



# The Persephone Biannually

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*A View through the Window into the Garden  
at 14 St James's Square, Bristol c. 1805  
attributed to Thomas Pole, Bristol Museum  
and Art Gallery*



# OUR BOOKS FOR SPRING/SUMMER 2022

The two new books for April 2022 are *As It Was and World Without End* by Helen Thomas, PB no. 142, and *A Well Full of Leaves* by Elizabeth Myers, PB no. 143. *As It Was* (which is how we shall refer to it for short) consists of two books, the first published in 1926 and the second in 1931. They are short, beautifully written memoirs of Helen Thomas's life with the poet Edward Thomas. In the first book they meet, fall in love, make love, and, because Helen is pregnant, get married – while Edward is still an Oxford undergraduate. The second book describes their life together – a difficult life because they had so little money – until the day Edward left to return to the trenches in France.

Those are the bare facts and the books can be read as straight autobiography. But nearly a hundred years on, the reader has to ask: how much is true? Some facts are obviously not true, for example Edward's recent biographer has pointed out that Helen misremembered where they spent their honeymoon. But that doesn't matter. What does matter is the truth about their relationship. There is no doubt that there was a very strong sexual bond between

Edward (born in 1878) and Helen (born in 1877) when they were 18. And it's interesting, given that the year was 1895, that it seemed not to have occurred to them *not* to make love. There was apparently no shame or guilt, which, given what we know from fiction of the period and from social history, is very surprising. In fact Helen delighted in their sexual harmony, so much so that the first edition of *As It Was*, which refers to Edward kissing her all over and her opening her eyes and 'knowing he was ready', had eight lines cut; which is why we have used the unexpurgated 1931 edition (we are usually very careful to re-set from the first edition of a book).

When Helen, aged 18, wrote to her friend Janet that '[Edward] wants a girl friend and I want a boy friend, and as I like him (or at least what I know of him) and I think he likes me, I think it would be good for both of us if we could be friends' there is no hint of restraint. So the undertone of *As It Was*, or the question that lies behind what one reads, is how a young writer like Edward can reconcile the need for solitude and reflection with the (quite understandable) longing for love. It is a question as old as time. Helen admits that



*A 1930s block printed textile, designed by Barron and Larcher, called Vernède after the WWI poet d. April 9th 1917.*



*A 1935 block printed textile by Phyllis Barron: Rosebank Fabrics, Manchester commissioned her to make overalls.*



Edward was what we would now call bipolar. And clearly a young man who was nicknamed ‘the genius’ by his friends, but had to write potboiler biographies to make money, while living in a cottage with a devoted wife and three children, was not going to have an easy time of it. We have seen this in biographies of writers so many, many times. Could Keats or Wordsworth or George Eliot or Katharine Mansfield or Virginia Woolf have written what they did with ‘a pram in the hall’? Surely not.

So there are two ways of reading the Helen Thomas volumes. One is ‘straight’, ie. a love story written with extraordinary (for the time) frankness, which then ends tragically with Edward’s death at the Battle of Arras. And the other is something more complex: a wife’s description of a marriage which is partly ‘true’ and partly wish fulfilment. The very fact that *As It Was* was not originally published under her name but the initials HT is evidence of – what? And what does it mean that in the two books she and Edward are called David and Jenny? An edition of the books, published in 1988 as *Under Storm’s Wing*, proudly changed the names to Edward and Helen. But the disadvantage of this was that Helen was not asked if she approved; and it was treating the two books as autobiography. Whereas by using different names, Helen Thomas was, I believe, admitting that

she was blending the factual account with some mild fictional embellishment, indeed writing autofiction decades before that word was invented.

When *World Without End* was published in 1931 Vita Sackville-West reviewed it on the radio. One can imagine her beautiful Bloomsburyesque tones coming over the airwaves as she said: ‘With all her apparent simplicity, Mrs Thomas is a most

accomplished artist. She knows exactly what she is about, she knows what to put in and what to leave out. She knows the full value of economy in language, so that when she does use a highly-coloured word, it leaps out of the page and seems exactly right and rich, as though it were the very word we had been waiting for all along. Mrs Thomas will be given ample credit for her apparent artlessness and simplicity, she will not be given credit for her very deliberate gifts as a stylist.



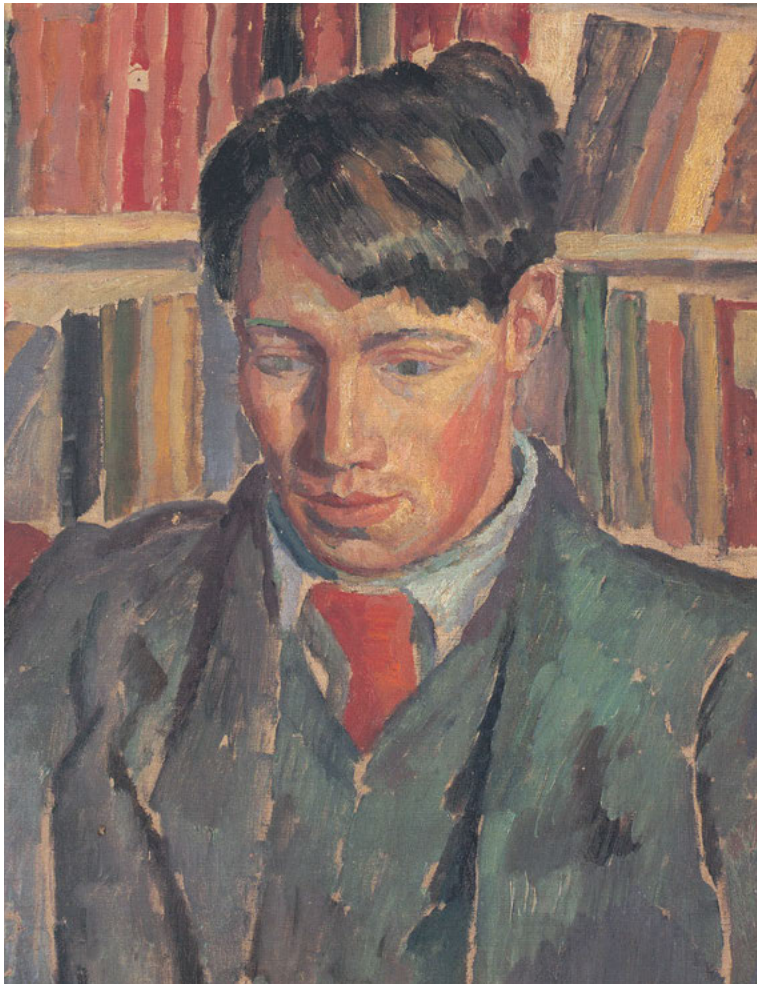
*Photograph of Helen Thomas taken in Ramsgate in 1898*

