives from Stella and Jack. It springs from the ecstasy I felt, in my covert, behind the folding doors of the Hyde Park Gate drawing room. I sat there, shielded, being half insane with shyness and nervousness; reading Fanny Burney's diary; and feeling come over me intermittent waves of very strong emotion—rage sometimes; how often I was enraged by father then!—love, or the reflection of love, too. It was bodiless; a light; an ecstasy. But also extraordinarily enduring. Once I came on a letter from him which she had slipped between the blotting paper—a sign of the lack of privacy in which we lived—and read it. "There is nothing sweeter in the whole world than our love", he wrote. I put the page down, not so much guiltily, at having pried; but in a quiver of ecstasy at the revelation. Still I cannot read words that give me that quiver twice over. If I get a letter that pleases me intensely, I never read it again. Why I wonder? For fear lest it shall dwindle? This colour, this incandescence, was in Stella's whole body. Her pallor became lit up, her eyes bluer. She had something of moonlight about her that winter, as she went about the house. "There's never been anything like it in the world", I said—or something like it—when she found me awake one night. And she laughed, tenderly, very gently, and kissed me and said, "Oh lots of people are in love as we are. You and Nessa will be one day", she said. Once she told me, "You must expect people to look at you both".

"Nessa", she said, "is much more beautiful than I ever was"—at

twenty-six she spoke of her beauty as a thing of the past. She told Aunt Mary—I think I read this too, nefariously, in some letter in a blotting book, she could only be neat and tidy now; she was to float us on the life of love; to launch us out on the ordinary woman's life that promised such treasures. At some party, perhaps Nessa's first party, a party where she wore white and amethysts perhaps, a party where Desmond* remarked her 'like a Greek slave', she was certain that George Booth† had fallen in love, and feared, tenderly foreboding, yet proudly, and gladly, how the Booths would mind if Nessa rejected him. Had Stella lived, the recollection makes me reflect, how different 'coming out' and those Greek slave years and all their drudgery and tyranny and rebellion would have been!

For some reason Stella and Jack's engagement lasted all the months from July till April. It was a clumsy, cruel, unnecessary trial for them both. Looking back, it seems everything was done without care or consideration, clumsily, wantonly. I conceive that as the months of that long waiting time passed she slowly roused herself out of the numb, frozen state in which mother's death had left her. At first she found in Jack rest and support; a refuge from all the worries and responsibilities of 'the family', relief too from those glooms which father never controlled, and spent on her. Slowly she became more positive, less passive; and asserted Jack's rights; her desire too for her own house; her own husband; a life, a home of their own. At last the promise, apparently exacted by father, and tacitly accepted, that they were to live on with us after their marriage, an arrangement now incredible but then accepted, became intolerable; and she went up to father one night in his study; and told him so; and there was 'an explosion'.

As the engagement went on, father became indeed increasingly tyrannical. He didn't like the name 'Jack', I remember his saying; it sounded like the smack of a whip. He was jealous clearly. But in those days nothing was clear. He had his traditional pose; he was the lonely; the deserted; the old unhappy man. In fact he was possessive; hurt; a man jealous of the young man. There was every excuse, he would have said, had he been asked, for his explosions. And as by

* Desmond MacCarthy, who belonged to the inner circle of Bloomsbury from its earliest days.

† George Booth was the son of Charles Booth, author of *Life and Labour of the People in London*. The Booths were 'Hyde Park Gaters', as Adrian was later to call them.

...time he had entrenched himself away from all truth, in a world which it is almost impossible to describe, for I know no one now who inhabit such a world—the engagement was incredibly loved, frustrated, and impeded. At last in April 1897 the marriage took place—conventionally, ceremoniously, with bells ringing, a company collected, and silver engraved wedding invitations, at Mary Abbots. Nessa and I handed flowers to the guests; father marched up the aisle with Stella on his arm.

He took it for granted that he was to give her away", George and I would grumbled. He ignored the fact that they had any claim. No one would have dared to take that privilege from him. It was somewhat typical—his assumption; and his enjoyment of the attitude. They went to Italy; we to Brighton. One fortnight was the length of their honeymoon. And directly she came back she was taken ill. It was appendicitis; she was going to have a baby. And that was mis-managed too; and so, after three months of intermittent illness, she died—at 24 Hyde Park Gate, on July 27th, 1897.*

The present. June 19th 1940. As we sat down to lunch two days ago, Monday 17th, John† came in, looked white about the gills, his pale eyes paler than usual, and said the French have stopped fighting. Today the dictators dictate their terms to France. Meanwhile, on this very hot morning, with a blue bottle buzzing and a toothless organ grinding and the men calling strawberries in the Square, I sit in my room at 37 M[ecklenburgh] S[quare]‡ and turn to my father.

My father now falls to be described, because it was during the seven years between Stella's death in 1897 and his death in 1904 that Nessa and I were fully exposed without protection to the full blast of that strange character. Nessa, when Stella died, was just eighteen; I fifteen and a half. In order to explain why I say "exposed", and why, though the word is not the right one—but I cannot find one that is—I call him a strange character, I should have to be able to inhabit again the outworn shell of my own childish mind and body. I am much nearer his age now than my own then.

* The A. 5a typescript ends here. The text now follows the BL 61973 typescript.

† John Lehmann, who eventually became a partner of The Hogarth Press.

‡ The Woolfs' London residence from July 1939.

But do I therefore 'understand' him better than I did? Or have I only queered the angle of that immensely important relationship, so that I shall fail to describe it, either from his point of view or my own? I see him now from round the corner; not directly in front of me. Further, just as I rubbed out a good deal of the force of my mother's memory by writing about her in *To the Lighthouse*, so I rubbed out much of his memory there too. Yet he too obsessed me for years. Until I wrote it out, I would find my lips moving; I would be arguing with him; raging against him; saying to myself all that I never said to him. How deep they drove themselves into me, the things it was impossible to say aloud. They are still some of them sayable; when Nessa for instance revives the memory of Wednesday and its weekly books, I still feel come over me that old frustrated fury

But in me, though not in her, rage alternated with love. It was only the other day when I read Freud* for the first time, that I discovered that this violently disturbing conflict of love and hate is a common feeling; and is called ambivalence. But before I analyse our relation as father and daughter, I will try to sketch him as I think he must have been, not to me, but to the world at large.

He was a little early Victorian boy, brought up in the intense narrow, evangelical yet political, highly intellectual yet completely unaesthetic, Stephen family, that had one foot in Clapham, the other in Downing Street. Such is the obvious first sentence of his biography. And as it goes on, it is all so obvious that I cannot bring myself to follow it—how he went to Eton and was unhappy; went to Cambridge and was in his element; was not elected an Apostle, was muscular; coached his boat; and Christian; but shed his Christianity—with such anguish, Fred Maitland† once hinted to me, that he thought of suicide, and how then, like Pendennis or any other of the Victorian young men of intellect—he was typical of them—took to writing for the papers, went to America; and was, so far as I can see, the very type, or mould, of so many Cambridge intellectuals—like George Trevelyan, like Charlie Sanger, like

* Diary entry for 2 December 1939, "Began reading Freud last night, to enlarge the circumference, to give my brain wider scope, to make it objective; to get outside. Thus defeat the shrinkage of age." *Diary of Virginia Woolf*, V, p. 248.

† Frederick William Maitland wrote the authorized 'Life' of Leslie Stephen. He married Florence Fisher, one of Aunt Mary's daughters.

the Dickinson—whom I knew later. It bores me to write of him, I try to describe him, partly because it is all so familiar; partly because it is a type that for me lacks picturesqueness, oddity, romance. That type is like a steel engraving, without colour, or warmth or body; but with an infinity of precise clear lines. There are no crannies or corners to catch my imagination; nothing dangles or sprays at me. It is all contained and complete and already summed up. Of course, I say to myself, I admire them. I go on: I respect them, I say; I admire their honesty, their integrity, their intellect. I have so clear an impression of them on my surface that if I am in the same room with them I feel I know exactly where I am; indeed, if I am in the same room with other types, like Harold Nicolson or Hugh Walpole, I have my Cambridge intellectual yard measure handy; and say silently: How terribly you fall short. How you miss the mark, here and here and here. But at the same time I am seduced; and feel that my measure has been proved faulty. The Harold Nicolson and the Hugh Walpoles give me colour and warmth; they amuse and stimulate me. But still I do not respect them as I respect George Moore.

But I can add something to my father's steel engraving—a violent temper. Even as a child Aunt Anny* told me, he would work himself into such violent rages that—I forget how she finished the sentence, but I think it had something to do with smashing a flower pot in a greenhouse; and nobody—nobody—could control him, she said. This temper that he could not control, and that, considering his worship of reason, his hatred of gush, of exaggeration, of all superlatives, seems inconsistent. It was due, I suppose, to the fact that he was spoilt as a child; because of his nervous delicacy; and that delicacy excused his extreme irritability. But it was also, I guess, the convention, supported by the great men of the time, Carlyle, Tennyson, that men of genius were naturally uncontrolled. And genius when my father was a young man was in full flower. A man of genius meant a man who had fits of positive inspiration; "Ah but," I can remember my father saying of Stevenson, "he was a man of genius." Those who had genius in the Victorian sense were like the prophets; different, another breed. They dressed differently; wore long hair, great black hats, capes and cloaks. They were invariably "ill to live with". But it never struck my father, I believe, that there was any harm in being ill to live with. I think

* Anne Ritchie (née Thackeray).

he said unconsciously as he worked himself up into one of those violent outbursts: "This is a sign of my genius," and he called in Carlyle to confirm him, and let himself fly. It was part of the convention that after these outbursts, the man of genius became "touchingly apologetic"; but he took it for granted that his wife or sister would accept his apology, that he was exempt, because of his genius, from the laws of good society. But was he a man of genius? No; that was not alas quite the case. "Only a good second class mind," he once told me, as we walked around the croquet lawn at Fritham. And he said he might have done well to be a scientist.

This frustrated desire to be a man of genius, and the knowledge that he was in truth not in the first flight—a knowledge which led to a great deal of despondency, and to that self-centredness which in later life at least made him so childishly greedy for compliments, made him brood so disproportionately over his failure and the extent of it and the reasons for it—these are qualities that break up the fine steel engraving of the typical Cambridge intellectual. He had considerably more idiosyncrasy, more character as a man—for I am trying to see him as a man not as a father—than the stock Cambridge type. For men like Lowell and Fred Maitland and Herbert Fisher not only admired him; but felt a protecting humorous love for him; so I judge from his power to breed stories; to create a legend. Fred Maitland for instance told how they marched over the Cornish moors all day and Leslie was silent; "but I felt we had become friends"; and Lytton told me of some Strachey cousin who had watched my father as he sat by the fire swinging his foot, and every time his foot swung it knocked against a fire dog; and every time my father said "Damn"; but not another word. And the Strachey cousin was attracted. Mrs Cornish too, speaking of his great attractiveness to Fred Benson, said: "He did by instinct all the little things that women like."

He had clearly that—something—which is not this quality or that quality, but all sorts of qualities summed up into what one calls "character"; personality; a way of impressing silence; a way of impressing the word "damn"; so that if one points to his obvious qualities—his honesty, his unworldliness, his loveliness, his perfect sincerity—one is singling out from a whole single qualities which were part of that whole; and the whole was different from the qualities of which it was made. At any rate, I gather from stories, from memories, that Leslie Stephen apart from his books was

sure; a man who if he came into the room changed what was and felt; and lived a very real life in the minds of men like Walter Headlam or Herbert Fisher; to whom he was a representative man; a man with a standard they often referred to. If a man like Leslie Stephen likes *Tristram Shandy*, Walter Headlam wrote to me, then it must be all right. That gives what I mean. And thus as I dribble on, purposely letting my mind flow, I am introducing a picturesque element into the steel engraving; something that one cannot analyse. Was I not conscious of this as a child? Was it not the origin of the love half of my ambivalent feeling? I too felt his attractiveness. It arose—to name some elements at random—from his simplicity, his integrity, his eccentricity—by which I mean he would say exactly what he thought, however inconvenient; and do what he liked. He had clear, direct feelings. He had certain ruling passions. Off he would stride with his sandwiches for some tremendous walk. Out he would come with some fact, or opinion, no matter who was there. And he had very strong opinions; and he was extremely well informed. What he said was thus most respectfully listened to. He had a godlike, yet childlike, standing in the family. He had an extraordinarily privileged position. I twisted my hair, imitating him. "Father does it," I told my mother when she objected. "Ah but you can't do everything father does," she said, conveying to me that he was licensed, for he was somehow not bound by the laws of ordinary people.

