

Baring Maurice

# Passing By



# Maurice Baring

# Passing By

*[http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio\\_book/?art=23160691](http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=23160691)*

*Passing By:*

# Baring Maurice

## Passing By

*From the Diary of Godfrey Mellor*

*Friday, December 18th, 1908. Gray's Inn.*

I went to the station this morning to see the Housmans off. They are leaving for Egypt and intend to stay there a month or perhaps two months. They are stopping a few days at Paris on the way.

*Saturday, December 19th.*

My Christmas holidays begin. I am spending Christmas with Uncle Arthur and Aunt Ruth. I have to be back at the office on the first of January.

*Thursday, January 1st, 1909. Gray's Inn.*

Received a post-card from Mrs Housman, from Cairo.

*Monday, February 2nd.*

Received a letter from Mrs Housman. They are returning to London.

*Sunday, February 8th.*

The Housmans return to-morrow. They have been away one month and twenty-one days.

*Monday, February 9th.*

Went to meet the Housmans at the station. They are going straight into their new house at Campden Hill and are giving a house-warming dinner next Monday, to which I have been

invited.

*Tuesday, February 10th.*

Lord Ayton has been made Parliamentary Under-Secretary. I do not know him but I remain in the office. He is taking me on.

*Monday, February 16th. Gray's Inn.*

The Housmans had their house-warming in their new house at Campden Hill. I was the first to arrive.

On one of the walls in the drawing-room there is the large portrait of Mrs Housman by Walter Bell, which I had never seen since it was exhibited in the New Gallery ten years ago. It was always being lent for exhibitions when I went to the old house in Inverness Terrace. While I was looking at this picture Housman joined me and apologised for being late. He said the portrait of Mrs Housman was Bell's *chef-d'oeuvre*. He liked it *now*. Then he said: "We are having some music to-night. Solway is dining with us and will play afterwards. He plays for nothing here, an old friend; you know him? Miss Singer is coming too. You know her? She writes. I don't read her."

At that moment Mrs Housman came in and almost immediately Mr and Mrs Carrington-Smith were announced. Mr Carrington-Smith is Housman's partner, an expert in deep-breathing besides being rich. Mrs Carrington-Smith had lately arrived from Munich. The other guests were – Miss Housman (Housman's sister), Lady Jarvis, Miss Singer, whom I was to take in to dinner, a city friend of Mr Housman's, Mr James Randall, a little man with a silk waistcoat, and, the last to arrive, Solway.

I sat on Mrs Housman's left, next to Miss Singer. Carrington-Smith sat on Mrs Housmans right; Housman sat at the head of the table, between Mrs Carrington-Smith and Lady Jarvis. Miss Singer talked to me earnestly at first. She is writing on the Italian Renaissance. I told her I was ignorant of the subject, upon which her earnestness subsided, and she smiled. Then we talked of music, where I felt more at home. She had been to all Solway's concerts. She is not a Wagnerite. Just as we were beginning to get on smoothly there was a shuffle in the conversation and Mrs Housman turned to me.

I told her we had a new chief at the office – Lord Ayton.

"We met him in Egypt," she said. "He had been big-game shooting. I had no idea he was an official."

I told her he was only a Parliamentary Under-Secretary. At that moment there was a lull in the general conversation and Housman overheard us.

"Ayton," he broke in. "A pleasant fellow, not too much money, some fine things, furniture, at his place, but he won't go far, no grit."

I asked Mrs Housman what he was like. She said they had made great friends at Cairo but she did not think they would ever meet again.

"You know," she said, "these great friends one makes travelling, people, you know, who are just passing by."

Miss Singer said he had an old house in Sussex. She had been over it. It was let; there were some fine old things there.

"But he won't sell," said Housman. "He's not a man of business."

Mrs Carrington-Smith said she preferred impressionist pictures, especially the Danish school. Housman laughed at her and said there was no money in them. Miss Housman said she had heard from a dealer that Lord Ayton had a remarkable set of Charles II. chairs and that she wished he would sell them. Solway took no part in the conversation but discussed music with Miss Singer. I caught the phrase, "trombones as good as Baireuth." Mrs Housman asked me whether I had seen Ayton yet. I told her he had not been to the office.

"I think you will like him," she said. Then, as an afterthought. "He's not a musician."

She asked me whether there were any changes in the staff. I told her none except for the arrival of a new Private Secretary (unpaid) whom Lord Ayton is bringing with him, called Cunninghame. She had never heard of him. We stayed a long time in the dining-room. Housman was proud of his Madeira and annoyed with us for not drinking enough. Mr Randall said he was sorry but he never mixed his wines, and he had some more champagne. Randall, Carrington-Smith and Housman talked of the international situation. Solway explained to me why portions of the Ninth Symphony were always played too fast. He was most illuminating. Then we went upstairs. More guests had arrived. A few people I knew, a great many I had not seen before, Solway played some Bach preludes and the

Waldstein Sonata. The unmusical went downstairs. There were about a dozen people left in the drawing-room.

Afterwards there were some refreshments downstairs. I got away about half-past twelve.

*Tuesday, February 17th. Gray's Inn.*

Our first day under the new regime. The new chief came to the office to-day. He looks young, and was friendly and unofficial. The new Private Secretary came too, Mr Guy Cunninghame, an affable young man. He wears a beautifully tied bow tie. I wonder how it is done and whether it takes a long time or not. He is well dressed, but when it comes to describing him he is dressed like anyone else, and yet he gives the impression of being well dressed. I don't know why. I suppose it is an art like any other. I could not tie a tie like that to save my life. *Equidem non invideo magis miror.*

He seems to have been everywhere, to have read everything and to know everyone. He is not condescending, he is just naturally agreeable.

I had to go over to the Foreign Office in the morning to see someone in the Eastern Department. When I came back Cunninghame told me that a Mrs Housman had been to see Ayton, about some billet for her brother-in-law. She talked to him first. Cunninghame said he thought she did not like coming on such an errand. She then saw A., who said he would do what he could. He told C. afterwards he was sure he couldn't do anything for the fellow. C. had never met her nor heard of her,

but curiously enough he said he recognised her from her picture which he had seen, Walter Bell's picture. I asked him if he had seen it at the New Gallery. He said no, at a dealer's in America two years ago.

I asked him if he was sure it was the same picture. He said he was quite sure. The picture was for sale.

"One couldn't mistake the picture," he said. "It's the best thing Walter Bell ever did. His pictures are valuable now he is dead, but there was a slump in them before he died, or rather, there never was a boom in them. That one picture attracted a great deal of attention when it was first exhibited, and then one heard little of him till he died. Now, of course, his pictures fetch high prices."