‘The human side of the book may be left to speak for itself. The closing pages, when she says goodbye to her husband just before he goes to the Front are among the most moving I have ever read. I need say no more, for I feel it almost impertinent to comment upon so intimate a revelation. But whether you read a book because it is a work of art or because it is a most moving human story, do not fail to read *World Without End*.’

Finally, the radio broadcast acknowledged that most listeners would not have read Edward Thomas’s poetry. And, indeed, while he was alive he was best-known as a critic, though he ‘was always conscious that there was something in himself more powerful than his charming but unsensational writings about the countryside’ (Isabel Raphael in the Afterword). He only started writing poetry in 1914 (at the suggestion of the poet

Robert Frost) and almost all his 140 poems were published posthumously; there was only one war poem, and so he was not bracketed with the other war poets. Then, in 1939, John Moore (whose novel *The Waters Under the Earth* will be PB no. 145 in October) published a biography, unfortunately, the stock was destroyed in the Blitz. But in the 1980s ‘Adlestrop’ started consistently to be one of the nation’s three favourite poems, there was a successful play called *The Dark Earth and the Light Sky* (with Hattie Morahan as Helen) and *Now All Roads Lead to France: The Last Years of Edward Thomas* was a bestseller. A hundred years on Edward Thomas’s poetry is greatly admired and widely read in a way that Helen could never have anticipated.

One of the Thomas family’s closest friends was the writer Eleanor Farjeon. She was the reason that after Edward’s death Helen went to live (near her) in Hampstead. And, oddly enough, this month’s other Persephone author, Elizabeth Myers, also went to live near Eleanor. But there is a more important link between Elizabeth and Helen. They both wrote with a kind of purity, a lack of dissembling, an honesty if you like, that is surprisingly rare. If they had ever met (which is possible, through Eleanor) they would have felt an immediate rapport. Both were good, kind



*David Garnett in 1919 (aged 27) painted by Dora Carrington. He was a close friend of Edward Thomas (they met through David’s publisher father) and in the 1930s Helen Thomas asked David to write Edward’s biography but he refused.*

people, hard workers, superb prose stylists, and both were passionate nature lovers, each of them unwitting pantheists. And yet, like so many deeply creative, over-sensitive people, both were a tiny bit deranged. (Which is why a proof-reader wrote about *A Well Full of Leaves*: 'It is honestly the most bonkers book I have ever read, and/but I loved it! Like a sort of whirling dervish of a piece of writing – utterly original, so startling, so strange and intense.'))

**A** *Well Full of Leaves* is about a family of four children growing up somewhere in the north, at some date unspecified but presumably in the years between the wars; their mother is a tyrant, no, more than that, a vile, despicable woman who is cruel to her children, self-centred, deplorable. The book is saying, rather like Dorothy Canfield Fisher in *The Home-Maker* (1924), PB no.7, that without nurturing and kindness, a child's growth is stunted. The rather coy 1943 subtitle to *A Well Full of Leaves* was *A Story of Happiness* but we have abandoned this because it has such an old-fashioned ring and indeed we would want to substitute *A Story of Unhappiness*; because each of the four children is inevitably damaged in some way. So this is a book about vile parents and, by implication, the importance of kind and tender nurturing. It describes the struggles of a young girl, from a background mirroring Elizabeth's own, imbued with a

similar nature, eventually stricken with tuberculosis. It was written in a strikingly adventurous style which caused *Punch* to say she 'used words as if they were new'.

**E**lizabeth grew up on the outskirts of Manchester. 'Her father was a womaniser, a gambler and a drinker so dangerous in drink that she and her younger sister, Dorothy, often went in fear of being murdered

by him' (a 1998 talk by Anthony Glynn). She did well at school but aged 14 had to leave in order to earn a living. (This happens to one of the children in the novel.) Yet the child who is at the heart of the book, Laura, survives her abusive mother through her intense, overwhelming love of nature, as did Elizabeth. She is able to discover happiness in the simple things of life. 'She remembered how, as a small child



*Elizabeth Myers in the early 1940s*



in the backyard of her home in grimy, smoky Ancoats (a suburb of Manchester), a cluster of dandelions transformed the yard for her into a beautiful garden of fragrant blooms.’ There was a strong streak of mysticism in her, reminiscent of Gerald Manley Hopkins. As she wrote, ‘no man, not even a Catholic, can understand the holy sweetness of God who does not recognise the holiness of a blade of grass or of a little town sparrow.’