He was a curious figure thus sitting often dead silent at the head of the family dinner table. Sometimes he was caustic; sometimes to Thoby especially instructive. He would ask what was the cube root of such and such a number; for he always worked out mathematical problems on railway tickets; or told us how to find the "dominical number"—when Easter falls was it? And mother would protest; no mathematics, she would say, at meals. Sometimes with an old friend he would laugh, at a college story I suspect, till the veins swelled on his forehead. Yes, certainly I felt his presence; and had many a shock of acute pleasure when he fixed his very small, very blue eyes upon me and somehow made me feel that we two were in league together. There was something we had in common. "What have you got hold of?" he would say, looking over my shoulder at the book I was reading; and how proud, priggishly, I was, if he gave his little amused surprised snort, when he found me reading some book that no child of my age could understand. I was a snob no



doubt, and read partly to make him think me a very clever little brat. And I remember his pleasure, how he stopped writing and got up and was very gentle and pleased, when I came into the study with a book I had done; and asked him for another. Indeed I was often on his side, even when he was exploding. He had come back, I remember, from a Sunday tramp, smelling airy and muddy in his rough suit, and there on the hearthrug was the stout imperturbable Dermot O'Brien,* in love with Stella, and asked, out of kindness, to stay to dinner. Again my father strode up and down the drawing room, groaning, swearing. He could say much more than anyone could believe without caring if the victim—stout Dermot—overheard. The genius mood was on him; and must be accepted. Did he mind if it wasn't? For some reason that night while noting my mother's half laughing deprecation—she was guilty of impulsive hospitality—I shared his mood not hers. You are right, you are right, I kept repeating, surveying the scene from my station on the raised step. I affirmed my sympathy, felt my likeness. And to top it all, though I never saw him with anything like the clarity that I saw my mother, he was, intermittently, especially when his hair was curled in a thick bob behind his ears, a very striking, indeed a magnificent figure; well dressed in his Hill Brothers' clothes; a swallow tail coat; very lean and tall and bent, with his beard flowing so that his little scraggy tie scarcely showed. His chin I think retreated; perhaps his mouth, which I never saw, was a little looselipped; but his forehead rose and swelled; his skull was magnificent, with a little dent over the arch of the brain, that he made me feel once; and though his eyes were very small, with hairy eyebrows hanging over them, they were pure bright forget-me-not blue. His hands were beautifully shaped; and he wore a signet ring with his double eagle crest engraved on a pale blue stone. As a trifling sign of his indifference to appearances, he went on wearing the ring when the stone was lost. He must have put on his clothes automatically, to the sound of poetry, I expect; the waistcoat was often unbuttoned; sometimes the fly buttons; and the coat was often grey with tobacco ash. He smoked pipes incessantly as he wrote, but never in the drawing room. There he sat in his own chair, with a little table beside him on which was a lamp and two or three books, and my mother sat behind

* Dermot O'Brien (1865–1945), a well-known amateur painter who was later active in Irish affairs.

at her writing table built into a very dark angle of the room;* with Lowell's snuffers to snuff her candles; and as my father read he kicked his foot up and down, and twisted and untwisted the lock behind his ear. He was always absorbed; often seemed completely unconscious of his surroundings; and lived by rote—that is always a certain moment would be up and off—upstairs to work, out to walk; every Saturday to visit James Payn†; or off to some meeting. And out of doors he strode along, often shaking his head emphatically as he recited poetry, and giving his stick a flourish. He wore a jillicock hat always, which sat rather oddly upon that great head with the thick bush of hair flowing out on either side. And I remember him too in very respectable evening dress dining out with my mother; and his black waistcoat had a cord round the edge, and he wore elastic sided boots. "I shall be glad when all this dining out is over, Jinny," he said to me, standing waiting by the lamp; and I was flattered by his confidence; yet felt that he enjoyed it.

They dined out quite often in those days, and gave dinner parties too. Indeed for all his unconventionality, he accepted the social conventions so much more completely than we do that I wonder how it is that I feel that he was remote from all that.‡ It came quite naturally to him to drive off in a hansom in evening dress; he made no bones about dinner parties of eight or ten; and a hired parlour-maid, and a dinner which had ever so many courses and different wines. I can see him taking a lady downstairs on his arm; and laughing. He cannot have been as severe and melancholy and morose as I make him out. He must have made conversation and told anecdotes, and he had, now I come to think of it, a little card case and went calling, like other Victorian gentlemen of a Sunday afternoon. Undoubtedly I colour my picture too dark, and the Leslie Stephen whom the world saw in the eighties, and in the nineties until my mother died, must have been not merely a Cambridge steel engraving intellectual. He must have been§ an attractive

* VW has written in the margin, "built in is accurate—at least of some of the cabinets; when we left H.P.G. part of the wall had to be cut down before this Italian cabinet was extricated".

† James Payn, novelist and editor of the *Cornhill Magazine*.

‡ VW has drawn a line through, "It is I suppose that I see only a fragment of him".

§ VW has drawn a line through, "a man of distinction".

man at fifty; a man who had four small children, and a beautiful wife; a man who came into the drawing room in evening dress and marched off down to dinner with Mrs Gosse, or Lady Romer, or Mrs Booth, or Lady Lyttleton, just as he presided over London Library meetings and went to the Ad Eundem dinner at Oxford or at Cambridge. There was a Leslie Stephen who played his part normally, without any oddity or outburst, in drawing rooms and dining rooms and committees. Still, I cannot conceive my father in evening dress. I cannot conceive him hearing everything that was said, and making jokes and being, of course, an intellectual man, but still a man of that well to do sociable late Victorian world. I remember my amazement, my envy, when the Booths said their father took them to dances. How astonished I felt when Charles Booth said something humorous about "shepherding my flock" and I realised that Charles Booth took Meg and Imogen to parties. When he and my mother drive off in their hansom which Amy has whistled off the rank, standing out in the street in her cap and apron and giving two shrill blasts till the hansom comes trotting—sometimes two hansoms raced each other and disputed which had come first—when they descend the many steps from the front door to the street, he passes beyond my horizon. I have never met anyone who knew my father in evening dress; I have never met him thus dressed in memoirs even. Yet he had great charm for women, and was often attracted, as I could tell from something gallant and tender in his manner, by the young and lovely. The name of an American, Mrs Grey, comes back to me, and my mother somehow conveying to me that I might tease him, as I extricated crumbs from his beard, about "flirting with pretty ladies". Those were the words I used; and he looked at me not angry, for I was only acting a parrot; still I remember the sudden shock, then he controlled what might have been a snort; and said something emphatic, as if to show me he would stand no jokes about that. There succeeds to that shock a memory of the immense emphasis with which once, when we were disputing were mother's eyes large or small: "Your mother's eyes are the most beautiful in the world." All the same I like to remember, for it gives humanity to his austere figure, that he was so struck, so normally and masculinely affected by Mrs Langtry's beauty, that he actually went to the play to see her. Otherwise he never went to a play; never went to picture galleries; had no ear whatsoever for music—when Joachim played at Little

Holland House, he asked, when is it going to begin?—the Beethoven or the Mozart being to his ears only "tuning up". In all his life he never troubled to visit Italy or France. Going abroad meant to him solely going to Switzerland to climb mountains; or going to Switzerland to look at mountains.

Mecklenburgh Square again on a hot summer day, July 1940. Invasion still impends. My book* is out; and jaded and distracted I return to this free page.

The sociable father then I never knew. Father as a writer I can get of course in his books; the father who is related to the man's Leslie Stephen, I suppose. The Leslie whom so many writers and scholars admired, though many thought him cold and sneering; just as many thought him formidable and wild and inapproachable. He is to be found here and there in memoirs. He never spoke a word when Stevenson and Gosse lunched with him, and sat silent with his long cold hands and his fan shaped beard flowing over his breast. When I read his books I get a critical grasp on him; I always read *Hours in a Library* by way of filling out my ideas, say of Coleridge, if I'm reading Coleridge; and always find something to fill out; to correct; to stiffen my fluid vision. I find not a subtle mind; not an imaginative mind; not a suggestive mind. But a strong mind; a healthy out of door, moor striding mind; an impatient, limited mind; a conventional mind entirely accepting his own standard of what is honest, what is moral, without a shadow of doubt accepting this is a good man; that is a good woman; I get a sense of Leslie Stephen, the muscular agnostic; cheery, hearty; always cracking up sense and manliness; and crying down sentiment and vagueness, yet putting in a dab of sentiment in the right place—"I will say no more . . . exquisite sensibility . . . thoroughly masculine . . . feminine delicacy . . .". That shows a very simply constructed view of the world; and the world was, I suppose, more simple then. It was a black and white world compared with ours; obvious things to be destroyed—headed humbug, obvious things to be preserved—headed domestic virtues. I admire (laughingly) that Leslie Stephen; and sometimes lately have envied him. Yet he is not a writer for whom I have a natural taste. Yet just as a dog takes a bite of grass, I take a bite of him medicinally, and there often steals in, not a filial,

* *Roger Fry: A Biography* was published on 25 July.

but a reader's affection for him; for his courage, his simplicity, for his strength and nonchalance, and neglect of appearances.

Through his books I can get at the writer father still; but when Nessa and I inherited the rule of the house, I knew nothing of the sociable father, and the writer father was much more exacting and pressing than he is now that I find him only in books; and it was the tyrant father—the exacting, the violent, the histrionic, the demonstrative, the self-centred, the self pitying, the deaf, the appealing, the alternately loved and hated father—that dominated me then. It was like being shut up in the same cage with a wild beast. Suppose I, at fifteen, was a nervous, gibbering, little monkey, always spitting or cracking a nut and shying the shells about, and mopping and mowing, and leaping into dark corners and then swinging in rapture across the cage, he was the pacing, dangerous, morose lion; a lion who was sulky and angry and injured; and suddenly ferocious, and then very humble, and then majestic; and then lying dusty and fly pestered in a corner of the cage.

Now I shall try to describe the cage—22 Hyde Park Gate—as it was in July 1897. Two nights ago I lay awake in Mecklenburgh Square going over each of the rooms. I began at the basement; in the servants' sitting room. It was at the back; very low and very dark; there was an ottoman covered in shiny black American cloth along one wall; and a vast cracked picture of Mr and Mrs Pattle covered the wall above it. I remember a very tall young man with tight trousers strapped over the instep, and white socks. It was relegated to the room because it was so big, so cracked, so bad—compared with the Watts portraits upstairs. One could hardly see it—who was the woman? I cannot see her—or anything else; for the creepers hung down in front of the window, in summer strung with hand-shaped semi-transparent leaves. There was an iron trellis to support them, and outside the little, dust-smelling, patchy square of wall-circled back garden. I remember the wood cupboard in the passage; piled with bundles of fire-wood tied with tarry string; once when I rummaged there for a stick to whittle, two eyes glowed in a corner, and Sophie warned me that a wild cat lived there. Wild cats might have lived there. The basement was a dark insanitary place for seven maids to live in. "It's like hell," one of them burst out to my mother as we sat at lessons in the dining room. My mother at once assumed the frozen dignity of the Victorian matron; and said (perhaps): "Leave the room"; and she (unfort-

unate girl) vanished behind the red plush curtain which, hooped round a semi-circular wire, and anchored by a great gold knob, hid the door that led from the dining room to the pantry.

It was in the dining room, at the long baize covered table, that we did our lessons. My mother's finger with the opal ring I loved pointed its way across French and Latin Grammars. The dining room had two little windows filled with bottle glass at one end. Built into the alcove was a heavily carved sideboard; on which stood a blue china dumb-waiter; and a biscuit tin shaped like a barrel. The room smelt slightly of wine, cigars, food. It was lit also by a skylight, one pane of which lifted in a wind and made me shiver, lest it should crash on our heads. Round the walls hung Sir Joshua engravings; in the corner on a pedestal of mottled yellow marble stood the bust of the first Sir James*—an eyeless, white man who still presides in the hall of Adrian's house in Regents Park. It was a very Victorian dining room; with a complete set of chairs carved in oak; high-backed; with red plush panels. At dinner time with all its silver candles, silver dishes, knives and forks and napkins, the dinner table looked very festive. A twisting staircase led to the hall. In the hall lay a dog, beside him a bowl of water with a chunk of yellow sulphur in it. In the hall facing the front door stood a cabinet with blue china; and on it a gold faced clock. In the hall was a three-cornered chair; and a chest in which rugs were kept; and on this chest was a silver salver deep in visiting cards; and a plush glove for smoothing the silk of George's and Gerald's top hats; and I also remember nailed over the fire place a long strip of chocolate coloured cardboard on which was written: "What is to be a gentleman? It is to be tender to women, chivalrous to servants . . ."—what else I cannot remember; though I used to know it by heart. What innocence, what incredible simplicity of mind it showed—to keep this cardboard quotation—from Thackeray I think—perpetually displayed, as if it were a frontispiece to a book—nailed to the wall in the hall of the house.

The two drawing rooms opened out of the hall; the front and the back drawing room. The front, facing the street, was comparatively light; the Watts portrait of father faced the door, a flattered, an idealised picture, up to which father would lead admiring ladies; and pause and contemplate it, with some complacency. But

* Sir James Stephen

"Lowell said it makes me look like a weasel," he once said. There was the grand piano upon which Christmas presents were stood; and Stella's writing table in the window; and the round table in the middle, which, when supplemented by a small folding table which has followed me, unwelcomed, even to Monks House, made the tea table. The tea table, the very hearth and centre of family life, the tea table round which sat innumerable parties; on which, when Sunday came—the tea table's festival day—pink shell plates were placed, full of brown Sunday buns, full of very thin slices of white and brown bread and butter.