***Letter from Guy Cunninghame to his cousin, Mrs Caryl***

LONDON,

*February 19th, 1909.*

DEAREST ELSIE,

Since my last letter I have been installed. I am George Ayton's Secretary. I sit in the office with another man, who was there before and has been taken on, called Mellor. He is as silent as a deaf-mute and I have no doubt is the soul of discretion. There isn't much work to do and Ayton has got a real Secretary of his own who writes shorthand and typewrites without mistakes and lives in his house. He writes all his private letters and does all his business for him. He is not supposed to do official work, but George brings him to the office all the same, and he has a typewriter in the clerk's room and is always ready to do any odd



job. I find him most useful. He is still more silent than Mellor. I haven't much to tell you. I have got into my new flat in Halkin Street. It will be presentable in time. The pictures are up, but not the curtains. Let us hope they won't be a failure: They were promised last week but have not yet arrived. If you have time and are passing that way I wish you would get me from the Bon Marché half-a-dozen coloured tablecloths.

George has got a flat in Stratton Street. I dined with him alone last night. We went to a Music Hall after dinner and heard Harry Lauder. His sister, Mrs Champion, is in Paris. Perhaps you will see her. Yesterday a lady came to the office to interview him and saw me first, a Mrs Housman. Have you ever heard of her? I recognised her at once as the subject of a picture by Walter Bell. Do you remember a large picture of a lady in white playing the piano? Such a clever picture. I saw it in New York at Altheim's shop, but I believe it was exhibited years ago at the New Gallery. Well, she is far more beautiful than the picture. She is not really tall, but she looks tall, with a wonderful walk, but I can't describe her, she makes other people look unreal – like wax-works. She was dressed anyhow and rather shabbily in black, wearing no gloves but the most beautiful ring I have ever seen, a kind of double monogram, probably old French. She came on business. I wonder who she is. She is not a foreigner and not, I think, an American, but she is, looks and talks, especially talks, not like an Englishwoman.

I shall try to come to Paris for Easter.

Don't forget the tablecloths.

*Yours,*

*Guy.*

***From the Diary of Godfrey Mellor***

*Monday, March 1st.*

I dined last night with the Housmans, They were alone except for Solway, and after dinner we had some music. Solway played the Schumann Variations and then he asked Mrs Housman to sing. I hadn't heard her for a long time as she hardly ever will sing now. She sang *Willst du dein Herz mir schenken*. Solway says the song isn't by Bach really but by his nephew. Then she sang a song from Purcell's *Dido*, some Schubert; among others, *Wer nie sein Brot*, and the *Junge Nonne*. Solway said he had never heard the last better sung. Housman then asked her to sing a song from *The Merry Widow*, which she did.

Housman plays himself by ear.

She did not allude to having been at the office, nor did I.

*Tuesday, March 2nd.*

Dined with Cunninghame at his flat last night. A comfortable and luxurious abode. I asked him if Ayton was likely to marry. He laughed. He said he had been in love for years, with a Mrs Shamier. I had never heard of her. Cunninghame said she was clever and accomplished, and had been very pretty and painted by all the painters.

He says A. will never marry. I asked him if Mrs Shamier was in London. He said of course. She has a husband who is in

Parliament, and several children; a country house on the south coast; but they are not particularly well off.

"You must come and meet her at dinner," he said. "I am devoted to her."

I asked him if she was fond of A.

"Not so much now, but she won't let him go."

I went away early as C. was going to a party.

*Wednesday, March 3rd.*

Went to the British Museum before going to the office, to look up an old English tune for Mrs Housman from Ford's *Music of Sundry Kinds* called *The Doleful Lover*. I found it.

*Thursday, March 4th.*

Went to Solway's Chamber Music Concert last night.

Brahms Quintet and a trio by Solway himself. Some Brahms *Lieder*. The Housmans were there. I thought Solway's trio fine.

*Friday, March 5th.*

A. went to the country this afternoon to stay with the Shamiers; so C. said, but, as a matter of fact, he told me he was going to his own house. Cunninghame is going away himself to-morrow. He always goes away on Saturdays, he says. I remain in London.

*Saturday, March 6th.*

Went to the London Library and got some books for Sunday: *Thaïs*, by Anatole France, recommended to me by C.; a book called *A Human Document*, recommended me by Mrs Housman. I do not think I shall read any of them. The only literature I read

without difficulty is *The Times* and *Jane Eyre*, and *The Times* doesn't come out on Sunday.

*Sunday Night, March 7th.*

Called on the Housmans in the afternoon. She was out. Luncheon at the Club. Dinner at the Club. I began *A Human Document*, but could not read more than five pages of it. I couldn't read any of the book by Anatole France.

Went to a concert in the afternoon. It was not enjoyable.

Read *Jane Eyre*.

*Letter from Guy Cunninghame to Mrs Caryl*

LONDON,

*Monday, March 8th.*

DEAREST ELSIE,

I meant to write you a long letter yesterday from the country. I went to stay with the Shamiers. I thought, of course, George would be there. He didn't come near the office on Friday. He wasn't there and evidently wasn't even expected.

Louise in tearing spirits and a new man there called Lavroff, a Russian philosopher; youngish and talking English better than any of us, except that he always said "*I have been seeing So-and-so to-day,*" "*I have been to the concert yesterday.*"

Needless to say, I didn't have a moment to write to you, in fact the only place where I get time to write you a line is at the office. Everything is appallingly dull. Mellor, the Secretary, had dinner with me one night. He spoke a little but not much. I think he is shy but not stupid.

George likes being in London, but Louise didn't mention him. It's curious if after all this fuss and trouble to get this job and to be in London it all comes to an end.

The tablecloths have arrived. Thank you a thousand times. They are exactly what I wanted. The curtains have arrived too but they are a failure; too bright. I can't afford to get new ones yet. This week I have got some dinners. George said something about giving a dinner this week.

Yours in great haste,

G.

***From the Diary of Godfrey Mellor***

*Monday, March 8th.*

A. asked me whether if I was free on Thursday I would dine with him. I said I would be pleased to. He said he would try and get a few people.

*Tuesday, March 9th.*

A. has got a Secretary called Tuke. He writes all his private letters and he comes down to the office in the mornings. This morning he came and asked me Mrs Housman's address. It is curious that he should have applied to me and not to C., as I was not here when she called, nor does A. know that I know her. How can he have known that I know her?

*Wednesday, March 10th.*

Dined with Cunninghame last night at his flat. The guests were Mr and Mrs Shamier, Miss Macdonald, C.'s cousin, M. Lavroff, a Russian, and a Miss Hope. I sat between the Russian

and Miss Macdonald. Miss Macdonald is an elderly lady, kind and agreeable. Mr Shamier, M.P., was once, I believe, an athlete, a cricket Blue. Miss Hope looked as if she were in fancy dress; Lavroff, the Russian, is unkempt, with thick eyebrows and dark eyes. Tolstoy was mentioned at dinner. Mrs Shamier said he was her favourite novelist, upon which Lavroff became greatly excited and said the day would come when, the world would perceive and be ashamed of itself for perceiving that Tolstoy was not worthy to lick Dostoyevsky's boots. Being asked my opinion I was obliged to confess that I had read the works of neither novelist. Miss Macdonald asked me who was my favourite novelist. I said Charlotte Brontë. She said she shared my preference and couldn't read Russian books, they depressed her. After dinner we had some music. Miss Hope sang and accompanied herself. She sang songs by Fauré and Hahn; among others *La Prison*. She altered the text of the last line, and instead of singing "Qu'as tu fait de ta jeunesse?" she rendered it – "Qu'as tu fait dans ta jeunesse?": scarcely an improvement. When she had finished Lavroff was asked to play. He consented immediately and played some folk songs. Although he is in no sense a pianist, they were beautifully played.