It was not until the late 1920s that Elizabeth and her mother and sister managed to make their escape and go and live on their own in Manchester. Then in 1931, when Elizabeth was 19, they moved to London; here she worked as a secretary in Fleet Street and began writing seriously. But in 1938, she was diagnosed with tuberculosis, necessitating a year in a sanatorium, and it was from here that she sent a short story to the editor of *The Listener*, who happened to be a friend of Eleanor Farjeon’s. The story, ‘Good Beds – Men Only’, which we publish in this *Biannually*, shows her spare and economical style, her gritty toughness, a tenderness which isn’t sentimental, and a sheer love of humanity. However, it was so strong on social realism that the *Listener* editor felt it would be too powerful for his readers (we hope it isn’t for ours). Eleanor, however, recognised it as ‘a little masterpiece’, and wrote to Elizabeth telling her she had a great gift and must

not be discouraged by the story being turned down. She also recommended a literary agent. Thus they became friends. And after the Myers family was bombed out in Eltham they came to live near Eleanor, and Hampstead Heath. Many years later Eleanor wrote a short memoir of her friend ‘Betty’ and we have used this as the Afterword to our edition of *A Well Full of Leaves*.

In 1942 Elizabeth was awarded a grant by the Society of Authors, given to ‘struggling writers of promise’ (what a pity Edward Thomas was not given any financial help in the same way). Then, through her friendship with Arthur Waugh, the father of Evelyn, she met Littleton Powys, the scholar and retired schoolmaster, and married him in 1943, which was the year *A Well Full of Leaves* was published. It soon became evident that, unlike Helen Thomas’s books which were almost universally admired, *A Well Full of Leaves* divided critical opinion down the middle. WR Benet in the US *Saturday Review of Literature* called it ‘remarkable... Miss Myers’ gift for descriptive epithet, her poet’s imagination, her unfolding of an exciting philosophy of life, these are some things I have not been astonished by for a long time in a new writer... Miss Myers possesses that extraordinary and unaccountable thing that we sometimes call genius.’ But the *New York Times* thought that although the first half of

the book contained writing of unusual quality, the second half was full of purple prose and ‘may be read either as unwittingly burlesque or as the lugubrious end of a case history.’ Yet everyone admired the breathtaking descriptions of the natural world. After Elizabeth’s death her husband wrote that the two criticisms of the book were that she was preaching Pantheism and that there was too much melodrama. But she said that she had simply wanted to bring the reader’s attention to ‘the wonder of natural Things’ and that the melodramatic story was deliberate: ‘There were only two characters in the book, Life and Circumstance, with the parents and children all being symbols. The former represent Ignorance, Stupidity, and Cruelty and the latter Scholarship (Robert), Beauty (Anda), Art (Steve) and Simplicity, Responsiveness, Acceptance, and Happiness (Laura, the narrator).

In the UK the book was soon reprinted as a Penguin and went through several editions. But after the end of the decade it was never revived. Whether that means the book is ‘dated’; or whether it was connected with Elizabeth’s death in 1947; or whether this is yet another of the peculiar anomalies of the publishing industry is hard to tell, but one thing we are sure of: some Persephone readers will simply love *Well* and some will not. But we hope enough people will see the unconventional, beautiful, unruly joy of it.

# BARRON AND LARCHER

The endpapers for this month's new books use textiles by the same designers, or rather by both of them (*As It Was*) and one of them (*A Well Full of Leaves*). Phyllis Barron (below) and Dorothy Larcher were at the forefront of the movement to revive hand block printing using natural dyes, and ran a successful business making textiles. They began working in London but in 1929 moved to Hambutts House in Painswick. Here, until 1939, Phyllis supervised the dyeing processes and managed the business and Dorothy trained local people to print and sew.


The red design used for *As It Was* dates from the early 1930s. It is called Vernède after the WWI poet Robert Vernède. He was killed at the Battle of Arras on the same day as Edward Thomas, but we did not know this when we bought the dress made out of the fabric (now on display in the shop). No one knows why the fabric was called after the dead poet; possibly the red is meant to evoke blood and the jagged lines barbed wire. Nor do we know which way up it is meant to be: on the dress the design is one way up on the bodice and the other way up on the skirt. And it is unclear

whether Phyllis and Dorothy knew the Vernède family, or simply admired the poetry.

The other (blue) fabric, used for *A Well Full of Leaves*, was designed by Phyllis Barron in 1935. It was a commission from Rosebank Fabrics in Ramsbottom, near Manchester, a subsidiary of Turnbull & Stockdale which had manufactured textiles since 1881: the company wanted overalls for their staff. We now own an overall which will also be in the shop. Again, a decision had to be made about which way up to have the fabric so we have used the overall as our template.



PHYLLIS BARRON &  
DOROTHY LARCHER  
PAINSWICK, GLOS'.  
*Telephone: Painswick 130.*



HAND - PRINTED STUFFS  
for dresses, fitted upholstery, curtains and covers made to order.  
Made coats, bedspreads, shawls, scarves. Parcels can be sent on approval.  
Visitors to the Cotswolds are invited to see the work in progress and the finished stuffs, at Painswick. Above is a pattern of our indigo-dyeing.

# THE RECTOR'S DAUGHTER

This novel, first published by the Hogarth Press in 1924 became an instant success [*wrote AN Wilson in The Oldie*]. The book was so popular that Boots' lending libraries restricted the number of borrowers.

Part of its appeal is that it enabled readers who had lived through the horror of WWI, the Spanish flu, the eruption of the Irish Civil War and the poverty and horror of the 1920s to step back into a world that was largely unchanged since Charlotte M Yonge chronicled Victorian parish life in the countryside. But it is a disturbing book, the very reverse of escapist.