The tea table rather than the dinner table was the centre of Victorian family life—in our family at least. Savages I suppose have some tree, or fire place, round which they congregate; the round table marked that focal, that sacred spot in our house. It was the centre, the heart of the family. It was the centre to which the sons returned from their work in the evening; the hearth whose fire was tended by the mother, pouring out tea. In the same way, the bedroom—the double bedded bedroom on the first floor was the sexual centre; the birth centre, the death centre of the house. It was not a large room; but its walls must be soaked, if walls take pictures and hoard up what is done and said with all that was most intense, of all that makes the most private being, of family life. In that bed four children were begotten; there they were born; there first mother died; then father died, with a picture of mother hanging in front of him. The house mounted in three roomed storeys above that bedroom. Above father's and mother's bedroom floor were the three bedrooms of George, Gerald, and Stella; above their bedrooms our night and day nurseries; above that the great study with its high ceiling of yellow stained wood; and the servants' bedrooms. There were different smells on different landings of that tall dark house. One landing smelt perpetually of candle grease; for on a high cupboard stood all the bedroom candles. On another half landing was the water closet; with all the brass hot water cans standing by a sink. On another half landing was the solitary family bath. (My father all his life washed in a yellow tin bath with flat ears on which the soap stood.) Further up, was a brown filter from which once the drinking water presumably was supplied: in our day it only dripped a little. At that height—it was on the study half landing—carpets and pictures had given out, and the top landing of all was a little pinched and bare. Once

when a pipe burst and some young man visitor—Peter Studd?—volunteered help and rushed upstairs with a bucket, he penetrated to the servants' bedrooms, and my mother, I noted, seemed a little 'provoked', a little perhaps ashamed, that he had seen what must have been their rather shabby rooms. My father's great study—that study had been built on, when the family grew—was a fine big room, very high, three windowed, and entirely booklined. His old rocking chair covered in American cloth was the centre of the room which was the brain of the house. He had written all his books lying sunk in that deep rocking chair; which swung up and down; for it was so deep that his feet were off the ground. Across it lay his writing board; with the sheets of foolscap always folded down the middle, so that he could make corrections in the margin. And there was his fine steel pen and the curious china inkpot, with a well, lidded, out at the side. All his books were dipped out of that well on the point of Joseph Gillott's long shanked steel pens. And I remember the little flat shield that his pen had rubbed smooth and hard on the joint of his forefinger. Minny's* portrait by Watts—a charming shy face—nestling away, not noble, not heroic, but shy and sweet, hung over the fireplace; and in the corner by the window stood a stack of rusty alpenstocks. From the three long windows one looked out over the roofs of Kensington, to the presiding Church of St Mary Abbots, the church where our conventional marriages were celebrated—and one day standing there father saw an eagle. It was, I thought, like him that he knew it for an eagle at once; and at once verified the fact, from the paper, that it was an eagle that had escaped from the Zoo. He would not make up stories about wild eagles flying over London. The room smelt perpetually of tobacco smoke.

The street below was a cul-de-sac. Our house was near the blank brick wall at the end. Hyde Park Gate, which led nowhere, but made a little sealed loop out of the great high road running from Hammersmith to Piccadilly, was something like a village street. One heard foot steps tapping along the pavement. Most of the people passing bowed to each other as they met. One recognised them approaching. That was Mrs Muir-MacKenzie; handsome, distinguished. That was the pale Miss Redgrave; or that was the red-nosed Miss Redgrave; or that was the ancient Mrs Redgrave,

* Harriet Marian Thackeray, the first Mrs Leslie Stephen.

veiled, in widow's weeds; going out in her bath chair with a Miss Redgrave in attendance—if it was wet she had a glass pane let down so that she looked like a museum specimen preserved under glass. There was also, in a house with a queer flight of angular steps, 'Her Grace' as the nurses called her—an old Duchess of Grafton. There was the house of the famous—somehow infamous—Mrs Biddulph Martin, the rich American, whose garden wall bulged out. "Why don't you make a good job of it?" said George to the workmen who were pointing the wall. They said they could only carry out orders; the wall continued to bulge. Mrs Biddulph Martin was tarnished perhaps by some connection with women's rights. So too certainly was Mrs Ashton Dilke, our next door neighbour. Indeed a man threw a stone at her at some meeting; and my mother, who had signed an anti-suffrage manifesto, holding that women had enough to do in their own homes without a vote, made kind enquiries through us, of the Dilke's governess. But Mrs Dilke, save for that eccentricity, was the pink of fashion; a very pretty woman, and so well dressed, that we used to notice her new dress, and to say "Mrs Dilke has far more new clothes than you have" to mother, who never had new clothes, and dressed always, I think, in a very simple sewing woman made black dress. And further up the street was Aunt Minna's* house, where she lived solitary with her perennial parrot and her perennial Italian manservant. He changed; but his name was always Angelo; and he was always small and greasy; and played bagatelle with us in his shirtsleeves in the basement. The house with the locked gate and the many steps in the middle of the street was famous for the 'big dog'. People called Maude lived there; impecunious, shifty, disreputable people; who could not pay their bills; and thus kept their gate locked and the big dog behind it to frighten duns. As one passed he sprang down the steps barking; and one day knocked me over and bit or bruised my arm. Then the villagers got together and brought a police court case; and Mr Plowden the magistrate was so impressed by my evidence—or rather my state of mind—that he ordered the dog to be destroyed. "But we don't want him destroyed," Mrs MacKenzie insisted, "only restrained." For it was agreed that it wasn't the poor Maude girls' fault—the handsome dark girls who lived behind the locked gate, scaring duns, were to be pitied for their disreputable parents' discreditable imprisoned lives.

* Sarah Emily Duckworth, the sister-in-law of Julia Stephen.

Everybody knew everybody, and everything about everybody, in Hyde Park Gate. It was a trial, if you disliked the gradual approach of a familiar face as I did, to see the MacKenzies or the Redgraves coming nearer and nearer until you had to stop or at least smile. The houses were all individual houses; some towering high, like ours; others, like the Redgraves', long low houses almost country houses; some had strips of garden; others were flush with the street. But they became stereotyped, pillared, and pompous up at the top fronting the main road. Incredible as it now seems, I can remember that one of these pompous houses had a carriage and pair with a coachman and footman who wore powdered wigs, and yellow plush knee breeches and silk stockings. Yet the owners were of no particular importance; and yet nobody thought such magnificence was strange. Perhaps one house out of every six in Hyde Park Gate kept a carriage, or hired one from Hobbs whose livery stable opened its great yard in the middle. For there was only the red bus to take people "into Town," as father called it, or, if you could afford it, a hansom or four-wheeler from the rank. The underground; a sulphur smelling steam clouded tunnel with trams running, I suppose, rather seldom, was far away—at Kensington High Street, or Gloucester Road. My father and mother always took the red bus, to them a hansom by day was an unknown luxury. My mother did all her immense rounds—shopping, calling, visiting hospitals and work houses—in omnibuses. She was an omnibus expert. She would nip from the red to the blue, from the blue to the yellow, and make them somehow connect and convey her all over London. Sometimes she would come home very tired, owning that she had missed her bus or the bus had been full up, or she had got beyond the radius of her favourite buses. But more often she would have some story to tell of her bus adventures—a talk she had had with the conductor, or how a fellow passenger had said this or that. "She sat weeping," I remember she said, "and I could only lend her my scent bottle." My father always climbed on top and smoked his pipe; she I think never did that, but, if she could, chose the corner seat and talked to the conductor. He would tell her his troubles; as the two stubby horses ploughed their way along the streets, those old omnibus horses who lived, it was said, only a year or two, for the pulling up to take in passengers destroyed their constitutions. Once a year about Christmas we saw a brace of pheasants swinging from the driver's seat—the gift of the Rothschilds.

The streets were full of horses. The streets were littered with little brown piles of steaming horse dung which boys, darting out among the wheels, removed in shovels. The horses kicked and reared and neighed. Often they ran away. Carriages crashed together I remember in High Street; horses went sprawling; they shied; they reared; wheels came off. The street rocked with horses and smelt of horses. The horses were often gleaming, spick and span horses, with rosettes in their ears; the footmen wore cockades in their hats; foam flecked the bright silver harness; coronets and coats of arms were painted on panels and among the sounds of the street—the tap of hoofs, the rush of wheels—one heard a jingling and metallic noise as the harness shook and rattled. But only solitary hansoms, or little high butchers' carts, or private broughams came clopping down our quiet Hyde Park cul-de-sac—our "backwater," as father called it.

My room in that very tall house was at the back. When Stella married, Vanessa and I were promoted to separate bed sitting rooms; that marked the fact that we had become, she at eighteen, I a fifteen, young ladies. My room, the old night nursery, was a long narrow room, with two windows; the fireside half was the living half; the washstand half was the sleeping half. It had been 'done up' at George's cost, I rather think; all traces of the night nursery were abolished. In the living half was my wicker chair, and Stella's writing table made after her design with crossed legs, and stained green and decorated by her with a pattern of brown leaves (at that time staining and enamelling and amateur furniture decorating were much the rage). On it stood open my Greek lexicon; some Greek play or other; many little bottles of ink, pens innumerable; and probably hidden under blotting paper, sheets of foolscap covered with private writing in a hand so small and twisted as to be a family joke.

The sleeping side was dominated by the long Chippendale (imitation) looking glass, given me by George in the hope that I should look into it and learn to do my hair and take general care for my appearance. Between it and the washstand, under the window, was my bed. On summer nights, I would lie with the window open, looking up at the sky, thinking, for I recall a story I wrote then, about the stars and how in Egypt some savage was looking at them; and also listening. Very far off there was a hum of traffic. In the mews one heard the stamp of horses; a clatter of the

wheels and buckets. In a bedroom window, one of the Queen's Gate back windows opposite, I could see Sir Alfred Lyall dressing and undressing. One of the windows was broken; the servants said there lay the wedding feast still untouched; for a bridegroom had failed, or a bride had died. Certainly there was a dusty broken window. Of a summer night I sometimes heard dance music and saw the dancers sitting out on the leads; saw them passing and re-passing the window on the stairs. One night I lay awake horrified hearing, as I imagined, an obscene old man gasping and croaking and muttering senile indecencies—it was a cat, I was told afterwards; a cat's-anguished love making. George, on the floor below, kept a store of old electric light bulbs which he shied at cats—pop-pop they would explode against the wall. Often I would lie awake till two or three, waiting for Nessa to come and see me after her party. I would read by the light of a candle, and blow it out as I heard her and Gerald approaching. But Gerald pinched the top of the candle, found the wax soft, and so detected me.

Which should I describe first—the living half of the room, or the sleeping half? They must be described separately; yet they were always running together. How they fought each other; that is, how often I was in a rage in that room; and in despair; and in ecstasy; how I read myself into a trance of perfect bliss; then in came—Adrian, George, Gerald, Jack, my father; how it was there I retreated to when father enraged me; and paced up and down scarlet; and there Madge* came one evening; and I could scarcely talk for happiness; and there I droned out those long solitary mornings reading Greek . . . And it was from that room Gerald fetched me when father died. There I first heard those horrible voices . . .

If that room, which is now I think cut into cubicles for the hotel guests—after we left it it became a Guest house—could bring out its ghosts, the business man from Birmingham, the lady from Cheltenham up to see the Royal Academy, would be amused; also pitiful; and perhaps one of them would say what an odd, what an unwholesome life for a girl of fifteen; I suppose they would add: "Such a life is quite impossible nowadays." And I suppose that, if one of them had read *To the Lighthouse*, or *A Room of One's Own*, or *The Common*

* Margaret Vaughan (née Symonds).

Reader, he or she might say: "This room explains a great deal."

But of course I was not thinking when I lived in my back room at H[yde] P[ark] G[ate] of Birmingham business men or ladies from Cheltenham. But I was thinking; feeling; living; those two lives that the two halves symbolized with the intensity, the muffled intensity, which a butterfly or moth feels when with its sticky tremulous legs and antennae it pushes out of the chrysalis and emerges and sits quivering beside the broken case for a moment; its wings still creased; its eyes dazzled, incapable of flight.

Anyone, whether fifteen or not, whether sensitive or not, must have felt something very acute, merely from what had happened. My mother's death had been a latent sorrow—at thirteen one could not master it, envisage it, deal with it. But Stella's death two years later fell on a different substance; a mind stuff and being stuff that was extraordinarily unprotected, unformed, unshielded, apprehensive, receptive, anticipatory. That must always hold good of minds and bodies at fifteen. But beneath the surface of this particular mind and body lay sunk the other death. Even if I were not fully conscious of what my mother's death meant, I had been for two years unconsciously absorbing it through Stella's silent grief; through my father's demonstrative grief; again through all the things that changed and stopped; the ending of society; of gaiety; the giving up of St Ives; the black clothes; the suppressions; the locked door of her bedroom. All this had toned my mind and made it apprehensive; made it I suppose unnaturally responsive to Stella's happiness, and the promise it held for her and for us of escape from that gloom; when once more unbelievably—incredibly—as if one had been violently cheated of some promise; more than that, brutally told not to be such a fool as to hope for things; I remember saying to myself after she died: "But this is impossible; things aren't, can't be, like this"—the blow, the second blow of death, struck on me; tremulous, filmy eyed as I was, with my wings still creased, sitting there on the edge of my broken chrysalis.

Yesterday (18th August 1940) five German raiders passed so close over Monks House that they brushed the tree at the gate. But being alive today, and having a waste hour on my hands—for I am writing fiction; and cannot write after twelve—I will go on with this loose story.*

By the time I had that room, when I was fifteen that is, "our" as we called ourselves had become separate. That was symbolized by our separate rooms. Yet we were not so separate as boys and girls, brothers and sisters, often become when the boys go to public schools and the sisters stay at home. Mother's and Stella's deaths, I suppose, united us. We never spoke of them. I can remember how awkwardly Thoby avoided saying "Stella" when a ship called *Stella* was wrecked. (When Thoby died, Adrian and I agreed that we would go on talking about him, "for there are so many dead people now.") This silence, we felt, covered something; something that most families had not. But without that bond, mine was from my earliest childhood so close with both Nessa and Thoby that if I describe myself I must describe them.