*Thursday, March 11th.*

Had dinner last night with Admiral Bowes in Hyde Park Gardens. The only people there besides myself were Colonel Hamley and Grayson, who is, they say, a rising M.P. The Admiral said his nephew, Bowes in the F.O. (whom I know a little), had

become a Roman Catholic.

"What on earth made him do that?" said Colonel Hamley.

"Got hold of by the priests," said the Admiral; and they all echoed the phrase: "Got hold of by the priests" and passed on to other topics.

I have often wondered what the process of being "got hold of by the priests" consists of, and where and how it happens.

*Friday, March 12th.*

Dined last night with A. at his flat. I was surprised to meet Mr and Mrs Housman. The hostess was A.'s sister, Mrs Campion. She is a deal older than he is, a widow and good company. There was also a Mrs Braham, and a younger man called Clive. He is in a bank and is, I believe, a useful man in a sailing boat.

I sat between Mrs Campion and Mrs Housman.

After dinner A. said to Mrs Housman that, knowing she liked music, he had provided her with a musical treat. Mrs Braham would sing to us. She sang, accompanying herself, *The Garden of Sleep*, *The Silver Ring*, *Mélisande in the Wood*, and, by special request, *The Little Grey Home in the West*. There was no other music.

*Saturday, March 13th.*

Had tea with the Housmans. They asked me to dinner next Tuesday to meet A. Mrs Housman says that Mrs Campion is one of the most charming and amusing people she has ever met. C. is staying in London. This Saturday A. is going to his house in the country. He has a small house on the coast near Littlehampton,

where he keeps his yacht, but, of course, he cannot yacht yet. He has a large house in Sussex which is let.

*Sunday Night, March 14th.*

Went down to Woking to spend the day with Solway in his cottage. He is composing a Sonata for piano and violin. He played me the first movement. He said he thought there was a certain amount of good music being composed at the present day which nobody was taking notice of, but which would probably come into its own some day. He said Mrs Housman was the singer who gave him the most pleasure. He said: "Her singing is *business-like*. She is divinely musical."

*Letter from Guy Cunninghame to Mrs Caryl*

*Sunday, March 14th.*

DEAREST ELSIE,

I have been spending a perfect Saturday to Monday in London. I have had a busy week and was glad to see no one and do nothing all to-day, that is to say, comparatively no one and nothing, as I went to the play on Saturday night, and to-day I went to a large luncheon party at Alice's, who is back at Bruton Street. The news is that the Shamier episode is over, quite, quite over. There is no doubt about it. She is madly in love with Lavroff. I don't wonder. He is so intelligent and plays wonderfully. As for George, I don't think he cares. You will at once ask if there is no one else. Nobody that I know of. I don't know who he sees and what he does. He hates going out, and talks every day of giving a dinner at his flat, but as far as I know he hasn't entertained a



cat yet.

I dined out every night last week, and gave one dinner at my flat. I think it was a success. Freda Macdonald, Louise, Lavroff and Eileen Hope, who sang quite beautifully. I asked Godfrey Mellor, but I really don't know if I can ask him again to that sort of party as he didn't utter a word. Freda liked him. But it does ruin a dinner to have a gulf of silence in the middle of it, especially as when he does talk he can be quite agreeable. George has gone down to the country. His sister is here now, but she goes north next week. I believe London bores him to death and he is longing for the summer and for his yacht. I am sorry you can tell me nothing of Mrs Housman. I haven't seen or heard anything more of her.

Thank you very much for the *langues de chat*. They added to the success of my dinner. Yours, etc.,

GUY.

***From the Diary of Godfrey Mellor***

*Monday, March 16th.*

I asked C. where he got his cigarettes. He said he got them from a little man who lived *behind* the Haymarket. Everybody seems to get their cigarettes and their shirts from a "little man." The little man apparently never lives in a street but always *behind* a street.

My new piano, a Cottage Broadwood, arrived to-day. It is bought on the three years' system.

*Tuesday, March 17th.*

Dined with my Aunt Ruth and Uncle Arthur last night, in Eccleston Square. A large dinner-party: a Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, the French Chargé d'Affaires and his wife, the Editor of *The Whig* and his wife, Lord and Lady Saint-Edith, Professor Miles, Sir Herbert Wilmott and Lady Wilmott, Mr Julius K. Lee of the American Embassy, and Mrs Lovell-Smythies, the novelist.

As we were all waiting for dinner in the dark library downstairs a Miss Magdalen Cross came in late, carrying a book in her hand. "This book," she said to us all, "is well worth reading." It was a German novel by Sudermann. An old lady who was standing next to her, and who I afterwards discovered was the widow of the Bishop of Exminster, said: "You prepared that entry in your cab, dear Magdalen." Miss Cross blushed. I took her in to dinner. She talked of sculpture, the Chinese nation, German novels, and Russian music. She has been three times round the world. She has no liking for most German music and cannot abide Brahms. She likes Wagner, Chopin, Russian Church music and Spanish songs. On the other side I had the wife of the French Chargé d'Affaires. She said: "J'adore l'odeur des paquets anglais." Her favourite English author, she said, was Mrs Humphry Wood. I did not like to ask her if she meant Mrs Humphry Ward or Mrs Henry Wood. She said the works of this novelist made her weep.

When we were left in the dining-room after dinner, Lord Saint-Edith, Professor Miles and Hallam (of *The Whig*) had a

long argument about some lines in Dante, and this led them to the Baconian theory. Lord Saint-Edith said he couldn't understand people thinking Bacon had written Shakespeare's plays. If they said Shakespeare had written the works of Bacon as a pastime he could understand it. He believed Homer was written by Homer. The Professor was paradoxical and said he thought the Odyssey was a forgery. "Tacitus," he said, "was known to be one."

After dinner upstairs there was tea but no music. Uncle Arthur is growing very deaf and forgetful and asked me how I was getting on at Balliol.

Aunt Ruth told me she had asked my new chief to dinner, but that he had refused. "Of course," she said, "this is not the kind of house he would find amusing. But considering how well I knew his father I think it would be only civil for him to come to one of my Thursday evenings."