'The rector's daughter', Mary, is a clever person, and if she had been male, she would have followed a career. It is entirely her gender that is the cause of her imprisonment in her father's parsonage and her father's ego. That is made the more frustrating since she, and the reader, can see that in his way Canon Jocelyn is an admirable old man.

But what about love? What about feeling? What about the hope, as she passes into middle age, and watches her sister dying, that life might offer her rather more to look forward to than the next Harvest Festival? Hope flickers that a Bloomsburyish little 'set' in London might recognise her skills as a poet. This is an especially powerful element of the novel: Mary learns, in her muted, pessimistic way, that literary 'success' would be no

more fulfilling than parish life if she cannot have something else.

That something is, of course, love. The novel brilliantly depicts a quartet of destinies: those of Canon Jocelyn and Mary, a neighbouring clergyman, Mr Herbert, and the beautiful high-spirited and highly sexed aristocrat Kathy, who marries him.

By the end, the reader is beginning to discover that this most surprising work of art is no crude feminist tract, deploring the lot of the unmarried woman, or the married woman. It is an analysis of love worthy of George Eliot herself.

What a pleasure to have the chance to re-read this great book, not in the ugly green Virago incarnation of my youth, but in the elegant opal-grey Persephone format, with its fine paper, marbled endpaper and handsome typeface (ITC Baskerville). If you have never read it you are in for a surprise. If you are returning to it, you will be reminded that FM Mayor, that chronicler of the concealed emotion and the quietly nourished intellect, and the well-spent, well-read, unshowy day, left behind a masterpiece.



*Spencer Frederick Gore (1878-1914) Interior c. 1910*



# 'THE HAPPY MAN' EMMA SMITH

They passed, equally absorbed each in his own thoughts, each carrying with him the face just gone by, to recognise it four steps further on, each turning at the same moment.

'Good heavens, Edison!'

'Well, good gracious me! I wasn't sure – and then I wondered –'

Mottram realised at once that poor Edison had quite forgotten his name, although he had been struck by something familiar in the face and his eye beamed a welcome. After all, why should he remember the name?

Mottram knew that for the other he must have been a boy moving up the school with him, progressing, like him, from the Third to the Sixth, just a boy among many boys. But Edison had not been just a boy. He had been Edison, and his name and his face survived the decades, the second almost as unchanged as the first. Here he stood, smiling. Mottram was exceptionally pleased to see him. The re-appearance of Edison could not be unpleasant, and so many things were – that was how he thought of him.

'Come and have a drink –'

'Oh, yes, I should like to. I *should* like to,' said Edison. 'Not in a pub?'

'Not if you don't want to – though there are some rather good ones round here. We'll go to my club; it's close, just across the road. Then we can talk. Good God, look out! – my dear fellow, you nearly – you can't just step

off the pavement like that –'

'I'm very bad at crossing roads,' said Edison.

Mottram hooked the umbrella he was carrying firmly over his companion's arm, and so presently, at a suitable moment, brought him safely to the farther side.

'Thank you,' said Edison. And there again was the winning, unconsidered smile, so well remembered, straight from the heart with the heart, one felt, at no very great distance, so that the transit was an easy matter. Its position, thought Mottram, the position of that readily accessible, almost visible heart, was the same, had not sunk down with the years through layer upon layer, so that to reach it now would require practically a feat of engineering. As in his own case, he thought, as in the case of those belonging to most of the middle-aged men he had once been at school with. He remembered suddenly how his mother, smart and sharp-tongued, had visited him one hot half-holiday and how, because he was nowhere to be found, Edison had entertained her. She said afterwards that he was a simpleton.

'Isn't he a simpleton?' she said. Mottram had misunderstood her. 'He's not a fool, you know. He does quite well – fairly well, anyway – in end-of-term marks.'

'I never said he was a fool,' she answered impatiently. Mottram always thought she had fallen a bit in love with Edison.

Now here sat the simpleton

before him, grown up, even ageing, waiting to be asked what he would like to drink, his gentle modest countenance filled with pleasure, yet still in a sort of reverie.

'What will you have?'

'I should like – I should like a glass of sherry,' said Edison, but in his tone was the shadow of a question, very polite, and his blue eyes turned upon Mottram were faintly questioning too. Mottram had no idea what was in the other's mind.

'You know,' he said, as they waited for their drinks, 'considering you were so nearly killed five minutes back in the street, what I can't understand is how you've survived so long. If *that's* the way you go about one would imagine you'd have been knocked over and done for years ago. I suppose you live in the country?'

'Yes, in the country. I wouldn't like to live in London, you know. And I very seldom come up by myself – hardly ever. The last time I came up by myself I got completely lost.'

'I'm not surprised,' said Mottram. He was amused to find that his attitude towards this man was precisely what it had been nearly thirty years before. Edison himself was so unchanged that it was impossible to behave or to feel differently towards him. One slipped back into the old habits that were not exactly patronising, nor yet altogether protective, but somewhere between the two, and felt younger for it, braced, as

though life, so beastly so often, and always complicated, had become simplified, fresher. He tried to remember what it was about Edison that had given him, in those remote amazing terms, a character, had made him a 'special' in the school. He was the sort of boy who should have been, surely, either bullied, disliked or ignored. Instead he had been held in affection – and the affection of boys is a sweet thing, though not, by Edison, appreciated, for he was unaware of this distinction in his favour: he had been more than tolerated, slightly loved, slightly respected too, and, as it was, in public, by the mass of the school throughout his schooldays. They had all been fond of him. Why? What was there in him that touched and commanded them?