When Stella died Thoby was seventeen—two years older than I. But long before that I was acutely conscious of him. Even as a little boy he was dominant among us. He could impose himself. He was not clever; he was not a funny talkative child; he was a clumsy awkward little boy, very fat, bursting through his Norfolk jacket. He dominated and led in our world. But even to the grown ups he was rather formidable. Father had to be sent for once or twice: I remember Thoby struggling like a tiger with Gerald. He was large and clumsy. He grew very quickly out of nursery ways. I cannot remember him childish, as Adrian was. But then mother was not so much at her ease with him as with Adrian. Nor he with her. He was not clever; but gifted. And his gifts were natural to him, naturally it came to him to look distinguished; to be silent, to draw. He would take a sheet of paper, hold it at an odd angle and begin easily, naturally, drawing a bird, not where I expected, but at some queer place, so that I could not guess how the bird would become a bird. He was not precocious; but won prizes now and then, yet failed to win a scholarship at Eton. His Latin and Greek were very rough, I think the masters said. But his essays showed great intelligence. Yet it was through him that I first heard about the Greeks. The day after he came back from Evelyns, the first time, he was very shy; and odd; and we went walking up and down the stairs together; and he told me the story of Hector and of Troy. I felt he

* The material that follows is a revision of the manuscript MH/A. 5d, which was transcribed on pages 107-37 in the original edition of *Moments of Being*.

was too shy to tell it sitting down; and so we kept walking up stairs and then down; and he told me the story rather fitfully, but excitedly. Also he told me stories about the boys at Evelyns. Those stories went on all through Evelyns, through Clifton, and through Cambridge. I knew all his friends through those stories. He had a great power for liking people, for admiring them. And they amused him; I think I felt that he enjoyed Evelyns; and Clifton, because he liked being on his own, and held his own; and was admired, but was also dominant there too. He held his own, he put up with disagreeables; he was far more philosophic, because more in his element at school than Adrian was. And he exacted his rights. The Pup had to apologise when he put another boy over him as head of the house; he was not going to be passed over. He was not easy to put upon. And yet he had no reason to assert himself; he did not expect to win things; he admired the boys who were good at football; good at Latin; but unenviably. I felt he had taken stock of his own powers; would come into possession of them all in good time; and enjoyed slowly and deliberately without being worried or upset whatever came his way at Clifton. He was tolerant; not critical; not precocious; biding his time, and serenely taking his place. And beneath this reserve, when he was with us, I felt, though he could not say a word ever about his feelings, a dumb affectionateness, a pride in us, and something melancholy too—perhaps the deaths of mother and Stella made him older than his age. And father's extraordinary demonstrative love for him.

I continue (22nd September 1940) on this wet day—we think of weather now as it affects invasions, as it affects raids, not as weather that we like or dislike privately—I continue, for I am at a twist in my novel,* to fill in another page. I was writing about Thoby when I left off. And last night, trying to soothe myself to sleep (for I was in a pucker, as Clive calls it, about the Anreps† coming here) I thought about St. Ives. I will write about St Ives, and so fittingly,

* She was now at work on *Between the Acts* which at this period is referred to as 'PH' in *A Writer's Diary*, for 'Poyntzet Hall' or 'Poyntz Hall'.

† VW was upset because she feared—mistakenly as it turned out—that Helen Anrep, the companion of Roger Fry until his death, was planning to move permanently to Rodmell with her son and daughter. 'Clive' is, of course, Clive Bell.

though indirectly, lead up to Thoby again. St Ives will fill him in.

Father on one of his walking tours, it must have been in 1881, I think—discovered St Ives. He must have stayed there, and seen Talland House to let. He must have seen the town almost as it had been in the sixteenth century, without hotels, or villas; and the Bay as it had been since time began. It was the first year, I think, that the line was made from St Erth to St Ives—before that, St Ives was eight miles from a railway. Munching his sandwiches up at Tregenna perhaps, he must have been impressed, in his silent way, by the beauty of the Bay; and thought: this might do for our summer holiday, and worked out with his usual caution ways and means. I was to be born in the following January; and, though they wished to limit their family, and did what they could to prevent me, he must have known that they were not successful in the steps they took; Adrian was born a year after me (1883)—again, in spite of precautions. It proves the ease and amplitude of those days that a man to whom money was an obsession thought it feasible to take a house on the very toenail, as he called it, of England, so that every summer he would be faced with the expense of moving children, nurses, servants from one end of England to the other. Yet he did it. They rented the house from the Great Western Railway Company. The distance did prove in one way a drawback; for we could only go there in the summer. Our country thus was canalised into two or at most into three months of the year. The other months were spent entirely in London. Yet in retrospect nothing that we had as children made as much difference, was quite so important to us, as our summer in Cornwall. The country was intensified, after the months in London to go away to Cornwall; to have our own house; our own garden; to have the Bay; the sea; the moors; Clodgy; Halestown Bog; Garbis Bay; Lelant; Treveal; Zennor; the Gurnard's Head; to hear the waves breaking that first night behind the yellow blind; to dig in the sand; to go sailing in a fishing boat; to scrabble over the rocks and see the red and yellow anemones flourishing their antennae; or stuck like blobs of jelly to the rock; to find a small fish flapping in a pool; to pick up cowries; to look over the grammar in the dining room and see the lights changing on the bay; the leaves of the escallonia grey or bright green; to go down to the town and buy a penny box of tintacks or a pocket knife; to prowls about Lanhams—Mrs Lanham wore false curls shaking round her head; the servants said Mr Lanham had married her 'through an advertise-

ment'; to smell all the fishy smells in the steep little streets; and see the innumerable cats with their fishbones in their mouths; and the women on the raised steps outside their houses pouring pails of dirty water down the gutters; every day to have a great dish of Cornish cream skinned with a yellow skin; and plenty of brown sugar to eat with blackberries . . . I could fill pages remembering one thing after another. All together made the summer at St Ives the best beginning to life conceivable. When they took Talland House father and mother gave us—me at any rate—what has been perennial, invaluable. Suppose I had only Surrey, or Sussex, or the Isle of Wight to think about when I think of my childhood.

The town was then much as it must have been in the sixteenth century, unknown, unvisited, a scramble of granite houses crusting the slope in the hollow under the Island. It must have been built for shelter; for a few fishermen, when Cornwall was more remote from England than Spain or Africa is now. It was a steep little town. Many houses had a flight of steps, with a railing leading to the door. The walls were thick blocks of granite built to stand the sea storms. They were splashed with a wash the colour of Cornish cream; and their roughness was like the clot of cream. There was nothing mellow about them; no red brick; no soft thatch. The eighteenth century had left no mark upon St Ives, as it has so definitely upon every southern village. It might have been built yesterday; or in the time of the Conqueror. It had no architecture; no arrangement. The market place was a jagged cobbled open place; the Church was on one side; built of granite, ageless, like the houses; the fish market stood beside it. There was no grass in front of it. It stood flush to the market place. There were no carved doors, large windows, no lintels; no moss; no comely professional houses. It was a windy, noisy, fishy, vociferous, narrow-streeted town; the colour of a mussel or a limpet; like a bunch of rough shell fish clustered on a grey wall together.

Our house, Talland House, was just beyond the town, on the hill. For whom the Great Western Railway had built it, I do not know. It must have been in the forties, or fifties; a square house, like a child's drawing of a house; remarkable only for its flat roof, and the crisscrossed railing that ran round the roof; again, like something a child draws. It stood in a garden that ran downhill; and had formed itself into separate gardens, surrounded by thick escallonia hedges, whose leaves, pressed, gave out a very sweet smell.

It had so many angles cut off, and lawns surrounded, that each had a name; there was the coffee garden; the Fountain—a basin with a funnel that dripped, hedged in with damp evergreens; the cricket lawn; the Love Corner, under the greenhouse, where the purple *Jackmanii* grew—where Leo Maxse proposed to Kitty Lushington (I thought I heard Paddy talking to his son, Thoby said, over-hearing the proposal). Then there was the kitchen garden; the strawberry beds; the pond where Willy Fisher sailed the little steamers he made with a paddle worked by an elastic band; and the big tree. All these different, cut off places were contained in that one garden of not more than two or three acres. One entered by a large wooden gate, the sound of whose latch clicking was one of the familiar sounds; up the carriage drive one went, under the steep wall of rock, sprinkled with the fleshy leaves of the mesembry-anthemums; and then came to the Lookout place, between the clumps of pampas grass. The Lookout place was a grassy mound, that jutted out over the high garden wall. There we were often sent to stand to look out for the fall of the signal. When the signal fell it was time to start for the station to meet the train. It was the train that brought Mr Lowell, Mr Gibbs, the Stillmans, the Lushingtons, the Symonds. But it was a grown-up affair—receiving friends. We never had friends to stay with us. Nor did we want them. "Us four" were completely self-sufficient. Once when a child called Elsie was brought by Mrs Westlake to play with us I "broomed her round the garden". I remember scuffling her like a drift of dead leaves in front of me.

From the Lookout place one had then, a perfectly open view across the Bay. (Mr Symonds said that the Bay reminded him of the Bay of Naples.) It was a large Bay, many curved, edged with a slip of sand, with green sand hills behind; and the curves flowed in and out to the two black rocks at one end of which stood the black and white tower of the Lighthouse; and at the other end, Hayle river made a blue vein across the sand, and stakes, on which always a gull sat, marked the channel into Hayle Harbour. This great flowing basin of water was always changing in colour; it was deep blue; emerald green; purple and then stormy grey and white crested. There was a great coming and going of ships across the bay. Most usually, it was a Haines steamer, with a red or white band round the funnel, going to Cardiff for coal. In rough weather, sometimes one would wake to find the whole bay full of ships, that had come in

overnight for shelter—little tramp steamers mostly, with a dip in the middle. But sometimes a big ship would be anchored there; once a battle ship; once a great sailing ship; once a famous white yacht. Then every morning the clumsy luggers went out, deep sea fishing; and in the evening there was the mackerel fleet, its lights dancing up and down; and the fleet returning, rounding the headland and suddenly dropping their sails. We would stand with mother on the Lookout place watching them.

Every year, about the first week in September, we would cry "The pilchard boats are out!" There they were being hauled down the beach, where they lay one behind another all the rest of the year. Horses were struggling to draw them over the beach. They were anchored near the shore, and looked like long black shoes, for each had a hood for the watchman at one end, and a great coil of net—seines they were called—at the other. The tarring of the pilchard boats was a regular occupation; and made the beach always smell slightly of tar. There they lay week after week, and were still lying when we left in October, waiting for the Huer who sat at his telescope up in the white shelter on Carbis Bay point to sight a shoal.* He sat there looking for a purple stain of pilchards to come into the bay and beside him was a great horn of some kind. Year after year the boats lay in the bay. The seines were never shot. The fishermen grumbled that the steam trawlers at Newlyn (perhaps) had disturbed the pilchards; and driven them out to sea. Once, though, as we sat at lessons we heard the Huer's cry—a long high clear hoot of sound. Then fishermen rowed out to the boats. We stopped lessons. The seines were shot. A dotted circle of corks floated here and there over the dark net beneath. But the pilchards passed out of the bay that time; and the seines were drawn in again. (It was in 1905, when we four took a lodging at Carbis Bay that the pilchards came. We rowed out early in the morning. The sea spurted and spat and bubbled with silver. A stranger in the next boat shovelled armfuls of that bubbling mass into our boat. "Like some fresh fish for breakfast?" he said—everyone was excited and jubilant; and boat after boat was weighed down to the water line with fish. And we went down to the harbour and saw them packed. I wrote a description of it, and sent it to some paper; which rejected it. But Thoby told Nessa, who told me, that he thought I might be

* "We would often stop and talk to him" is lightly pencilled through.

bit of a genius.) All the years we were at St Ives the pilchards never came into the bay; and the pilchard boats lay there, anchored, waiting; and we used to swim out and hang onto the edge, and see the old man lying in his brown tarpaulin tent, keeping watch. The waiting pilchard boats was [sic] a sight that made father pish and pshaw at table. He had a curious sympathy for the poverty of the fisher people: a respect for fishermen, like his respect for Alpine guides. And mother, of course, got to know them in their houses; and went about, "doing good" as Stella wished to have it said on her tombstone; she visited, helped, and started her nursing society. After her death it became the Julia Prinsep Stephen Nursing Association; Meredith* and the Symonds and Stillmans contributed to it; and Ka Arnold-Forster† told me not so long ago that it still exists.

Every year, in August, the Regatta took place in the bay. We watched the Judges' boat take its station, with lines of little flags hung from mast to mast. The St Ives notables went on board. A band played. Wafts of music came across the water. All the little boats came out of the harbour. Then a gun was fired, and the races began. Off went the boats—the luggers, the pleasure boats, the rowing boats; racing round the different courses that were marked by flags round the bay. And while they raced, the swimmers got ready in a line on the Regatta boat for their races. The gun fired; they plunged and we could see the little heads bobbing and the arms flashing and heard the people shouting as one swimmer gained on another. One year our charming curly headed young postman (I remember the brown linen bag in which he carried letters) should have won; but he explained to Amy later "I let the other chap win, because it was his last chance."

It was a very gay sight, with the flags flying, the guns firing, the boats sailing, and the swimmers plunging or being hauled back on board. A crowd of St Ives people gathered to watch in the Malakoff, that octagonal space at the end of the Terrace which had been built, presumably, in the Crimean War and was the only attempt that the town made at ornament. St Ives had no pleasure pier, no parade, only this angular gravelly patch of ground, set with a few

* George Meredith, the novelist and poet.

† Ka Arnold-Forster, née Katherine Cox, a 'Neo-Pagan', Fabian and Newnhamite, who was involved in a rather stormy love affair with Rupert Brooke.

stone seats upon which retired fishermen in their blue jerseys smoked and gossiped. The Regatta day remains in my mind, with its distant music, its little strings of flags, the boats sailing; and the people dotted on the sand, like a French picture.