*Wednesday, March 17th.*

I dined at the Housmans' last night. It was a dinner for A. He was the guest of the evening. To meet him there were Lady Maria Lyneham, who must be over seventy; a French lady of imposing presence called, if I caught the name correctly, the Princesse de Carignan and who, Housman whispered to me, was a Bourbon, and if she had her rights would be Queen of France to-day; a secretary from the Italian Embassy; Mr and Mrs Baines. Mr Baines is an official at the British Museum and is half French. His wife, he told me, had once been taken for Sarah Bernhardt. There were several other people: Sir Herbert Simcox, the K.C., and

Lady Simcox, an art critic, a lady journalist and Miss Housman.

A. sat between Mrs Housman and Lady Simcox. Housman had the Princesse de Carignan on his right and Lady Maria on his left. I sat between Lady Maria and Miss Housman. Lady Maria told me she dined out whenever she could, and asked me to luncheon on Sunday. "Don't come," she said, "if you mind meeting lions; I like pleasant people. Only I warn you I have an old-fashioned prejudice for good manners and I always ask their wives."

Mr Baines talked beautiful French to the Princesse. Lady Maria told me she was neither French nor a princess, but the illegitimate daughter of a Levantine. "But very respectable all the same, I'm afraid," she added.

After dinner a few people came. Among others, Housman's partner and Esther Lake, the contralto. She sang (she brought her own accompanist) some Handel and *Che faro* and, by request of Mr Housman, Gounod's *There is a Green Hill*.

I drove home with A. He told me he had enjoyed himself immensely and he thought Esther Lake was the finest singer in the world.

He said Miss Housman was a very clever woman and Housman appeared to be quite a good sort.

He said he liked this kind of dinner-party.

*Thursday, March 18th.*

The first day there has been a feeling of spring in the air. I went to St James's Park on the way to the office.

Dined at the Club.

*Friday, March 19th.*

A. asked me to spend Sunday with him in the country. I told him I was sorry I was engaged to go out to luncheon on Sunday. He said I must come the week after.

*Saturday, March 20th.*

C. said it was a great pity A. did not go out more. He used to go out a great deal, he said. "I suppose," he added, "it's because he doesn't want to meet Mrs Shamier." I said I thought C. had told me he was fond of her. "Yes," said C, "he was very fond of her, but that is all over now."

*Sunday Evening, March 21st.*

I went to St Paul's Cathedral in the morning. Then to luncheon with Lady Maria in her house in Seymour Place.

A curious luncheon. There were two actors and their wives, Father Seton, and Mr Le Roy, who writes detective stories, and his wife, and Sir James Croker.

I sat next to Mrs Le Roy, who is, she told me, a Greek. She told me her husband had written one hundred and ten books, but that she had read none of them. She said it worried him if she read them. She said it was a great sacrifice as she doted on detective stories and was told his were very good. The actors, who were both actor managers, told us about their forthcoming productions. Mr Vane said there was going to be a real panther in his next production (a Shakespearean revival). Mr Jones Acre is producing a play which is translated from the Swedish, and which

deals with the question of a man who has inoculated himself and his whole family with a fatal disease, in the interests of science.

Father Seton took a great interest in the stage, and said he considered the Church and the stage should be close allies. The clergy took far too little interest in these things. It was a pity, he said, to let the Romans have the monopoly of that kind of thing. This surprised Mrs Le Roy, who said she thought he was a Roman Catholic. He laughed and said Rome would have to capitulate on many points before any idea of corporate reunion could be entertained.

Sir James Croker told stories of early days in the Foreign Office and Lord Palmerston.

We sat on talking until half-past three. I then went home and read *Jane Eyre*.

***Letter from Guy Cunninghame to Mrs Caryl***

*HALKIN STREET,*

*March 25th.*

DEAREST ELSIE,

I start on Thursday and shall arrive Thursday evening. I have got rooms at the Ritz. Let us have dinner together Thursday night, and *not* go to a play. I shall stay in Paris a week and then go for four days to Mentone. Then I shall come back to Paris for three days, and then home. I suppose we shall have to dine at the Embassy one night. George is going to the country for Easter with his sister. I want a really nice screen (a small one). You must help me to find one, not too dear. I also want something for the

dining-room, which at present is too bare.

I won't write any more now.

*Yours,*

G.

***From the Diary of Godfrey Mellor***

*Sunday, March 29th. Hôtel St Romain, Rue St Roch, Paris*

Went to a concert at the *Cirque d'Été* this afternoon, not a very interesting programme. A great deal of Wagner, and *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*.

Dined by myself at a Duval. Start for Florence to-morrow morning.

*Tuesday, March 30th. Villa Fersen, Florence*

Arrived this morning before luncheon after an exhausting journey second-class. In the carriage there was a soldier belonging to the *Garde Républicaine*. He said he was on duty at the Opera and had he known I was passing through Paris he could have given me a *billet de faveur*.

The Housmans' villa is at the top of a hill on the Bellosguardo side. It is rather a large house, covered with wistaria, with high windows with iron bars. It has a large empty *salon* with a piano. A fine room for sound. The garden is beautiful.

*Wednesday, March 31st.*

I walked down into Florence very early in the morning. I reached the town before anything was open and met a party of men in shorts and flannels running back to a hotel. They were Eton masters taking exercise. I didn't go to any picture galleries,

but I walked about the streets and went into the Duomo, an ugly building inside. I got back for luncheon.

Housman said that they must leave cards in the afternoon and take a drive in the Cascine. They went out in a carriage and pair. I went for a walk to the Boboli Gardens. At dinner Housman said they had met several friends, and he is giving a dinner-party on Sunday.

*Thursday, April 1st.*

The Housmans took me to luncheon with a banker called Baron Strong. What the explanation of this title is I do not know. They live in the modern part of the town. He was a genial host, portly, with long white whiskers. His wife, the Baroness, an Italian, a distinguished lady. There were present a Marchese whose real name I was told was Goldschmidt, and his wife, a retired and talkative English diplomatist, a Russian lady, an Italian, who talked English, French and Russian with ease, called Scalchi, Professor Johnston-Wright, who is spending his holiday here, and a Frenchman. When the latter heard Scalchi talk every language successively he said to him: "Vous êtes une petite tour de Babel."

In the afternoon we left cards at several houses and villas and then went for a drive in the Cascine. Some people called at tea-time, but I escaped. After dinner Mrs Housman sang some Schumann, *Frühlingsnacht*, and the *Dichterliebe*. These songs, she said, suit Florence.

*Friday, April 2nd.*



I had a talk with the Italian gardener as far as my Italian permitted me to. I pointed out a plant, a mauve-coloured plant, I don't know its name, that seemed to grow in great profusion. He said: "Fiorisce come il pensiero dell' uomo." More calls in the afternoon, and another drive in the Cascine.

Housman has bought a large modern statue representing *The Triumph of Truth*, a female figure carrying a torch, with a serpent at her feet. She is triumphing, I suppose, over the snake.