He was always good-natured, often a little surprised, willing, easily grateful. He answered all questions with directness occasionally disconcerting, never untruthfully. There was no mystery about him and no malice. He went about in a dream of his own, like someone who is rather deaf, but it was not a secretive dream; he was not conscious of it. And he knew quite a lot about things like butterflies; quite a lot but not too much. Yes, that was old Edison, as near as one would ever get to a picture of him. And here he was, no nearer, no further. He looks very happy, thought Mottram.

'Have another glass of sherry?'

'Oh no. No. Not another. Thank you very much all the same. I never have more than one at a time. It's very good sherry,' he added. Mottram was quite sure that he was unable to tell the difference between sherry, good or bad, but was anxious not to offend him by refusing.

'That sounds to me an uncomfortably abstemious rule,' said Mottram. 'Have you taken a vow?'

'Well, I suppose I have in a way. That's to say, I promised my wife, you know.'

Mottram felt astonished. 'You're married? How funny – I beg your pardon, it's not funny at all really – it's just that somehow I never thought of you as being married.'

It was funny; it was extraordinary, he thought. Then he recalled his mother, that charming worldly woman with the penetrating mind who had certainly felt for the boy a softness – oh! more, enough to vex her, enough for her never to visit the school again although she quite often spoke of her afternoon with a sort of stingless amusement unusual in her. They had first, he remembered her telling him, talked together across ink baize cloth in the study, later wandered about the school, in the classrooms empty of boys, the chapel, over the quad and the playing-fields, and their conversation, ardently polite, had gone weaving to and fro with them, like an early morning's dewy iridescent evaporating mist around their

heads. It had been summer, the beginning of July. So perhaps after all – yes, it was difficult to see with other people's eyes.

'I daresay it does seem funny,' said Edison. 'Well of course it is, I daresay,' he said, almost laughing. 'I married rather funnily in a way, most people would think. But it didn't seem funny to us – no, not in the least. Now if we *hadn't* got married, that would have seemed odd to us, I mean – it's worked out very well,' he said, looking across at Mottram with his trustful air still undestroyed.

Mottram, longing to know more, was for a while unable to think of the appropriate encouragement. He was afraid that without the right word Edison might lose his thread; go on to talk, perhaps, about fishing or something like that. So he said quickly:

'And your wife doesn't like you drinking? You're never allowed a second glass?'

'Oh well, she wouldn't really be cross or anything. It's just that when I was little – quite little, you know – I must have been about six at the time – I promised I wouldn't drink at all. I've forgotten, but I think it was because she was particularly upset. Her father had just died of drink, that was it. And it made an awful impression on her. Well, it would, you know, wouldn't it? And I can remember her standing me up in front of the fender – it was one of those

tall ones they hang clothes on, you know; it was winter and there was a big fire – and making me promise, solemnly never to touch the stuff. And I did – Oh yes; I promised her. Of course it's different now, but somehow, I don't know, I've never really broken the habit.'

Mottram felt his world reeling. 'Six?' he said, you were six years old at the time you – you promised?'

'Yes,' said Edison, nodding, and his blue eyes went back and back to that sight of himself. 'Yes, I remember distinctly because she said over and over again, 'You're only six now,' – and that stuck in my mind. I didn't know what she meant by only. Yes, poor soul, she was terribly distressed at the time; she was crying, I remember.'

'And she – your wife, that is – she was a neighbour's little girl who came over to play with you?' Mottram had already settled on her being the village publican's daughter, something beautiful and disreputable like that. He was ashamed of insisting but meant to have the whole of it, now they were started.

'Good gracious me, no – she wasn't a little girl,' said Edison. 'She was my Nanny. In those days,' he repeated, very kindly and softly, 'she was my Nanny.'

'Ah!' said Mottram; and then the two men sat and thought about this turn of affairs for some time, the one happily, the other in amazement. After an interval of silence Mottram found courage:

'I've never heard of a man marrying his Nanny before.'

'No, nor have I,' said Edison, turning radiantly towards him. 'But I can't think why not, can you? I mean, your nurse is the one woman you can be certain loves you, and she knows that you love her. And then you get so used to each other, and live so close, don't you know, it's hard to do without. I found it impossible. And then there's the understanding – no two people could have a better understanding, do you think? They wouldn't have the chance, other people, I mean. Oh, I think it's the best sort of marriage in all the world,' cried Edison, shining bright with enthusiasm.

'I believe you may be right,' said Mottram; and he pondered on it again, the notion of those darling nursery days being carried on unceasingly, the cosiness, the smell of things airing, and red curtains and wet ponies, on till the end of life. Snakes-and-ladders would turn into canasta or picquet; that was all the difference.

'The trouble is,' he said, 'it wouldn't have done for me. I couldn't have married my Nanny. She was terribly ugly.' Then he feared he might have spoken inconsiderately, and given pain. But Edison appeared un wounded.

'Oh dear, what a pity. I had all the luck on my side because mine, you see, was a very pretty young woman when I first knew

her – everyone said so. I always admired her appearance, right from the start, as long ago as I can remember in fact. She was a country girl. We both like the country. That's why I hardly ever come up to London.'

'No, you wouldn't, of course,' said Mottram vaguely. He wanted to ask another question. 'I was wondering,' he began, 'what her name is. It must have been difficult changing over from calling her Nanny to – something else.'

'Oh, I still call her Nanny,' said Edison. 'In fact, I can't for the life of me think what her other name is. I know it quite well, but it's gone out of my head for the moment. Annie? No, it wouldn't be that, would it? Well, anyway, I call her Nanny. It seems more natural.'

He said it was time for him to go, because of the train, so Mottram escorted him outside and put him in a taxi. Edison pushed the window down and waved his hat through it, either from exuberance or that particular politeness of his, until the taxi had disappeared with him round a corner. Standing on the London pavement after he was gone, Mottram thought again of his mother, who had been dead for several years, and felt, in a confused way, sorry for her, as though she had been cheated.