In those days St Ives, save for ourselves and casual wandering painters, had no summer visitors. Its customs were its own customs; its festivals its own too. There was the August Regatta. Then once in every twelve years or so,* old men and women over seventy danced round Knills Monument—a granite steeple in a clearing—and the couple who danced longest were given a shilling? half a crown?—by the Mayor—Dr Nicholls, on that occasion, who wore a long fur trimmed cloak. St Ives had a relic, but a relic in use, of the past—Charlie Pearce, the town crier. Now and again he shuffled along the front swinging a muffin bell and crying “Oyez, Oyez, Oyez.” What he went on to say, I do not know, save that on one occasion, when a visitor at Talland House lost a brooch, she had it cried by Charlie Pearce. He was blind, or nearly; with a long wasted face, grey eyes, like the eyes of a fish that has been boiled, and he wore a battered top hat, a frock coat tightly buttoned round his angular body, and he shuffled oddly from side to side as he went swinging his bell, and crying “Oyez, Oyez, Oyez.” We knew him, as we knew so many of the town characters, through the servants, in particular through Sophie, who had many friends among them. We knew all the tradespeople, who came up the drive to the kitchen door, carrying their parcels—Alice Curnow, with the washing in a great basket; Mrs Adams the fisherwoman, who brought fish in another basket—the lobsters still alive, still blue, hobbling about in the basket. The lobster would be set on the kitchen table, and the great claw would open and shut and pinch one. Can I be remembering a fact when I think I remember a long thick fish wriggling on a hook in the larder, and that Gerald beat it to death with a broom handle?

The kitchen, Sophie’s kitchen, for she was dominant over all the other “denizens of the kitchen”, as we called them in the *Hyde Park Gate News*, was directly beneath our night nursery. At dinner time we would let down a basket on a string, and dangle it over the kitchen window. If she were in a good temper, the basket would be drawn in, laden with something from the grown-ups’ dinner and

* This ceremony takes place every five, not every twelve, years.



pushed swaying out again. If she was in “one of her tempers,” the basket was sharply jerked, the string cut, and we [were] left holding the dangling string. I can remember the sensation of the heavy basket, and of the light string.

Every afternoon we “went for a walk”. Later these walks became a penance. Father must have one of us to go out with him, Mother insisted. Too much obsessed with his health, with his pleasures, she was too willing, as I think now, to sacrifice us to him. It was thus that she left us the legacy of his dependence, which after her death became so harsh an imposition. It would have [been] better for our relationship if she had left him to fend for himself. But for many years she made a fetish of his health; and so—leaving the effect upon us out of the reckoning—she wore herself out and died at forty-nine; while he lived on, and found it very difficult, so healthy was he, to die of cancer at the age of seventy-two. But, though I slip in, still venting an old grievance, that parenthesis, St Ives gave us all the same that “pure delight” which is before my eyes at this very moment. The lemon-coloured leaves on the elm tree; the apples in the orchard; the murmur and rustle of the leaves makes me pause here, and think how many other than human forces are always at work on us. While I write this the light glows; an apple becomes a vivid green; I respond all through me; but how? Then a little owl [chatters]* under my window. Again, I respond. Figuratively I could snapshot what I mean by some image; I am a porous vessel afloat on sensation; a sensitive plate exposed to invisible rays; and so on. Or I fumble with some vague idea about a third voice; I speak to Leonard; Leonard speaks to me; we both hear a third voice. Instead of labouring all the morning to analyse what I mean, to discover whether I mean anything real, whether I make up or tell the truth when I see myself taking the breath of these voices in mysails and tacking this way and that through daily life as I yield to them, I note only the existence of this influence; suspect it to be of great importance; cannot find how to check its power on other people—does Louie feel it? Does Percy? Which of the people watching the incendiary bomb extinguished on the hill last night would understand what I mean if they read this?—I erect a finger post here, to mark a vein I will some time try to work out; and return to the surface; that is St Ives.

* A line has been drawn through ‘chatters’ and an indecipherable word has been pencilled in.

The regular Sunday walk was to Trick Robin or, as father liked to call it, Tren Crom. From the top, one could see the two seas, St Michael's Mount on one side; the Lighthouse on the other. Like all Cornish hills, it was scattered with blocks of granite; said some of them to be old tombs and altars; in some, holes were driven, as if for gate posts. Others were piled up rocks. The Loggan rock was on top of Tren Crom; we would set it rocking; and be told that perhaps the hollow in the rough lichened surface was for the victim's blood. But father, with his severe love of truth, disbelieved it; he said, in his opinion, this was no genuine Loggan rock; but the natural disposition of ordinary rocks. Little paths led up to the hill, between heather and ling; and our knees were pricked by the gorse—the blazing yellow gorse with its sweet nutty smell. Another walk, a short children's walk, was to Fairyland, as we called that solitary wood, with a broad wall circling it. We walked on the wall, and looked down into a forest of oak trees, and great ferns, higher than our heads. It smelt of oak apples; it was dark, damp, silent, mysterious. A longer, an adventurous walk was to Halestown Bog. Again father corrected us; Helston Bog we called it; the real name was Halestown. In that bog we sprang from hag to hag; and the hags squelched and we plunged up to the knee in the brown bog water. There the *Osmunda* grew; and the rare maiden-hair fern. Better than these walks, a treat announced perhaps once a fortnight, was an afternoon sailing. We would hire a lugger; the fisherman went with us. But once Thoby was allowed to steer us home. "Show them you can bring her in, my boy," father said, with his usual trust and pride in Thoby. And Thoby took the fisherman's place; and steered; flushed and with his blue eyes very blue, and his mouth set, he sat there, bringing us round the point, into harbour, without letting the sail flag. One day the sea was full of pale jelly fish, like lamps, with streaming hair; but they stung you if you touched them. Sometimes lines would be handed us; baited by gobbets cut from fish; and the line thrilled in one's fingers as the boat tossed and shot through the water; and then—how can I convey the excitement?—there was a little leaping tug; then another; up one hauled; up through the water at length came the white twisting fish; and was slapped on the floor. There it lay flapping this way and that in an inch or two of water.

Once, after we had hung about, tacking, and hauling in gurnard after gurnard, dab after dab, father said to me: "Next time if you

are going to fish I shan't come; I don't like to see fish caught but you can go if you like." It was a perfect lesson. It was not a rebuke; not a forbidding; simply a statement of his own feeling, about which I could think and decide for myself. Though my passion for the thrill and the tug had been perhaps the most acute I then knew, his words slowly extinguished it; leaving no grudge, I ceased to wish to catch fish. But from the memory of my own passion I am still able to construct an idea of the sporting passion. It is one of those invaluable seeds, from which, since it is impossible to have every experience fully, one can grow something that represents other people's experiences. Often one has to make do with seeds; the germs of what might have been, had one's life been different. I pigeonhole 'fishing' thus with other momentary glimpses; like those rapid glances, for example, that I cast into basements when I walk in London streets.

Oak apples, ferns with clusters of seeds on their backs, the regatta, Charlie Pearce, the click of the garden gate, the ants swarming on the hot front door step; buying tintacks; sailing; the smell of Halestown Bog; splits with Cornish cream for tea in the farm house at Trevail, the floor of the sea changing colour at lessons; old Mr Wolstenholme in his beehive chair; the spotted elm leaves on the lawn; the rooks cawing as they passed over the house in the early morning; the escallonia leaves showing their grey undersides: the arc in the air, like the pip of an orange, when the powder magazine at Hayle blew up; the boom of the buoy—these for some reason come uppermost at the moment in my mind thinking of St Ives—an incongruous miscellaneous catalogue, little corks that mark a sunken net.

And to pull that net, leaving its contents unsorted, to shore, by way of making an end where there is no such thing, I add: for two or three years before mother's death (1892-3-4, that is) ominous hints reached the nursery that the grown ups talked of leaving St Ives. The distance had become a drawback; by that time George and Gerald had work in London. Expense, Thoby's school, Adrian's school, became more urgent. And then just opposite the Lookout place a great square oatmeal coloured hotel appeared when we came down in July. My mother said, with her dramatic gestures, that the view was spoilt; that St Ives would be ruined. For all these reasons, then, a house agent's board appeared one October in our garden; and as it needed repainting I was allowed

to fill in some of the letters—This House to Let—from a pot of paint. The joy of painting mingled with the dread of leaving. But for a summer or two no tenant came. The danger, we hoped, was averted. And then in the spring of 1895 mother died. Father instantly decided that he wished never to see St Ives again. And perhaps a month later Gerald went down alone; settled the sale of our lease to some peop' called Millie Dow, and St Ives vanished for ever.

I recover then today (October 11th 1940) a mild Autumn day (London battered last night) from these rapid notes only one actual picture of Thoby; steering us round the point without letting the sail flap. I recover the picture of a schoolboy whose jacket was rather tight; whose arms shot out of their sleeves. He looked sulky; grim; his eyes became bluer when he was thus on his mettle; his face flushed a little. He was feeling earlier than most boys, the weight laid on him by father's pride in him; the burden, the responsibility of being treated as a man.

Why do I shirk the task, not so very hard to a professional—have I not conveyed Roger from one end of life to the other?—like myself, of wafting this boy from the boat to my bed sitting room at Hyde Park Gate? It is because I want to go on thinking about St Ives. I have the excuse that I could, if I went on thinking, recall many other pictures; bring him in again and again. And it is not only an excuse; for always round him, like the dew that collects in beads on a rough coat, there hangs the country; butterflies; birds; muddy roads; muddy boots; horses.

But it is true, I do not want to go into my room at Hyde Park Gate. I shrink from the years 1897–1904, the seven unhappy years. Not many lives were tortured and fretted and made numb with non-being as ours were then. That, in shorthand, was the legacy of those two great unnecessary blunders; those two lashes of the random unheeding, unthinking flail that brutally and pointlessly killed the two people who should have made those years normal and natural, if not 'happy'.

I am not thinking of mother and of Stella; I am thinking of the damage that their deaths inflicted. I will describe it more carefully later, I will illustrate with a scene or two. That is why I do not wish to bring Thoby out of the boat into my room.

Without those deaths, to hark back to an earlier thought, it is true that he would not have been so genuinely, though dumbly, bound to us. If there is any good (I doubt it) in these mutilations, it is that it sensitises. If to be aware of the insecurity of life, to remember something gone, to feel now and then, overwhelmingly, as I felt for father when he made no claim to it, a passionate fumbling fellowship—if it is a good thing to be aware of all this at fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, by fits and starts—if, if, if—. But was it good? Would it not have been better (if there is any sense in saying good and better when there is no possible judge, no standard) to go on feeling, as at St Ives, the rush and tumble of family life? To be family surrounded; to go on exploring and adventuring privately while all the while the family as a whole continued its prosaic, rumbling progress; would this not have been better than to have had that protection removed; to have been tumbled out of the family shelter; to have had it cracked and gashed; to have become critical and sceptical of the family—? Perhaps to have remained in the family, believing in it, accepting it, as we should, without those two deaths, would have given us greater scope, greater variety, and certainly greater confidence. On the other hand, I can put another question: Did those deaths give us an experience that even if it was numbing, mutilating, yet meant that the Gods (as I used to phrase it) were taking us seriously, and giving us a job which they would not have thought it worthwhile to give—say, the Booths or the Milmans? I had my usual visual way of putting it. I would see (after Thoby's death) two great grindstones (as I walked round Gordon Square)* and myself between them. I would stage a conflict between myself and 'them'. I would reason that if life were thus made to rear and kick, it was a thing to be ridden; nobody could say 'they' had fobbed me off with a weak little feeble slip of the precious matter. So I came to think of life as something of extreme reality. And this of course increased my sense of my own importance. Not in relation to human beings; in relation to the force which had respected me sufficiently to make me feel myself ground between grindstones.†

It seems to me therefore that our relation (Thoby's and mine) was

* When Leslie Stephen died in 1904 the four Stephens moved from 22 Hyde Park Gate to 46 Gordon Square, Bloomsbury.