*Saturday, April 3rd.*

We went to see the Easter Saturday ceremony at the Duomo, and then to luncheon at the Villa Michael Angelo. It belongs to a rich American called Fisk. There were present besides Mr and Mrs Fisk an English authoress, a picture connoisseur, Scalchi, an American archæologist, an Italian man of letters, and a Miss Sinclair, also an archæologist. Housman said afterwards this was the cream of intellectual Florence.

I sat between two archæologists. I found their conversation difficult to follow.

After luncheon we called on the British Consul's wife, whose day it was. Then after a drive in the Cascine we went home.

*Easter Sunday, April 4th.*

Mrs Housman went to Mass early. Went for a walk with Housman. On the Ponte Vecchio we met Ayton and his sister, Mrs Campion. Mrs Campion, he said, had insisted on him taking her to Florence.

Housman asked them to dinner to-night; they accepted. A

great many people came to tea.

The dinner-party to-night was quite a large one. Baron and Baroness Strong, Lord Ayton, Mrs Campion, Mr and Mrs Fisk, Scalchi and the Marchese and his wife, whom we met lately. I sat between Mrs Campion and Baron Strong. After dinner Mrs Fisk played Chopin with astonishing facility, but without any expression.

A. intends to stay here another fortnight.

Housman said he received a telegram which will necessitate his meeting his partner at Genoa. His partner is on the way to the Riviera. He may have to go to Paris too, but he hopes not, and intends to be back in a few days if possible.

*Monday, April 5th.*

Housman left to-day for Genoa. I went with Mrs Housman to San Marco and the Accademia in the morning. In the afternoon to the Certosa with Mrs Housman, A. and Mrs Campion.

*Tuesday, April 6th.*

Mrs Campion and A. came to luncheon. Mrs Campion, who is an expert gardener, told me the names of all the flowers in the garden. They have not remained in my mind.

*Wednesday, April 7th.*

We all spent a morning sight-seeing and had luncheon at a restaurant. In the afternoon we drove to Fiesole.

*Thursday, April 8th.*

Housman is not coming back. He is obliged to go to Paris and he will go straight to London from there.

We drove to Fiesole in the morning. Had luncheon with some Italian friends of Mrs Campion, Count and Countess Alberti. Nobody there except the host and hostess and their three children. A fine villa and no garden. Countess Alberti said it was no use having a garden if one lived here in summer, as everything dried up. She is a charming woman, natural and unpretentious, and talks English like an Englishwoman.

She asked A if he had met many people, and A. said he was a tourist and had no time for visits. Countess Alberti said he was quite right and that she knew nothing in the world more—*seccante* was the word she used, than Florentine society.

She asked us all to come again next week. I am leaving on Sunday, and A. and Mrs Campion are going to Paris on Monday. Mrs Housman remains here another week.

*Friday, April 9th.*

Mrs Housman had a headache and did not come down. I went to the town and did some shopping and went over the Bargello. Mrs Housman came down to dinner and sang afterwards, Schubert, Schumann and Brahms. I had never heard her sing *O Versenk o versenk dein Leid mein Kind, in die See* before.

*Saturday, April 10th.*

We went to a great many churches in the morning and saw a number of frescoes. Mrs Housman received a great many invitations, but refused them all. A. and Mrs Campion and the Albertis came to dinner. Countess Alberti persuaded Mrs

Housman to sing. She sang some English songs: *Passing By*, *Lord Randall*, etc., Gounod's *Chanson de Mai*, and some Lully. Countess Alberti said it was a comfort to hear singing of which you could hear every word. A. liked *Passing By* best, and he made her sing it twice. He asked me who the words were by. The tune is Edward Purcell's. The words, although generally attributed to Herrick by musical publishers, are by an anonymous poet, and occur in Thomas Ford's *Music of Sundry Kinds*, 1607. They are as follows: —

There is a ladye sweet and kind,  
Was never face so pleas'd my mind,  
I did but see her passing by,  
And yet I love her till I die.

Her gestures, motions, and her smile,  
Her wit, her voice my heart beguile,  
Beguile my heart, I know not why;  
And yet I love her till I die.

There is also a third stanza.

***Letters from Guy Cunninghame to Mrs Caryl***

VILLA BEAU SITE,

MENTONE,

Thursday, April 8th.

DEAREST ELSIE,

It is divine here and this villa is a dream. We went to Monte

Carlo yesterday and I won 300 francs and then lost it again. I saw hundreds of people, *monde* and *demi-monde*. Among the latter Celia Russell, having luncheon with rather a gross-looking shiny financier. I asked who he was and found out that he was Housman of Housman & Smith. Apparently C.R. has been living with him for some time, ever since, in fact, L. went to India. But the interesting thing to me is that Housman is the husband of that beautiful Mrs Housman I told you about. M. knows them and knows all about them. Mrs Housman was a Canadian, very poor, with no one to look after her but an old aunt. He married her about ten years ago. Since then he has become very rich. Carrington-Smith is now his partner. Housman supplies the brains. They live somewhere in the suburbs and she never goes anywhere.

I am not coming back till next Monday. I shall be able to stop two or three days in Paris, very likely longer.

*Yours,*

*G.*

*HALKIN STREET,*

*Sunday, May 9th.*

DEAREST ELSIE,

I have had a busy week since I have been back. Monday I dined with George at his flat. A man's dinner to meet some French politicians who are over here for a few days. I told you I was determined to make Mrs Housman's acquaintance, and I have. I had luncheon on Tuesday with Jimmy Randall, a city friend of

mine. You don't know him. He knows the Housmans intimately. I told him I wanted to know them and he asked me to meet them last night.

We dined at the Carlton, Randall, the Housmans and myself. I think she is even more beautiful than I thought before. I couldn't take my eyes off her. She was in black, with one row of very good pearls. I never saw such eyes. Housman is too awful; sleek, fat and common beyond words, but sharp as a needle. He has an extraordinary laugh, a high, nasal chuckle, and says, "Ha! ha! ha!" after every sentence. They have asked me to dinner next Tuesday. I will write to you about it in detail. Mrs H. is charming. There is nothing American or Colonial about her, but she is curiously un-English. I can't understand how she can have married him. I caught sight of her again this morning at the Oratory, where I always go if I am in London on Sundays, for the music. Randall told me she is very musical, but I didn't get any speech with her.

The flat looks quite transformed with all the Paris things. They are the greatest success.