*Published in Harpers Bazaar 1954 and not reprinted since.*



# HOSTAGES TO FORTUNE PB 41

Once in a while a first novel burns so brightly that it gives the reviewer a just occasion for shouting out loud about it [*wrote the novelist Naomi Royde-Smith in 1933*].

*Hostages to Fortune* must now be added to the list.

However, a loud shout would be inappropriate to the heralding of Miss Elizabeth Cambridge as a new novelist. Her book is too quiet in itself to be the cause of noise in others. But no one can read far in the clear pages of *Hostages to Fortune* without that sense of ease that comes from good workmanship: those who can read them without a cumulative inclination to chuckle, not always silently, do not deserve to have so delicate and rich a talent offered for them to praise or blame.

Quite simply Miss Cambridge

begins at a beginning. Catherine has just given birth to her first child. "My word," Catherine thought, "that's not a baby, it's a person." She looked at Nurse. Nurse had not observed the phenomenon. She was presenting proudly a nice little girl.'

There, with the utmost economy, we have Catherine, who is to be with us throughout the book, and Nurse who, being 'monthly', is to vanish to give place to Lowe, who conforms to no standards but her own. It is at first the author's deftness that enchants the reader's attention. She has given us Catherine at once – in a line that is to be followed and filled in, but hardly surpassed, for significance until the portrait is completed and Catherine has grown old enough to be a grandmother.

Nor does William, the baby's

father, who is away on active service, remain unknown to us, though at first unseen.

'Catherine was retrimming a hat – she knew that William would be home on leave at any moment. He would expect her to look attractive but would not want to spend money to achieve that result... She was left with the feeling of humble gratitude when William proposed, with great inappropriateness, in the piece like the inside of a concertina between two railway carriages.'

It is all simple, quiet and inevitable. The picture as a whole, in spite of lovely sunlit passages, and a rare half-hour of escape into idleness and dreaming, is low in tone and carefully truthful in detail like some sweet masterpiece by Vermeer of Delft that has been dimmed by time.



*The Regina Hotel, Bennett Street, Bath in the summer of 1942*

# WHY WAS BATH BLITZED?

Eighty years ago, on the last weekend in April, the Bath Assembly Rooms, a few yards from Persephone Books' new premises in Edgar Buildings, was gutted by German incendiary bombs; nearby, 27 people died in the Regina Hotel (picture on the opposite page). In total 400 people were killed in the two nights of the 'Bath Blitz', when eighty bombers targeted the city with high explosive and incendiary bombs. This was one of a series that became known as 'Baedeker raids': a German press officer said next day, 'We shall go out and bomb every building in Britain marked with three stars in the Baedeker Guide.'

How did the Bath Assembly Rooms end up as a military target? In fact the Bath Blitz followed several months after the large-scale Blitz on London and on major industrial and port cities such as Coventry, Bristol, Plymouth and Portsmouth. The German aim in the Blitz had been to hit English industry and trade – initially to prepare the way for invasion. Thus Bristol suffered 29 raids in late 1940 and the first half of 1941 (when Bath suffered some casualties from random bombing on the way to Bristol). But the main Blitz failed to achieve its objectives and petered out in May 1941.

The trigger for the Baedeker raids was the RAF bombing, in March 1942, of a Renault truck factory near Paris. This enraged Hitler and provoked him to

resume bombing in retaliation and as a deterrent. But the targeting of the Baedeker cities was the direct result of the bombing of Lübeck on March 23rd.

The top brass of the RAF, led by Portal, and with Arthur Harris running Bomber Command from February 1942, wanted to show how more effective bombing could help win the war. Lübeck was bombed to show what the RAF could do – in a port city, easy to locate, and full of medieval, closely-packed wooden buildings vulnerable to fire. It was spectacularly successful – 60% of the buildings in the old city were destroyed (at the cost of 300 lives). It came at a low point of the war: in *Few Eggs and No Oranges* (PB no. 9) Vere Hodgson comments: 'We are all heartened by the terrible raids on Lübeck and Rostock. It is terrible to be so glad – but we cannot be anything else.' Hitler and Goebbels were both very concerned at the effect of these raids on German morale – hence the need for a more specific 'tit for tat' retaliation against the English Baedeker cities – Exeter, Bath, then Norwich, York and Canterbury.

Up to this point Luftwaffe bombing had been tied to military objectives. Even the notorious bombing of Guernica in the Spanish Civil War had been linked to ground action, as had the ruthless bombing of Warsaw in September 1939 and of Rotterdam in May 1940. The

Baedeker raids were frightening and lethal – on a moonlit night, an unprepared Bath had almost no defence – but by comparison were essentially pointless. The raids spared most of the Georgian centre, apparently because the bombers were using a map which directed them to the Kingsmead area of south-west central Bath, and, despite a cluster of bombs nearby, the Royal Crescent only suffered the destruction of two houses (2 and 17).

It was the RAF which then developed a more aggressive policy of city bombing – first Cologne, Essen and Bremen in the summer of 1942. But the state of the bombers' navigation by night made these efforts patchy. The RAF had found it hard to hit industrial targets with precision. Hence the development of so-called area bombing: the follow-up to Lübeck, on a much greater scale, was the bombing of Hamburg in July 1943, when a massive firestorm was created in residential areas and over 40,000 were killed – see the shattering entry for 14th August 1942 on the 'Terror raids' in Mathilde Wolff-Mönckeberg's *On The Other Side* (PB no. 75). The most notorious Allied bombing was to be the destruction of Dresden (a logistic and industrial hub as well as a historic city) in the last weeks of the war.