† Doubtful reading.

more serious than it would have been without those deaths. The unspoken thought—I have roughly visualised it—was there, in him; in me; when he came into my room at Hyde Park Gate. It was behind our arguments. We were, of course, naturally attracted to each other. Besides his brother's feeling (and he was protective) he had I think an amused, surprised, questioning attitude to me as an individual. I was a year and a half younger; and a girl. A shell-less little creature, I think he thought me; so sheltered, in my room, compared with him; an ingenuous, eager listener to his school stories; without any experience of my own with which to cap his; but not passive; on the contrary, bubbling, inquisitive, restless, contradicting. We had branched off, after that rambling up and down stairs, to read on our own. He had consumed Shakespeare, somehow or other, by himself. He had possessed himself of it, in his large clumsy way, and our first arguments, since I listened passively to the story of the Greeks on the stairs outside the water closet, outside the candle grease smelling landing, were about Shakespeare. He would sweep down upon me, with his assertion that everything was in Shakespeare. He let the whole mass that he held in his grasp descend in an avalanche on me. I revolted. But how could I oppose all that? Rather feebly; getting red and agitated. Still it was then my genuine feeling that a play was antipathetic to me. How did they begin? With some dull speech a hundred miles from anything interesting. To prove it I opened [*Twelfth Night*]* and read "If music be the food of love, play on . . ." I was downed that time. And he was ruthless; exasperating; downing me, overwhelming me; with enough passion to make us both heated. So that my opposition cannot have been quite ineffectual. He made me feel his pride, it was like his pride in his friends, in Shakespeare—shuffling off Falstaff, he pointed out, without a sign of sympathy. That large natural inhumanity in Shakespeare delighted him. It was a tree's way of shedding its leaves. On the other hand, when Desdemona wakes again, he thought possibly Shakespeare was 'sentimental'. These are the only particular criticisms that I remember, for he was not, as I am, a breaker off of single words, or sentences, not a note taker. He was more casual, rough and ready and comprehensive. And so I did not get from him any minute comments; but felt rather that Shakespeare was to him his other world; the place where he

* The typescript leaves a blank space for the title.

got the measure of the daily world. He took his bearings there; and sized us up from that standard. I felt once that he was half thinking of Falstaff and Hal and Mother Quickly and the rest, in a third class smoker in the underground, when there was some squabble between drunken men; and he sat in the corner, with his pipe in his mouth, looking over the edge of a newspaper; surveying them; unperturbed; equipped; as if placing it all. I felt (not only then) that he knew his own place; and relished his inheritance, I felt he scented the battle; was already, in anticipation, a law maker; proud of his station as a man; ready to play his part among men. Had he been put on, he would have proved most royally. The words Walter Lamb used of him were very fitting.*

So we argued; about Shakespeare; about many many things; and often lost our tempers; but were attracted by some common admiration. The spot in Grays' Inn where, walking home one night, he said to me: "I always wonder what the man in green is thinking"—(where does that come from?) by which I was elated, knowing him to mean that he wanted me to talk—[wanted] my opinion—that flag stone in the dark is still one of my unsubmerged islands. But how reserved we were! Brothers and sisters today talk quite freely together about—oh everything. Sex, sodomy, periods, and so on. We never talked much about ourselves even; I can recall no confidences, no compliments; no kisses; no self analysis between me and him. As for sex, he passed from childhood to boyhood, from boyhood to manhood under our eyes, in our presence, without saying a single word that could have been taken for a sign of what he was feeling. Did other boys fall in love with him? Not he with them, for a certainty. From Clive I learnt later (when talk was about everything) that Lytton's sodomy was to him one of the stock jokes; one of the Strache's preposterous, laughable absurdities. Yet beneath that silence—it may be kept cool and sweet, it may be given a depth and seriousness, an emotional power and quality that speech destroys—dwelt as I felt great susceptibility; great sensibility; great pride in us whose photographs were always on his fireplace at Cambridge; and all those desires which would have made him a

* From the final speech of Fortinbras in *Hamlet*, "Let four captains/ Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage,/For he was likely, had he been put on,/To have proved most royal . . ." Walter Lamb, elder brother of the painter Henry Lamb and close friend of Thoby, was at Trinity College, Cambridge.

lover; a husband; a father. His loves were already distinctly sketched though so submerged; was there some dancing mistress, at Cambridge, brought to light by Gerald who found her photograph? And then of course Elena; and then Irene. But again how ceremonious, how formal, his approach to loving women was. How very silent in words; yet how apparent in its tremble and quiver without words. That would have been his private life. Publicly, he would have been, had he been put on, a judge certainly. Mr Justice Stephen he would be today; with several books to his credit; one or two on law; some essays exposing humbugs; perhaps a book on birds, with drawings by himself. By this time, aged sixty, he would have been a distinguished figure; but not prominent; for he was too melancholy, too independent, unconforming, to take any ready made mould. He would have been more of a character than a success, I suppose; had he been put on.

The knell of those words affects my memory of a time when in fact they were not heard at all. We had no kind of foreboding that he was to die when he was twenty-six and I was twenty-four. That is one of the falsifications—that knell I always find myself hearing and transmitting—that one cannot guard against, save by noting it. Then I never saw him as I see him now, with all his promise ended. Then I thought only of the moment; him there in the room; just back from Clifton; or from Cambridge; dropping in to argue with me. It was, whatever date I give it, an exciting moment; in which we both pushed out from the mists of childhood; and each saw the other emerging; and each felt new qualities, he in himself, me in myself; both in each other. They were days of discovery. Exciting days, whether one called them happy or unhappy; or agitating. Externally I remember the discovery that he looked astonishingly handsome, in his new J. Hills suit of blue serge. That was in October 1899 when he first went to Cambridge. The summer at Warboys I discovered that he smoked a pipe. He never had it out of his mouth. Then term after term I discovered Bell, the Strache, and Sydney-Turner.* But I am rushing too far ahead of myself in Hyde Park Gate. I go back then to the year that Stella died—1897.

I could sum it all up in one scene. I always see when I think of the months that followed her death a leafless bush, a skeleton bush,

* Clive Bell, Lytton Strachey and Saxon Sydney-Turner, Thoby's Trinity College friends who were to form part of the nucleus of 'old Bloomsbury'.

in the dark of a summer's night. This rather finely drawn many-twigged tree stands outside a garden house. Inside I am sitting with Jack Hills. He grips my hand in his. He wrings my hand. He groans: "It tears one asunder" He gripped my hand to make his agony endurable; as women in childbirth grip a sheet. "But you can't understand", he broke off. "Yes I can", I murmured. Subconsciously, I knew that he meant his sexual desires tore him asunder; I knew that he felt that at the same time as his agony at Stella's death. Both tortured him. And the tree outside in the August summer half light was giving me, as he groaned, a symbol of his agony; of our sterile agony; was summing it all up. Still the leafless tree is to me the emblem, the symbol, of those summer months.

He came every weekend to the house we had at Painswick. Every night either Vanessa or I wandered off with him alone after dinner. Every day he wrote to one or the other. We bore the brunt of his anguish. He was in agony. "Poor boy, he looks very bad", Father once muttered audibly. And Jack, overhearing, stammered some awkward sentence to cover up, to prevent him from saying more. He looked anguished; yet dogged; all in coal black. George, Gerald, Jack were all in black from head to toe. The leafless tree and Jack's hand gripping my wrist; they come back together when I think of that summer.

The leafless tree was behind our ostensible lives for many months. But trees do not remain leafless. They begin to grow little red chill buds. By that image I would convey the misery, the quarrels, the irritations, half covered, then spurting out, the insinuations, which as soon as family life started again began to prove that Stella's death had not left us more united; as father said; but had left us all ill adjusted; growing painfully into relations that her death had distorted.

Another garden scene—this time at Fritham—comes back to me. George had taken my arm in his. Indoors father was playing his nightly whist with the others. George singled me out, and walked me off round the lawn. I cannot remember any phrase exactly. A sound of mumbling comes back; his pressure on my hand; and then I gathered that very emotionally and ambiguously, with many such words as "Darling old Goat", "old party", and so on, he was telling me that people were saying that Vanessa was in love with Jack; it was illegal; their marriage he meant; could I not speak to

her; persuade her—It was a blurred night talk; with the usual resonance of emotional chords; and I was flattered; perhaps felt important; and must have promised I would say whatever it was he wanted me to say. What? I do not remember what I said; only her answer, and its bitterness: "So you take their side too."

Then I realised that she had her side; if that were so, of course I was on her side. Confusedly, I wobbled at once from George's side to her side. But my vagueness and confusion show that I knew very little of the exact state of things; I had not been called in until George had tried other measures—for one thing as Nessa told me later, he had spoken to father; and he, with that backbone of intellect which would have made him, had we lived to be at ease with him, so dependable in serious relations, had said simply; she must do as she liked; he was not going to interfere. That was what I admire in him; his dignity and sanity in the larger affairs; so often covered up by his irritations and vanities and egotisms.

These scenes, by the way, are not altogether a literary device—a means of summing up and making a knot out of innumerable little threads. Innumerable threads there were; still, if I stopped to disentangle, I could collect a number. But whatever the reason may be, I find that scene making is my natural way of marking the past. A scene always comes to the top; arranged; representative. This confirms me in my instinctive notion—it is irrational; it will not stand argument—that we are sealed vessels afloat upon what it is convenient to call reality; at some moments, without a reason, without an effort, the sealing matter cracks; in floods reality; that is a scene—for they would not survive entire so many ruinous years unless they were made of something permanent; that is a proof of their "reality". Is this liability of mine to scene receiving the origin of my writing impulse? These are questions about reality, about scenes and their connection with writing to which I have no answer; nor time to put the question carefully. Perhaps if I should revise and rewrite as I intend, I will make the question more exact; and worry out something by way of answer. Obviously I have developed the faculty, because in all the writing I have done (novels, criticism, biography) I almost always have to find a scene; either when I am writing about a person, I must find a representative scene in their lives; or when I am writing about a book, I must find the scene in their poems or novels. Or is this not quite the same faculty?

So that was one of the little red buds or thorns, on the skeleton

tree; Vanessa was in love with Jack; Jack was absorbing her selfishly; people were talking; and George and Gerald (to a lesser degree) were getting their hackles up. That is one of the aspects of death that is left out when people talk—as father talked—of the message or teaching of sorrow. They never mention its unbecoming side; its legacy of bitterness, bad temper; ill adjustment; and what is to me the worst of all—boredom.

(15th November 1940) We never spoke, during those unhappy years, of those scenes. (Scenes, I note, seldom illustrate my relation with Vanessa; it has been too deep for 'scenes'.) Thoby, I imagine, never guessed at their existence. He may have had a vague conception that something, as he would have put it, was 'up' between Jack and Vanessa. But his general attitude was aloof—was he not a man? Did not men ignore domestic trifles?—and judicial. From his remote station, as schoolboy, as undergraduate, he felt generally speaking that we should accept our lot; if George wanted us to go to parties, why not? If father—who was not, he once told me, a normal specimen of manhood—wished us to walk, we should. Once at Salisbury, when the Fishers were neighbours, Vanessa, detesting them, and in particular Aunt Mary, who had viciously interfered, writing surreptitious letters addressed to Cope's studio, criticising her behaviour towards George and Jack—when Vanessa refused to visit them, and cut them in the street, Thoby pronounced one of his rare impressive judgements. He said gruffly it was not right to treat Aunt Mary like that.

It thus came about that Nessa and I formed together a close conspiracy. In that world of many men, coming and going, in that big house of innumerable rooms, we formed our private nucleus. I visualise it as a little sensitive centre of acute life; of instantaneous sympathy, in the great echoing shell of Hyde Park Gate. The shell was empty all day. In the evening back they would all come; Adrian from Westminster; Jack from Lincoln's Inn Fields; Gerald from Dents; George from the Post office or the Treasury, back to the focus, the tea table, where Nessa and I presided. The staple day would be spent (after the morning's work) together. Together we shaped our own angle, and from it looked out at a world that seemed to both of us much the same. Very soon after Stella's death we realised that we must make some standing place for ourselves in this

baffling, frustrating whirlpool. Every day we did battle for that which was always being snatched from us, or distorted. The most imminent obstacle, the most oppressive stone laid upon our vitality and its struggle to live was of course father. I suppose hardly a day of the week passed without our planning together: was he by any chance to be out, when Kitty Maxse or Katie Thynne* came? Must I spend the afternoon walking round Kensington Gardens? Was old Mr Bryce coming to tea? Could we possibly take our friends up to the studio—that is, the day nursery? Could we avoid Brighton at Easter? And so on—day after day we tried to remove the pressure of his tremendous obstacle. And over the whole week brooded the horror, the recurring terror of Wednesday. On that day the weekly books were given him. Early that morning we knew whether they were under or over the danger mark—eleven pounds if I remember right. † On a bad Wednesday we ate our lunch in the anticipation of torture. The books were presented directly after lunch. He put on his glasses. Then he read the figures. Then down came his fist on the account book. His veins filled; his face flushed. Then there was an inarticulate roar. Then he shouted . . . “I am ruined.” Then he beat his breast. Then he went through an extraordinary dramatisation of self pity, horror, anger. Vanessa stood by his side silent. He belaboured her with reproaches, abuses. “Have you no pity for me? There you stand like a block of stone . . .” and so on. She stood absolutely silent. He flung at her all the phrases about shooting Niagara, about his misery, her extravagance, that came handy. She still remained static. Then another attitude was adopted. With a deep groan he picked up his pen and with ostentatiously trembling hands he wrote out the cheque. Slowly with many groans the pen and the account book were put away. Then he sank into his chair; and sat spectacularly with his head on his breast. And then, tired of this, he would take up a book; read for a time; and then say half plaintively, appealingly (for he did not like me to witness these outbursts): “What are you doing this afternoon, Jinny?” I was speechless. Never have I felt such rage and such frustration. For not a word of what I felt—that unbounded contempt for him and of pity for Nessa—could be expressed.

* Lady Katherine Thynne who married Lord Cromer.

† A passage of eight sentences is crossed through and reworked, with minor changes, in the lines that follow.

That, as far as I can describe it, is an unexaggerated account of a bad Wednesday. And bad Wednesdays always hung over us. Even now I can find nothing to say of his behaviour save that it was brutal. If instead of words he had used a whip, the brutality could have been no greater. How can one explain it? His life explains something. He had been indulged, ever since he broke the flower pot and threw it at his mother (whatever the truth of that story, it ran something like that). Delicacy was the excuse then. Later there was the ‘genius’ legend to which I have referred. And first his sister, Carry,* then Minny, then my mother, each accepting the legend, and bowing to it, increased the load for the other. But there are additions and qualifications to be made. To begin with, it is notable that these scenes were never indulged in before men. Fred Maitland thus resolutely refused to believe, though tactfully instructed by Carry, that Leslie’s tempers were more than what he called (in his biography) coloured showers of sparks. If Thoby had given him the weekly books, or George, the explosion would have been minimised. Why then had he no shame in thus indulging his rage before women? Partly of course because woman was then (though gilt with an angelic surface) the slave. But that does not explain the histrionic element in these displays; the breast beating, the groaning, the self-dramatisation. His dependence on women helps to explain that. He needed always some woman to act before; to sympathise with him, to console him (“He is one of those men who cannot live without us,” Aunt Mary whispered to me once. “And it is very nice for us that it should be so.” Coming downstairs arm in arm with her, I laid that remark aside for further inspection.) Why did he need them? Because he was conscious of his failure as a philosopher. That failure gnawed at him. But his creed, the attitude, that is to say, adopted by him in his public relations, made him hide the need he had for praise; thus to Fred Maitland and to Herbert Fisher he appeared entirely self deprecating, modest, and ridiculously humble in his opinion of himself. To us he was exacting, greedy, unabashed † in his demand for praise. If then, these suppressions and needs are combined, it seems possible that the reason for this brutality to Vanessa was that he had an illicit ‡ need for

* Caroline Emilia Stephen.