*Yours,*

*G.*

*Wednesday, May 12th.*

DEAREST ELSIE,

The dinner-party came off last night. They live in Campden Hill. I was early and the parlour-maid said Mrs Housman would be down directly, and I heard Housman shouting upstairs: "Clare,

Clare, guests," but he did not appear himself. I was shown into a large white and heavily gilded drawing-room, with a candelabra, a Steinway grand, and light blue satin and ebony furniture, a good many palms, but no flowers. The drawing-room opened out on to an Oriental back drawing-room with low divans, small stools inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and a silver lamp (from a mosque) hanging from the ceiling, heavy curtains too, behind which I suspect stained-glass windows. Over the chimney-piece an Alma Tadema (a group on a marble seat against a violet sea). At the other end of the room Walter Bell's picture. It *was* the picture I saw before, but more about that later. On another wall over a sofa a most extraordinary allegorical picture: a precipice bridged by a large serpent, and walking on the serpent two small figures, a woman in white draperies and a knight dressed like Mephistopheles, all these painted in the crudest colours. The Housmans then appeared, and Housman did the honours of the pictures, faintly damned the Alma Tadema, and said the Snake Picture was by Mucius of Munich in what he called *Moderne* style. He had picked it up for nothing; some day it would be worth pots of money. Ha! ha! Then the guests arrived. Sir Herbert Simcox, K.C., Lady Simcox, dressed in amber velvet and cairngorms; Housman's sister Miss Sarah, black, and very large, in yellow satin, with enormous emerald ear-rings; Carrington-Smith, Housman's partner; Mrs Carrington-Smith, naked except for a kind of orange and red *Reform Kleid*, with a green complexion, heavily blacked eyebrows, and a *Lalique*

necklace. Then, making a late entrance, as if on the stage, a Princesse de Carignan, a fine figure, in rich and tight black satin and a large black ruff, heavily powdered. Housman whispered to me that she was a legitimate Bourbon. I think he meant a Legitimist. We went down to dinner into a dark Gothic panelled dining-room, with a shiny portrait of Mr Housman set in the panelling over the chimney-piece.

I sat between Mrs Housman and Mrs Carrington-Smith. I talked to Mrs Housman most of the time. Mrs Carrington-Smith asked me if I liked Henry James's books. I said I liked the early ones. She said she preferred the later ones, but she could never feel quite the same about Henry James again since he had put her into a book. She was, she said, *Kate* in *The Wings of the Dove*. After dinner Housman moved up and sat next to me. He talked about art and *bric-à-brac*. I asked him if I could possibly have seen Bell's portrait of Mrs Housman in America. He said, "Certainly." He had bought it cheap and sold it dear, anticipating a slump in Bell, which was not slow in coming. He had then bought it back directly Bell died, anticipating a boom, which had also occurred. "It is now worth double what I gave for it. Ha! ha! ha!"

Randall said he liked a picture to tell a plain story and he could make nothing of the Snake Picture upstairs. Housman laughed loudly and said it was the oldest story in the world: the man, the woman, and the serpent. Ha! ha! We went upstairs, where there was a crowd. I was seized upon by the Princesse de Carignan,



and she whispered to me confidential secrets about Europe. She preened herself and displayed the deportment of a queen in exile.

Then we had some music. Esther Lake bawled some Rubinstein, and Ronald Solway played an interminable sonata by Haydn with variations and all the repeats. Some of the guests went downstairs, but I was wedged in between the Princesse and a Mrs Baines, a fluffy, sinuous woman, dressed in a loose Byzantine robe. Her husband, who is an expert in French furniture, told me she was once mistaken for *Sarah*, and she has evidently been living up to the reputation for years. He was careful to add that it was in the days when Sarah was thin – Mrs Baines being a wisp.

After the music, which I thought would never stop, we went downstairs again for a stand-up supper and sweet champagne. I was introduced by Housman to Ronald Solway. Housman told him I was a musical connoisseur, so he bored me with technicalities for twenty minutes. I couldn't get away. He had no mercy on me. Housman has got a box at the Opera. He told me I must use it whenever I like. How can she have married that man?

*Yours,*

*G.*

*Wednesday, May 19th.*

DEAREST ELSIE,

Thank you for your most amusing letter. I have been busy and not had a moment to write. We have had a good deal of work to do. Last Friday I had supper at Romano's after the play. Housman

was there with Celia Russell. I spent Saturday to Monday with the Shamiers. Lavroff was there. Last night I went to the Opera to the Housmans' box. It was *Bohème*. During the *entr'acte* who should come into our box but George. He stayed there the whole time, talking to Mrs H., and came back during the next *entr'acte*.

The next day at the office when I was in his room I said something about the Housmans and began telling him about my dinner. He froze at once and said Mrs Housman was an extremely nice woman. I said something about Housman, and George said: "Oh, not at all a bad fellow." So I saw I was on dangerous ground. Housman has asked me to spend next Sunday at his country house, a small villa on the Thames near Staines. I am going.

They are dining with me on Thursday. I asked George, too, and he accepted joyfully.

*Yours,*

*G.*

*Monday, May 24th.*

DEAREST ELSIE,

I am just back from the country. But first I must tell you about my dinner. I had asked the Housmans, George, Eileen Hope, and Madame de Saint Luce who is staying in London for three weeks. Just before dinner I got a telegram saying that Mrs Housman was laid up and couldn't possibly come. Housman arrived by himself. George was evidently frightfully annoyed and hardly spoke. Madame de Saint Luce was amazed and rather amused by Housman, and after dinner Eileen sang beautifully, so it went

off fairly well except for George.

Saturday I went down to Staines. Housman had got an elegant villa on the river. Very ugly, with red tiles, photogravures, and green wooden chairs and a conservatory, full of calceolaria. But I must say his food is delicious. George was there, Lady Jarvis, and Miss Sarah.

After dinner on Saturday there was a slight fracas. George asked Mrs Housman to sing. She didn't much want to, but finally said she would. Miss Sarah, who is a brilliant pianist, said she would accompany her (she evidently hates being accompanied). She sang a song of Schubert's, *Gute Nacht*. Miss Sarah played it rather fast. Mrs Housman said it ought to be slower. Miss Sarah said it was meant to be fast, and that was her conception of the song in any case.

Mrs Housman said she couldn't sing it like that, and didn't, and then she said she couldn't sing at all. Afterwards she did sing some English ballads and accompanied herself.

She sings most beautifully, her voice is perfectly produced and you hear every word. There is nothing throaty or operatic about it but her voice goes straight through one. George was entranced. Sunday afternoon George and Mrs H. went out on the river and stayed out all the afternoon. I spent the afternoon with Lady Jarvis, who is most clever and amusing. She told me all about the Housmans. Mrs H. is not Canadian but Irish. She was brought up in a convent in French Canada. Directly she came out of it her marriage with H., who was then in a Canadian

firm, was arranged by her aunt (her aunt was an imbecile and quite penniless). They lived several years in Canada, California and other parts of America, and came to England about three years ago. Housman was unfaithful from the first. Lady Jarvis knew about Celia Russell. I asked her if Mrs Housman knew. She said she – Lady Jarvis – didn't know, but it wouldn't make any difference if Mrs H. did or not. She said: "There is nothing about Albert Housman that Clare doesn't know." Then she said that unless I was blind I must of course have seen George was madly in love with her.

I said I agreed. She said she thought Mrs Housman was madly in love with him. I said I wasn't sure. Lady Jarvis said she was quite sure.

They came back very late from the river and Mrs Housman didn't come down to dinner. She said she had a headache. We had rather a gloomy dinner although Miss Sarah and Lady Jarvis never stopped talking for a moment, but George was silent.