The Bath Blitz was pointless. Which leads to the question: can the bombing of civilians ever be justified?

# THE PERSEPHONE 143

1. **William – an Englishman** by Cicely Hamilton Prize-winning 1919 novel about the effect of WWI on a socialist clerk and a suffragette. Preface: Nicola Beauman

2. **Mariana** by Monica Dickens This funny, romantic first novel, which came out in 1940, describes a young girl's life in the 1930s. Preface: Harriet Lane **Also a Persephone Classic**

3. **Someone at a Distance** by Dorothy Whipple 'A very good novel indeed' (*Spectator*) about the destruction of a formerly happy 1950s marriage. Preface: Nina Bawden, R4 'Book at Bedtime' **Also a Persephone Classic**

4. **Fidelity** by Susan Glaspell 1915 novel by a Pulitzer-winning writer brilliantly describing the effect of a girl in Iowa running off with a married man. Preface: Laura Godwin

5. **An Interrupted Life** by Etty Hillesum From 1941–43 a woman in Amsterdam, 'the Anne Frank for grown-ups', wrote diaries and letters: they are among the great documents of our time. Preface: Eva Hoffman

6. **The Victorian Chaise-longue** by Marghanita Laski A 'little jewel of horror': 'Melly' lies on a chaise-longue in the 1950s and wakes as 'Milly' ninety years before. Preface: PD James

7. **The Home-Maker** by Dorothy Canfield Fisher An ahead-of-its-time 'remarkable and brave 1924 novel about being a house-husband' (Carol Shields). Preface: Karen Knox, Afterword: Elaine Showalter **Also a Persephone Classic**

8. **Good Evening, Mrs Craven: the Wartime Stories of Mollie Panter-**

**Downes** Short stories first published in *The New Yorker* from 1938–44.

Five were read on R4. Preface: Gregory LeStage **An unabridged Persephone audiobook read by Lucy Scott. Also a Persephone Classic**

9. **Few Eggs and No Oranges** by Vere Hodgson A 600-page diary, written from 1940–45 in Notting Hill Gate, full of acute observation, wit and humanity. Preface: Jenny Hartley

10. **Good Things in England** by Florence White 'One of the great English cookbooks, full of delightful, delicious recipes that actually work.' Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall

11. **Julian Grenfell** by Nicholas Mosley A biography of the First World War poet, and of his mother Ettie Desborough. Preface: author

12. **It's Hard to be Hip over Thirty and Other Tragedies of Married Life** by Judith Viorst Funny and wise 1960s poems about marriage, children and reality. Preface: author

13. **Consequences** by E M Delafield By the author of *Diary of a Provincial Lady*, PB No. 105, in this 1919 novel a girl who fails to marry goes in to a convent. Preface: Nicola Beauman

14. **Farewell Leicester Square** by Betty Miller Novel (by Jonathan Miller's mother) about a Jewish film-director and 'the discreet discrimination of the bourgeoisie' (*Guardian*). Preface: Jane Miller

15. **Tell It to a Stranger** by Elizabeth Berridge Observant and bleak 1947 short stories, an *Evening Standard* bestseller. Preface: AN Wilson

16. **Saplings** by Noel Streatfeild A novel by the well-known author of *Ballet Shoes*, about the destruction of a family during WW2; a R4 ten-part

serial. Afterword: Jeremy Holmes **Also a Persephone Classic**

17. **Marjory Fleming** by Oriol Malet A deeply empathetic novel about the real life of the Scottish child prodigy who lived from 1803–11; translated into French; a play on Radio Scotland.

18. **Every Eye** by Isobel English An unusual 1956 novel about a girl travelling to Spain, highly praised by Muriel Spark: a R4 'Afternoon Play'. Preface: Neville Braybrooke

19. **They Knew Mr Knight** by Dorothy Whipple A 1934 novel about a man driven to committing fraud and what happens to him and his family; a 1946 film. Afterwords: Terence Handley MacMath and Christopher Beauman

20. **A Woman's Place** by Ruth Adam A survey of women's lives from 1900–75, very readably written by a novelist-historian: an overview full of insights. Preface: Yvonne Roberts

21. **Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day** by Winifred Watson A delightful 1938 novel about a governess and a nightclub singer. Read on R4 by Maureen Lipman; now a film with Frances McDormand and Amy Adams. Preface: Henrietta Twycross-Martin. **A Persephone audiobook read by Frances McDormand. Also a Persephone Classic**

22. **Consider the Years** by Virginia Graham Sharp, funny, evocative WW2 poems by Joyce Grenfell's closest friend and collaborator. Preface: Anne Harvey

23. **Reuben Sachs** by Amy Levy A fierce 1880s satire on the London Jewish community by 'the Jewish Jane Austen', praised by Oscar Wilde. Preface: Julia Neuberger