† Doubtful reading.

‡ ‘violent’ is crossed through and ‘illicit’ is added above, followed by a comma and an illegible word.

sympathy, released by the woman, stimulated; and her refusal to accept her role, part slave, part angel, exacerbated him; checked the flow that had become necessary of self pity, and stirred in him instincts of which he was unconscious. Yet also ashamed. "You must think me," he said to me after one of these rages—I think the word he used was "foolish". I was silent. I did not think him foolish. I thought him brutal.

If someone had said to him simply and straightforwardly: "You are a brute to treat a girl like that . . ." what would he have said? I cannot imagine that the words would have meant anything to him. The reason for that complete unconsciousness of his own behaviour is to be found in the disparity, so obvious in his books, between the critical and the imaginative power. Give him a thought to analyse, the thought say of Mill or Bentham or Hobbes, and he is (so Maynard* told me) a model of acuteness, clarity, and impartiality. Give him a character to explain, and he is (to me) so crude, so elementary, so conventional that a child with a box of chalks could make a more subtle portrait. To explain this one would have to discuss the crippling effect of Cambridge and its one sided education. One would have to follow that by a discussion of the writer's profession in the nineteenth century and the mutilations of intensive brain work. He never used his hands.† And one would have to show how both these influences told upon a nature that was congenitally unaware of music, of art, and puritannically brought up.‡ All this would have to be considered and its effect in intensifying certain sensibilities and reducing others to atrophy.

The fact remains that at the age of sixty-five he was a man in prison, isolated. He had so ignored, or disguised his own feelings that he had no idea of what he was; and no idea of what other people were. Hence the horror and the terror of those violent displays of rage. There was something blind, animal, savage in them. Roger Fry said that civilisation means awareness; he was uncivilised in his extreme unawareness. He did not realise what he did. No one could enlighten him. Yet he suffered. Through the walls of his prison he had moments of realisation.

From it all I gathered one obstinate and enduring conception;

* John Maynard Keynes.

† "He never used his hands" is a marginal note, the rest of which is illegible because of the deterioration of the paper.

‡ "a self-centred narrow nature" is crossed through.

nothing is so much to be dreaded as egotism. Nothing so really hurts the person himself; nothing so wounds those who are forced into contact with it.

But from my present distance of time I see too what we could not then see—the gulf between us that was cut by our difference in age. Two different ages confronted each other in the drawing room at Hyde Park Gate. The Victorian age and the Edwardian age. We were not his children; we were his grandchildren. There should have been a generation between us to cushion the contact. Thus it was that we perceived so keenly, while he raged, that he was somehow ridiculous. We looked at him with eyes that were looking into the future. What we saw was something that is so obvious now to any boy or girl of sixteen or eighteen that it is hardly to be described. But while we looked into the future, we were completely under the power of the past. Explorers, and revolutionists, as we both were by nature, we lived under the sway of a society that was about fifty years too old for us. It was this curious fact that made our struggle so bitter and so violent. For the society in which we lived was still the Victorian society. Father himself was a typical Victorian. George and Gerald were consenting and approving Victorians. So that we had two quarrels to wage; two fights to fight; one with them individually; and one with them socially. We were living say in 1910; they were living in 1860.

Hyde Park Gate in 1900 was a complete model of Victorian society. If I had the power to lift out of the past a single day as we lived it about 1900, it would give a section of upper middle class Victorian life, like one of those sections with glass covers in which ants and bees are shown going about their tasks. Our day would begin with family breakfast at 8.30. Adrian bolted his, and whichever of us, Vanessa or myself, was down would see him off. Standing at the front door, we would wave a hand till he had disappeared behind the bulging wall of the Martins' house. This hand waving was a relic left us by Stella—a flutter of the dead hand which lay beneath the surface of family life. Father would eat his breakfast sighing and snorting. If there were no letters, "Everyone has forgotten me", he would exclaim. A long envelope from Barkers would mean of course a sudden roar. George and Gerald would come later. Vanessa disappeared behind the curtain with its golden anchor. Dinner ordered, she would dash for the red bus to take her to the Academy. If Gerald coincided, he would give her a lift in his daily

hansom, the same generally; in summer the cabby wore a red carnation. George, having breakfasted more deliberately, would persuade me sometimes to sit on in the three-cornered chair and would tell me scraps of gossip about last night's party. Then he would kiss me, button up his frock coat, give his top hat a promise with the velvet glove and trot off, handsome, debonair, in his ribbed socks and very small well polished shoes to the Treasury.

Left alone in the great house, father shut in his study at the top, Lizzie polishing brass stair rods, another maid doing bedrooms, Shag asleep on his mat, while Sophie, I suppose, stood at the back door taking in joints, milk, vegetables from tradespeople in their little carts, I mounted to my room; spread my Liddell and Scott upon the table, and settled down to read Plato, or to make out some scene in Euripides or Sophocles for Clara Pater, or Janet Case.*

From ten to one Victorian society did not exert any special pressure upon us. Vanessa, under the eye of Val Prinsep,† or Mr Oules, R.A.‡ or occasionally of the great Sargent himself, made those minute pencil drawings of Greek statues which she brought home and fixed with a spray of odd smelling mixture; or painted a histrionic male model rather like Sir Henry Irving in oils. I read and wrote. For three hours we lived in the world which we still inhabit. For at this moment (November 1940) she is painting at Charleston; and I am writing here in the garden room at Monks House. Nor would our clothes be very different; the skirts a little shorter perhaps. My hair not much untidier than now; and Vanessa in a blue cotton smock; as no doubt she is at this moment.

Victorian society began to exert its pressure at about half past four. In the first place, we must be in; one certainly, preferably both. For at five father must be given his tea. And we must be tidied and in our places, she at the tea table, I on the sofa, for Mrs Green was coming; or Mrs Humphrey Ward; if no one came, it was still necessary to be there; for father could not give himself his tea in the society of those days

The pressure of society made itself apparent as soon as the bell rang and Lizzie, also dressed in her afternoon black with a white

* Clara Pater, the sister of Walter Pater, who taught Virginia Greek and Latin before Miss Case. Janet Case, in addition to being a severe and thorough teacher, became a lifelong friend of Virginia's.

† Julia Stephen's cousin, son of Sarah and Thoby Prinsep.

‡ Walter William Oules R.A. (1848-1933).

apron, announced the visitor. For then instantaneously we became young ladies possessed of a certain manner. We both still possess that manner. We learnt it partly from remembering mother's manner; Stella's manner, and it was partly imposed upon us by the visitor who came in. For the manner in which a young man—say Ronny Norman*—addressed young ladies was a marked manner. The visitors upon that day were, let us suppose, Ronny Norman, Eveline Godley, Elsa Bell and Florence Bishop. We should have first to make conversation. It was not argument, it was not gossip. It was a concoction, a confection; light; ceremonious; and of course unbroken. Silence was a breach of convention. At the right moment, one of us would take father's trumpet and convey some suitable portion to him. And then, if we could contrive it, the trumpet would be skilfully transferred to Florence Bishop. And our concoction would begin again with Ronny Norman. He would say something about an awfully jolly play; or an awfully jolly picture perhaps. Light remarks about friends were allowed. Elsa Bell, to recall an exact sentence, said in her society way: "My brothers always take off their hats if they meet me in the street." Light discussion of brothers and their manners followed. At this point father, groaning, would intervene.†

[... father would be irritated: Florence Bishop would too and [would] withdraw her unlucky remark—that he looked well; Ronny Norman would ask him if he remembered Mill; he would unbend—for he liked Ronny Norman—and say how he had met Mill with his father in Chelsea.‡ "Oh dear, these old stories . . ." he would say. Well, the talk had its little steeps and waterfalls—its

* Ronald Norman, a distant relative of the Camerons; later Chairman of the B.B.C.

† The next page of the BL typescript is missing. As mentioned in the Editor's Note, the relevant passage from the earlier version, MH/A. 5a, has been inserted within brackets.

‡ In the ms, VW refers to the guests around the tea-table by their initials, but not consistently which would suggest that convenience rather than a stylistic effect was her motive. Thus, the full names have been restored in the text. P. 49 of the ms booklet which does not appear to belong to the version of the text used here provides a fuller context for Miss Bishop's remark. The first half-dozen lines read: "Florence Bishop had said that she thought him looking remarkably well. This was an insult—a breach of the code: it was essential that he should receive sympathy. And so we must brush up our talk with that."

dangers: but it went something like that: and the whole was enclosed in the Victorian manner. It may have been natural for Ronny Norman, for Eveline Godley, for Miss Bishop. It was not natural for Vanessa or myself. We learned it. We learned it partly from memory: and mother had that manner: it was imposed on us partly by the other side—if Ronny Norman said that, one had to reply in the same style. Nobody ever broke the convention. If you listened, as I did, it was like watching a game. One had to know the rules.]

We both learnt the rules of the game of Victorian society so thoroughly that we have never forgotten them. We still play the game. It is useful. It has also its beauty, for it is founded upon restraint, sympathy, unselfishness—all civilized qualities. It is helpful in making something seemly out of raw odds and ends. Major Gardner, Mrs Chavasse, and Mr Dutton need some solving to make it into a sociable party. But the Victorian manner is perhaps—I am not sure—a disadvantage in writing. When I read my old *Literary Supplement* articles, I lay the blame for their suavity, their politeness, their sidelong approach, to my tea-table training. I see myself, not reviewing a book, but handing plates of buns to shy young men and asking them: do they take cream and sugar? On the other hand, the surface manner allows one, as I have found, to slip in things that would be inaudible if one marched straight up and spoke out loud.

Society—upper middle class Victorian society—came into being when the lights went up. About seven thirty the pressure of the machine became emphatic. At seven thirty we went upstairs to dress. However cold or foggy, we slipped off our day clothes and stood shivering in front of washing basins. Each basin had its can of hot water. Neck and arms had to be scrubbed, for we had to enter the drawing room at eight with bare arms, low neck, in evening dress. At seven thirty dress and hair overcame paint and Greek grammar. I would stand in front of George's Chippendale mirror trying to make myself not only tidy, but presentable. On an allowance of fifty pounds it was difficult, even for the skilful, and I had no skill, to be well dressed of an evening. A home dress, made by Jane Bride, could be had for a pound or two; but a party dress, made by Mrs Young, cost fifteen guineas. The home dress therefore might be, as on one night that comes back to mind, made cheaply but eccentrically, of a green fabric, bought at Story's, the furniture shop.

It was not velvet; nor plush; something betwixt and between; and for chairs, presumably, not dresses. Down I came one winter's evening about 1900 in my green dress; apprehensive, yet, for a new dress excites even the unskilled, elated. All the lights were turned up in the drawing room; and by the blazing fire George sat, in dinner jacket and black tie, cuddling the dachshund, Schuster, on his knee. He at once fixed on me that extraordinarily observant scrutiny with which he always inspected our clothes. He looked me up and down for a moment as if I were a horse brought into the show ring. Then the sullen look came into his eyes; the look which expressed not simply aesthetic disapproval; but something that went deeper. It was the look of moral, of social, disapproval, as if he scented some kind of insurrection, of defiance of his accepted standards. I knew myself condemned from more points of view than I could then analyse. As I stood there I was conscious of fear; of shame; of something like anguish—a feeling, like so many, out of all proportion to its surface cause. He said at last: "Go and tear it up." He spoke in a curiously tart, rasping, peevish voice; the voice of the enraged male; the voice which expressed his serious displeasure at this infringement of a code that meant more to him than he could admit.

George accepted Victorian society so implicitly that to an archaeologist he would be a fascinating object. Like a fossil he had taken every crease and wrinkle of the conventions of upper middle class society between 1870 and 1900. He was made presumably of precisely the right material. He flowed into the mould without a doubt to mar the pattern. If father had graved on him certain large marks of the age—his belief that women must be pure and men manly; his hatred of strong language—"Damm!" Gerald said once, and up flew his hands in protest; when Rezia Corsini* smoked a cigarette after tea, "I won't have my drawing room turned into a bar parlour!" he exclaimed—still he smoothed out the petty details of the Victorian code with his admirable intellect, with his respect for reason—no one was less snobbish than he, no one cared less for rank or luxury. But if father had the larger lines of the age stamped on him, George filled them in with a crisscross, with a crowquill etching of the most minute details. No more perfect fossil of the Victorian age could exist. And so, while father pre-

* Lucrezia Rasponi who had married Filippo Corsini in 1901.

served the framework of 1860, George filled in the framework with all kinds of minutely-teethed saws; and the machine into which our rebellious bodies were inserted in 1900 not only held us tight in its framework, but bit into us with innumerable sharp teeth.