You know he sees nobody now except the Housmans.

*Yours,*

G.

***From the Diary of Godfrey Mellor***

*Monday, May 3rd. Gray's Inn.*

A. returned to London a day sooner than he was expected. His Secretary, Tuke, had not returned. He had left his address with me. He spent his holiday in the Guest House, Fort Augustus Abbey, a Benedictine monastery. He returned this morning. A.

asked me on Saturday where he was. When I told him, A. showed great surprise. He said: "He has been with me six years and I never knew he was an R.C. It's extraordinary when a thing once turns up, you then meet with it every day. I seem always to be coming across Catholics now."

*Tuesday, May 4th.*

Alfred Riley telegraphed to me to know whether I could put him up to-night. I have answered in the affirmative, but he will be, I fear, most uncomfortable.

*Wednesday, May 5th.*

Riley arrived last night. He has been in Paris for the last three months working at the *Bibliothèque Nationale*. He told me he had something of importance to tell me: that he was seriously thinking of becoming a Roman Catholic. I was greatly surprised. He was the last person I would expect to do such a thing. I told him I had no prejudice against Roman Catholics, but it was very difficult for me to believe that a man of his intellectual attainments could honestly believe the things he would be expected to believe. Also, if he needed a Church I did not understand why he could not be satisfied with the Church of England, which was a historic Church. He said: "Do you remember when we were at Oxford that we used to say it would be a great sell if we found out when we were dead that Christianity was true after all? Well, I believe it is true. I believe, not in spite of my reason, nor against my reason, nor apart from my reason, but with my reason. Well, if one believes with one's

reason in the Christian revelation, that is to say, if one believes that God has uttered Himself fully and uniquely through Christ, such a belief has certain logical consequences." I said nothing, for indeed I did not know what to say. Riley laughed and said: "Don't be alarmed; don't think I am going to hand you a tract. For Heaven's sake let me be able to speak out at least to one person about this." I begged him to go on, and he said he thought Catholicism was the only logical consequence of a belief in the Christian revelation. Anglicanism and all forms of Protestantism seemed to him like the lopped off branches of a living tree.

I asked him what there was to prevent him worshipping in Roman Catholic churches if he felt inclined that way without sacrificing his intellectual freedom to their tenets.

He said: "You talk as if it was ritual I cared for and wanted. One can be gluttoned with ritual in the Anglican Church if one wants that."

As for giving up one's freedom, he said I must agree that law, order and discipline were the indispensable conditions of freedom. He had never heard Catholics complain of any loss of freedom, indeed Catholic philosophy, manners, customs, and even speech, seemed to him much freer than Protestant or Agnostic philosophy, and what it stood for. He asked me which I thought was freest, a Sunday in Paris or Rome or a Sunday in Glasgow or London.

I suggested his waiting a year. He said perhaps he would.

*Thursday, May 6th.*

Riley talked of music, Wagner, *Parsifal*. He quoted some Frenchman who said that *Parsifal* was "*moins beau que n'importe quelle Messe Basse dans n'importe quelle Église*." I said that I had never been to a Low Mass in my life, but that I disliked the music at most High Masses I had attended. I said I disliked Wagner, especially *Parsifal*. He said he agreed about Wagner, but I did not understand what the Frenchman had meant. I confessed I did not. He said: "It is like comparing a description of something to the reality." I told him that I envied people who were born Catholics, but I did not think it was a thing you could become. He said it was not like becoming a Mussulman. He was simply going back to the older tradition of his country, to what Melanchthon and Dr Johnson called and what in the Highlands they still call the Old Religion. I told him that I had once heard a man say, talking of becoming a Roman Catholic, "if I could tell the first lie, all the rest would be easy and follow naturally down to scapulars and Holy Water."

*Friday, May 7th.*

Riley left this morning. He has gone back to Paris. He is not going to take any immediate step.

*Sunday, May 9th*

I went to see Mrs Housman yesterday afternoon. I told her what Riley had told me. I asked her if she thought people could *become* Roman Catholics if they were not born so. She said she wished that she had not been born a Catholic so as she might have become one. She envied those who could make the choice.

I asked her if she did not consider there was something unreal about converts. She said she thought English converts were in a very difficult situation which required the utmost tact. Many perhaps lacked this tact. She said that in Canada and America, where she had lived most of her life, the anti-Catholic prejudice as it existed in England did not exist, at any rate it was not of the same kind. "The nursery anti-Catholic tradition doesn't exist there."

She asked me what I had advised Riley to do. I told her I had dissuaded him from taking such a step and had begged him to wait. She said: "If he is to become a Catholic there will be a moment when he will not be able to help it. Faith is a gift. People do not become Catholics under the influence of people or books, although people and books may sometimes help or sometimes hinder, but because they are pulled over by an invisible rope – what we call *Grace*."

I told her I would find it difficult to believe that a man like Riley would believe what he would have to believe. She asked me whether I found it difficult to believe that she accepted the dogmas of the Church. I said I was convinced she believed what she professed, but that I thought that born Catholics believed things in a different way than we did. I did not believe that this could be learnt by converts.

She said I probably thought that Catholics believed all sorts of things which they did not believe. Such at least was her experience of English Protestants, who seemed to imbibe curious



traditions in the nursery, on the subject.

I asked her if Mr Housman believed in Catholic dogma. She said: "Albert has been baptized and brought up as a Catholic, but he is an Agnostic. He is very charitable towards Catholic institutions."

She asked me more about Riley and whether he had any Catholic friends. I said: "Not to my knowledge." "Poor man, I am afraid he will be very lonely," she said.

She said that she herself knew hardly any Catholics in England, that is to say she had no real Catholic friends, and that she felt as if she were living in perpetual exile.

"You see," she said, "your friend ought to realise that he will have to face the prejudice and the dislike not only of narrow-minded people but of very nice intelligent and broad-minded people, who agree with you about almost everything else. The Church has always been hated from the beginning, and it always will be hated. In the past it was people like Marcus Aurelius who carried out the worst persecutions and hated the Church most bitterly with the very best intentions, and it is in a different way just the same now."

I said that to me it was an impossible mental gymnastic to think that Catholicism was the same thing as early Christianity.

She said: "Because the tree has grown so big you think it is not the same plant, but it is. When I go to Mass I feel as if I were looking through the wrong end of a telescope right back into the catacombs and farther."

I told her Riley would take no decisive step. He had promised to wait. She said there was no harm in that. There were many other things I wished to ask her, but A. arrived, and after talking on various topics for a few moments I left.

*Monday, May 10th.*

A. told me he had been invited to dinner by Aunt Ruth next Thursday and that he was going. He asked me whether I was invited. I said I was invited.

*Tuesday, May 11th.*

Cunninghame said he was dining at the Housmans' to-night.

*Wednesday, May 12th.*

I asked C. whether he had enjoyed his dinner. He said it was very pleasant, but that the music was too classical for his taste. A. was not there.