But what material was George made of so that he took the pattern so completely? In the first place, he was almost brainless; in the second he had an abundance of feeling. His physical passions were strong. This mixture was poured into a perfectly adapted physical vessel. He was in a conventional way as handsome as a man could be. He was precisely six foot in height; well proportioned; and, as the old ladies said, well set up in every respect. His eyes were too small and too stupid to light up this great framework. He had over a thousand a year of unearned income. He could supply frock coats, hats, shoes, ties, horses, guns, bicycles, as the occasion required. Thus furnished and equipped society opened its arms wide to him and embraced him. He can never have met with any opposition at Eton, at Cambridge, or in London. He offered none. He had no instinct, no ability to make him stray beyond the circle of the upper middle class world in the evening drawing room. He was never rebuffed or criticised because he never went an inch out of his orbit. Any defiance therefore was unfamiliar to him; and my green dress set ringing in him a thousand alarm bells. It was extreme; it was artistic; it was not what nice people thought nice. Was that the formula, he said to himself, as he saw me come into the room? Did he too feel that it threatened something in himself? Was I somehow casting a shadow in his world; pointing a finger of scorn at him? I do not know. Gerald, I remember, spoke up for me good naturedly. "I don't agree," he said. "I like you in that dress." To my discredit, I never wore it again in George's presence. I knuckled under to his authority.*

It is true that George was thirty-six when I was twenty. And he had [a] thousand pounds [a] year whereas I had fifty. These were good reasons why it was difficult not to submit to whatever he decreed. But there was another element in our relationship. Besides feeling his age and his power, I felt too what I have come to call the outsider's feeling. I felt as a gipsy or a child feels who stands at

* The following lines are crossed through and reworked in the next paragraph, "In my defence I must say that he was fifteen years older; and he made it difficult not to comply because whereas I had £50 a year he had a thousand a year. And he gave us presents."

the flap of the tent and sees the circus going on inside. I stood in the drawing room at Hyde Park Gate and saw society in full swing. I saw George as an acrobat jumping through hoops. I saw him, perhaps with fear, perhaps with admiration. The patriarchal society of the Victorian age was in full swing in our drawing room. It had of course many different parts. Vanessa and I were not called upon to take part in some of those acts. We were only asked to admire and applaud when our male relations went through the different figures of the intellectual game. They played it with great skill. Most of our male relations were adept at that game. They knew the rules, and attached extraordinary importance to those who won the game. Father for example laid immense stress upon school reports; upon scholarships; triposes and fellowships. The male Fishers went through those hoops to perfection. They won all the prizes, all the honours. What, I asked myself, when I read Herbert Fisher's autobiography the other day, would Herbert have been without Winchester, New College and the Cabinet? What would have been his shape had he not been stamped and moulded by that great patriarchal machine? Every one of our male relations was shot into that machine at the age of ten and emerged at sixty a Head Master, an Admiral, a Cabinet Minister, or the Warden of a college. It is as impossible to think of them as natural human beings as it is to think of a carthorse galloping wild maned and unshod over the pampas.

George had not been able to enter the intellectual machine. He tried again and again to enter the diplomatic service, but failed. There was however the other machine—the social machine. That he entered; and he learnt the rules of the game so well and played it so assiduously that he emerged at the age of sixty with a Lady Margaret for wife, with a knighthood, with a sinecure of some sort, three sons, and a country house. In ways so indefinite that I cannot name them, I felt, at twenty, that George no less than Herbert Fisher was going through the hoops; doing the required acts. In a thousand ways he made me feel that he believed in society. A belief which is so commonly accepted, as his was by all his friends, had depth, swiftness, inevitability. It impresses even the outsider by the sweep of its current. Sometimes when I hear God Save the King I too feel a current belief but almost directly I consider my own splits asunder and one side of me criticises the other. George never questioned his belief in the old tune that society played. He

rose and took his hat off and stood. Not only did he never question his behaviour; he applauded it, enforced it.

These perceptions, however slight and transient they were then, gave my attitude to George a queer twist. I must obey because he had force—age, wealth, tradition—behind him. But even while I obeyed, I marvelled—how could anyone believe what George believed? There was a spectator in me who, even while I squirmed and obeyed, remained observant, note taking for some future revision. The spectacle of George, laying down laws in his leather arm chair so instinctively, so unhesitatingly, fascinated me. Upstairs alone in my room I wrote a sketch of his probable career; which his actual career followed almost to the letter.*

But unfortunately, though we could and indeed must, sit passive and applaud the Victorian males when they went through the intellectual hoops, George's hoops—his social triumphs—needed our help. Here, of course, his motives were—as indeed they always were—mixed. Naturally, at eighteen or so, we had to be brought out. And he naturally, as we had no mother, took her place. What proved unnatural, however, was his insistence that we should go where he wished us to go, and do as he wished us to do. Here the other motive came in; his desire to make us share his views, approve of his beliefs. I cannot even now understand why it was that he attached so much emotion to this desire. No, I puzzle; but I cannot find the true reason. Some crude wish to dominate there was; some jealousy, of Jack no doubt; some desire to carry off the prize; and, as became obvious later, some sexual urge. At any rate this matter of taking us out became an obsession with him. And thus, when the London season began, several times a week we would go upstairs after dinner—after the post had come, the tea had been drunk, and father had gone up to his study—and change into long satin dresses, for which Sally Young would charge fifteen guineas, pull on long white gloves, slip on satin shoes, and snap a row of pearls, of amethysts, round our necks. The cab would be called; and off we would drive along the silver plated streets, for the wood pavements were beaten to silver on a dry summer night. to the house where there was an awning, bright windowed, and perhaps a strip of red carpet, and a little cluster of gaping passers by.

* There follows a deleted paragraph which is reworked, with minor changes in the passage that follows.

Society exerted its full pressure about eleven o'clock on a June night in 1900. I remember the dazed, elated, frozen feeling as the lights beat on me, going upstairs with George following behind. He held his opera hat always under his arm. He would introduce me with his little bow: "And this is my sister, Virginia." Can I remember anything further—any words, any human emotions? There, at the Savoy, was Mrs Joseph Chamberlain, the very image of womanly charm. We were going to the opera, *The Ring*; it was broad daylight, and George, with a lack of tact with which he reproached himself afterwards—he would tot up the night's successes and failures—had placed her opposite the window; and she was then not quite at her prime. Eddie Marsh sat next me, as I now suppose. That night I called him Richard Marsh; and vaguely connected him with fiction. After a pause, he did his duty by me; "What is your father writing now?" A blank occurs. But I visualise my own efforts to keep up the conversation as the wild floundering and scrapings of a skater who cannot skate. At the Chamberlains' I sat next to a chubby spruce boy, perhaps a private secretary. We discussed public speaking. "Our host", he reminded me, for I had been denouncing the death of oratory, "is generally supposed to be a good speaker." And then on I plunged, and told him—the words come back—that snobbishness, that money making, deserved imprisonment as well as theft and murder. But I had plunged too deep; the glue stuck to my quivering feet. On the steps of a ball room I can see the romantic figure of Geoffrey Young; blue eyed; bland, immaculate. "But how very good of you to have come", he replied superciliously; for had I not told him that I hated dancing? Then he left me. At Lady Sligo's I remember pressing some spruce boy to tell me how life was lived in the peerage; whether Garters were taken seriously. Again silence. At the Lyulph Stanleys' I stood unclaimed against a door. Up came Elena Rathbone* and nailed the coffin of my failure by introducing me to a girl, also partnerless. And soon she discovered, as all my partners discovered, that I could not dance. The humiliation of standing unpartnered returns to me. But at the same time I recall that the good friend who is with me still, upheld me; that sense of the spectacle; the dispassionate separate sense that I am seeing what will be useful later; I could even find the words for the scene as I stood

* Elena Rathbone who later married Bruce Richmond, editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*.

there. At the same time, there was the thrill; and the oddity. For the first time one was in touch with a young man in white waistcoat and gloves; and I too was in white and gloves. If it was unreal, there was a thrill in that unreality. For when at last I came back to my bedroom, it looked small, untidy; and I would ride the waves of these fragmentary feelings—repeat these scraps of talk—say it all over to myself—what I said—what he said—and next morning would still be going over it as I read my Sophocles for Miss Case.

None of this is strange; nor if this had been all would there have been much in these parties to come back to mind. They would have slid off one's back like so much sparkling water. But there was George. And he made us feel that every party was a test; if a success, then the prize was ours; we had satisfied Lady Sligo; looked lovely; so and so had said I have never seen a lovelier girl and so on. But if it was a failure, then doom was before us; we would fall into the depths of dowdiness; of eccentricity. The importance of the party either way was enormous. But why? This question could not be asked. If, plucking up courage, one of us, opening one of those stiff envelopes with an engraved card on it, should say: "But if I hate going to parties, why should I accept this one?" He would instantly wrinkle his cheek lines; and announce tartly: "You're too young to pick and choose . . ." There would be silence. Then changing his mood, opening his arms, he would cry: "Besides, I want you to come. I hate going alone . . . beloved. Say you will come?" Duty and emotion muddled the stream. And over that turbulent whirlpool the ghosts of mother and Stella presided. How could we do battle with all of them?

By degrees then these parties, these tests, for which one had to prepare so carefully, became ordeals. "Only three weeks till the end of July I would say," as the cards arrived. But before the three weeks were over there would be coaxing and hinting; and when the night came, a battle, and Vanessa would stalk off, if beaten, to dress herself in the famous black velvet dress, and George, left in the drawing room, would pace up and down; and protest that he could not take her if she looked like that. And yet other girls would give their eyes to be asked—wherever it was. Did he feel, I return to the puzzle, that we criticised his conception? Was it again the sexual jealousy that fermented in his depths? At any rate, he would run through an astonishing range of emotions about these parties. He would upbraid us with selfishness, with narrowness. Causti-

phrases would hint at his displeasure. He complained to his circle of dowagers. He invoked their help.* And he succeeded, of course, in impressing the outsiders. How could we resist his wishes? Was not George Duckworth wonderful? And anyhow what else did we want? Society in those days was a perfectly competent, perfectly complacent, ruthless machine. A girl had no chance against its fangs. No other desires—say to paint, or to write—could be taken seriously. Even Beatrice Thynne,† when I told her I meant to be a writer, said at once: "I'll ask Alice to invite you to meet Andrew Lang";‡ and when I boggled, thought me excessively foolish.

The division in our lives was curious. Downstairs there was pure convention; upstairs pure intellect. But there was no connection between them. This was partly, of course, due to father's deafness, which had cut off his intercourse with the younger generation of writers. Young writers, young painters never came to Hyde Park Gate. When Will Rothenstein§ somehow drifted into father's study, he was terror struck. Leslie Stephen opened book after book and pointed silently, trying, apparently, to show him Thackeray drawings. Yet he kept his own intellectual attitude—the old Cambridge attitude—perfectly pure. No one cared less for the conventions. No one was less of a snob. Nobody respected intellect more. Thus I would go from the drawing room, where George was telling one of his little triumphs—"Mrs Willie Grenfell asked me to come for a weekend. And I said on the whole I thought I wouldn't . . . She was taken by surprise . . ."—up to father's study to fetch a book. I would find him swinging in his rocking chair, pipe in mouth. Slowly he would unwrinkle his forehead and come to ground and realise with a very sweet smile that I stood there. Rising he would go to the shelves, put the book back, and ask me gently, kindly; "What did you make of it?" Perhaps I was reading Boswell; without a doubt, I would be gnawing my way through the eighteenth century.

* A line is drawn through: "He paid for clothes; he bought enamel brooches; to the public he represented the good brother; doing his duty by motherless girls".

† Lady Beatrice Thynne, daughter of the Marchioness of Bath and sister of Katherine and Alice.

‡ Andrew Lang (1844–1912) was a journalist and man of letters who wrote on an immense variety of subjects.

§ Sir William Rothenstein describes this alarming incident in his autobiography, *Men and Memories: 1872–1938* (abridged ed., Chatto & Windus, London, 1978). p. 61.

Then, feeling proud and stimulated, and full of love for this unworldly, very distinguished and lonely man, whom I had pleased by coming, I would go back to the drawing room and hear George's patter. There was no connection. There were deep divisions.

Great figures stood in the background. Meredith, Henry James, Watts, Burne-Jones, Sidgwick, Haldane, Morley. But with them again we had no close connection. My memories of them are strong; but only of figures looming large in the distance. I can still see Symonds, as I saw him from the landing at Talland House. I looked down on his crinkled yellow face; and noted his tie—a yellow cord to which two balls of yellow plush were attached. I remember the roll and rear of Meredith's voice; pointing to a flower and saying "that damsel in the purple petticoat." I remember still more clearly the ceremony of our visits to great men. For father and mother were equally respectful of greatness. And the honour and the privilege of our position impressed themselves on us. I remember Meredith dropping slices of lemon into his tea. I remember that Watts had great bowls of whipped cream; and a plate of minced meat. "I kissed him", said mother, "before he dipped his moustache in the cream." He wore ruffles at his wrists, and a long grey dressing gown. And we went to Little Holland House always on a Sunday morning. I remember that Lowell had a long knitted purse, constrained by two rings; and that a sixpence always slipped out of the slit. I remember Meredith's growl; and I remember the hesitations and adumbrations with which Henry James made the drawing room seem rich and dusky. Greatness still seems to me a positive possession; booming; eccentric; set apart; something to which I am led up dutifully by my parents. It is a bodily presence; it has nothing to do with anything said. It exists in certain people. But it never exists now. I cannot remember ever to have felt greatness since I was a child.*

[There they were, on the verge of the drawing room, these great men: while, round the tea table, George and Gerald and Jack talked of the Post Office, the publishing office, and the Law Courts. And I, sitting by the table, was quite unable to make any connection. There were so many different worlds: but they were distant from

* The British Library typescript ends here, omitting the last paragraph of MH/A. 5d. This has been included within brackets as it is unusual for VW to omit entire paragraphs from the manuscript version in the typescript.

me. I could not make them cohere; nor feel myself in touch with them. And I spent many hours of my youth restlessly comparing them. No doubt the distraction and the differences were of use; as a means of education; as a way of showing one the contraries. For no sooner had I settled down to my Greek than I would be called off to hear George's case; then from that I would be told to come up to the study to read German; and then the gay world of Kitty Maxse would impinge.]