*Thursday, May 13th.*

I dined last night with A. in his flat. Nobody but ourselves. A. played the pianola after dinner. He said I must come and stay with him in the country soon. He would try and get the Housmans to come too.

*Friday, May 14th.*

A. dined with Uncle Arthur and Aunt Ruth. So did I. It was a dinner for the American Ambassador. I sat next to a Miss Audrey Bax, a lady of decided views and picturesque appearance. She talked about Joan of Arc, and asked me whether I had read Anatole France's book about her. I said I had not, but I had read an English translation of Joan of Arc's trial which I thought

one of the most impressive records I had ever read. She said: "Ah, you like the stained-glass-window point of view about those sort of people." I was rather nettled and said I preferred facts to fiction. I thought Joan of Arc as she appeared in her trial was a very sensible as well as being a very remarkable person. She had not read this. She said Anatole France told one all one wanted to know from a rational point of view. It was a comfort to read common-sense about this sort of hallucinated people. A man who was sitting opposite her joined eagerly in the conversation, and said that the two people in the whole of history who had made the finest defence when tried were Mary Queen of Scots and Joan of Arc. Miss Bax said she supposed he looked upon Mary Queen of Scots as a martyred saint. The other man, whose name I found out afterwards was Ashfield, an American who is now at the American Embassy, said that he regarded Mary Queen of Scots as a woman who was tried for her life and who had defended herself without lawyers without making a single mistake under the most difficult circumstances. He said he had been a lawyer, and spoke from a lawyer's point of view. Miss Bax went back to Joan of Arc and Anatole France and said his book was as important a work as Renan's *Vie de Jésus*. Mr Ashfield said he thought that work no improvement on the Gospel. I said I had not read it. Miss Bax again said that if we preferred sentimental traditions we were at liberty to do so. She preferred rational writers untainted by superstition. Ashfield said he regarded Renan as a sentimental writer. Miss Bax said:

"No doubt you prefer Dean Farrar." Ashfield said he did not think Renan's book was a more successful attempt to rewrite the Gospels than Dean Farrar's although it was better written. She said that proved her point, and as she seemed satisfied, we talked of other things. But throughout her conversation she struck me for a professed free-thinker to be singularly dogmatic and sometimes almost fanatical.

*Saturday, May 15th.*

Spent the afternoon and evening with Solway at Woking but came back after dinner.

*Sunday, May 16th.*

Went to see Mrs Housman in the afternoon, but she was not at home. This is the first time she has not been at home on Sunday afternoons for a very long time.

*Monday, May 17th.*

A. said he was going to the opera to-night. Housman, whom he had seen yesterday, had told him it would be a very fine performance.

*Tuesday, May 18th.*

Went to the opera in the gallery. Some fine singing. Cunninghame had been in the Housmans' box.

*Wednesday, May 19th.*

Was going to dine with the Housmans to-night, but Mrs Housman is unwell.

*Thursday, May 20th.*

Lady Jarvis has asked me to stay with her Sunday week.

*Friday, May 21st.*

This morning a man called Barnes came to the office. He is an acquaintance of Cunninghame's; he is in the F.O. He talked of various things, and then he asked Cunninghame whether he knew Mrs Housman. He said she was playing fast and loose with A.'s affections. She was doing it, of course, to convert him. Catholics didn't mind how immoral they were in such a cause. He said that she was well known for it. She had refused to marry Housman till he had been converted. He had been so much in love with her that he could not refuse. I said that I happened to know that Housman had been baptized a Catholic when he was born. Cunninghame bore me out and said it was all nonsense about A. He was sure Catholicism had nothing to do with it. He knew Mrs Housman quite well and she had never mentioned it to him. Barnes said we could say what we liked, but all London was talking of A.'s unfortunate passion and Mrs H.'s behaviour.

"One sees them everywhere together," he said.

C. said: "Where?"

Barnes said: "Oh, at all the restaurants and at the opera."

Cunninghame said he had expected Mrs Housman to dinner, but she had been unable to come.

*Saturday, May 22nd.*

Called on Mrs Housman to inquire. They have gone to the country until Monday.

*Monday, May 24th.*

I had luncheon with A. to-day at his flat. He said he had been

staying with the Housmans at their house on the Thames. He said he had put his foot in it. On Saturday night at dinner they were talking about Ireland, and he said he had no wish to go to a country full of priests. Mrs Housman told him, laughing, she was a Catholic. He asked me if I had known this. I told him I had always known it. He asked me whether she was very devout. I said I knew she always went to Mass on Sundays, that she had never mentioned the subject to me except once when I asked her a question with reference to a friend of mine. He asked me whether Housman was a Catholic too. I told him what I knew.

*Tuesday, May 25th.*

Went to the opera, in the Housmans' box. Housman and Cunninghame were there. Mrs Housman did not come. A. looked in during the *entr'acte*.

*Wednesday, May 26th.*

A. gave a dinner at his Club. All politicians except myself and Cunninghame.

*Thursday, May 27th.*

Tuke asked me to take a ticket for a concert at Hammersmith at which his sister is performing on the piano. I have done so.

*Friday, May 28th.*

Luncheon with A. at his Club. He is staying with Lady Jarvis on Saturday. The Housmans, he said, will be there. Cunninghame is going also. A. told me Mrs Housman has not been well lately. I said I thought she did too much. He asked me in what sort of way. I said she attended to a great many charities and that

as Housman entertained a great deal I thought it tired her. Mrs Housman had told him I was very musical. He asked me if I played any instrument. I said none except the penny whistle. He asked me if I did not think Mrs Housman a very fine singer. I said I did. He also said that he supposed she knew a lot of priests. I said I had never met one in her house.

*Sunday, May 30th. Rosedale, Surrey.*

I arrived rather late last night. Besides the guests I knew I was to meet, was a Frenchman, M. Raphael Luc, and a Mrs Vaughan. After dinner we had some music. M. Luc sang several French songs, by Lully, and others that I had heard Mrs Housman sing. His singing was greatly appreciated and applauded, and it is, I confess, as far as it goes, perfection itself, as regards quality, taste and art, but I could not help thinking the whole time that it would be impossible for him to interpret Schubert.

This morning I sat in the garden and read the newspapers. Mrs Housman drove to Church which was some distance off.

Mr Winchester Hill, the novelist, arrived for luncheon and brought with him Miss Ella Dasent, the actress. At the end of the meal she gave us some vivid impersonations of contemporary actors and actresses.

We sat talking for some time in the verandah. Then Lady Jarvis took Housman to show him the garden, and Cunninghame walked away with Mrs Vaughan and M. Luc.

Miss Housman, Mr Hill, Miss Dasent, and myself remained on long chairs underneath a large tree. Miss Dasent and Mr

Hill discussed at great length a play that he is adapting for her from one of his novels. The story seemed to me absurd – it was something about an Italian nobleman strangling his wife's lover with a silk handkerchief.



# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.