- 24. Family Roundabout by Richmal Crompton** By the author of *William*, a 1948 family saga contrasting two matriarchs and their very different children. Preface: Juliet Aykroyd
- 25. The Montana Stories by Katherine Mansfield** All the short stories written during the author's last year; with a detailed editorial note and the contemporary illustrations. Five were read on R4.
- 26. Brook Evans by Susan Glaspell** An unusual novel written in 1928, the same year as *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, about the enduring effect of a love affair on three generations.
- 27. The Children who Lived in a Barn by Eleanor Graham** A 1938 classic about five children fending for themselves; starring the unforgettable hay box. Preface: Jacqueline Wilson
- 28. Little Boy Lost by Marghanita Laski** Novel about a father's search for his son in France in late 1945, the *Guardian's* Nicholas Lezard's Paperback Choice, R4 'Book at Bedtime' read by Jamie Glover. Afterword: Anne Sebba. Also a *Persephone Classic*
- 29. The Making of a Marchioness by Frances Hodgson Burnett** A very entertaining 1901 novel about the melodrama when a governess marries a Marquis; a R4 Classic Serial. Preface: Isabel Raphael, Afterword: Gretchen Gerzina. A *Persephone* audiobook read by Lucy Scott. Also a *Persephone Classic*
- 30. Kitchen Essays by Agnes Jekyll** Witty and useful essays about cooking, with recipes, published in *The Times* and reprinted as a book in 1922. 'One of the best reads outside Elizabeth David' wrote gastropoda.com. Also a *Persephone Classic*
- 31. A House in the Country by Jocelyn Playfair** An unusual and very interesting 1944 novel about a group of people living in the country during WW2. Preface: Ruth Gorb
- 32. The Carlyles at Home by Thea Holme** A 1965 mixture of biography and social history describing Thomas and Jane Carlyle's life in Chelsea.
- 33. The Far Cry by Emma Smith** A beautifully written 1949 novel about a young girl's passage to India: a great *Persephone* favourite. R4 'Book at Bedtime'. Preface: author
- 34. Minnie's Room: The Peacetime Stories of Mollie Panter-Downes 1947–1965**: Second volume of short stories first published in *The New Yorker* and not known in the UK.
- 35. Greenery Street by Denis Mackail** A delightful, very funny 1925 novel about a young couple's first year of married life in a (real) street in Chelsea. Preface: Rebecca Cohen
- 36. Lettice Delmer by Susan Miles** A unique 1920s novel in verse describing a girl's stormy adolescence and path to redemption; much admired by T S Eliot.
- 37. The Runaway by Elizabeth Anna Hart** A Victorian novel for children and grown-ups, republished in 1936 with Gwen Raverat wood engravings. Afterwords: Anne Harvey, Frances Spalding
- 38. Cheerful Weather for the Wedding by Julia Strachey** A funny, sardonic 1932 novella by a niece of Lytton Strachey, praised by Virginia Woolf. Preface: Frances Partridge. An unabridged *Persephone* audiobook read by Miriam Margolyes. A film with Felicity Jones. Also a *Persephone Classic*
- 39. Manja by Anna Gmeyner** A 1938 German novel, newly translated, about five children conceived on the same night in 1920, and their lives until the Nazi takeover. Preface: Eva Ibbotson (the author's daughter)
- 40. The Priory by Dorothy Whipple** A much-loved 1939 novel about a family, upstairs and downstairs, living in a large country house. 'Warm, witty and realistic' (*Hatchards*). Preface: David Conville
- 41. Hostages to Fortune by Elizabeth Cambridge** 'Deals with domesticity without being in the least bit cosy' (*Harriet Lane, Observer*): a remarkable fictional portrait of a doctor's family in rural Oxfordshire in the 1920s.
- 42. The Blank Wall by Elisabeth Sanxay Holding** 'The top suspense writer of them all' (*Chandler*). A 1947 thriller about a mother shielding her daughter from a blackmailer. Filmed as *The Reckless Moment* (1949) and *The Deep End* (2001); a R4 serial in 2006.
- 43. The Wise Virgins by Leonard Woolf** This wise and witty 1914 novel contrasts the bohemian Virginia and Vanessa with the girl next door in 'Richstead' (*Putney*). Preface: Lyndall Gordon
- 44. Tea with Mr Rochester by Frances Towers** Magical, unsettling 1949 stories, a surprise favourite, that are unusually beautifully written; read on R4 in 2003 and 2006. Preface: Frances Thomas
- 45. Good Food on the Aga by Ambrose Heath** A 1933 cookery book written for Aga owners which can be used by anyone; with illustrations by Edward Bawden
- 46. Miss Ranskill Comes Home by Barbara Euphan Todd** A wry 1946 novel: Miss Ranskill is shipwrecked and gets back to a changed wartime England. Preface: Wendy Pollard
- 47. The New House by Lettice Cooper** 1936 portrayal of the day a family moves into a new house, and the resulting adjustments and tensions. Preface: Jilly Cooper

**48. The Casino by Margaret Bonham** 1940s short stories with a dark sense of humour; read several times on BBC R4. Preface: Cary Bazalgette

**49. Bricks and Mortar by Helen Ashton** An excellent 1932 novel by a very popular pre- and post-war writer, chronicling the life of a hard-working, kindly London architect and his wife over thirty-five years.

**50. The World that was Ours by Hilda Bernstein** A memoir that reads like a novel set before and after the 1964 Rivonia Trial. Mandela was given a life sentence but the Bernsteins escaped to England. Preface and Afterword: the author **Also a Persephone Classic**

**51. Operation Heartbreak by Duff Cooper** A soldier fails to go to war – until the end of his life. ‘The novel I enjoyed more than any other in the immediate post-war years’ (Nina Bawden). Afterword: Max Arthur

**52. The Village by Marghanita Laski** This 1952 comedy of manners describes post-war readjustments in village life when love ignores the class barrier. Afterword: Juliet Gardiner

**53. Lady Rose and Mrs Memmary by Ruby Ferguson** A 1937 novel about Lady Rose, who inherits a great house, marries well – and then meets the love of her life on a park bench. A great favourite of the Queen Mother. Preface: Candia McWilliam

**54. They Can’t Ration These by Vicomte de Mauduit** 1940 cookery book about ‘food for free’, full of excellent (and fashionable) recipes.

**55. Flush by Virginia Woolf** A light-hearted but surprisingly feminist 1933 ‘life’ of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s spaniel, ‘a little masterpiece of comedy’ (TLS). A ‘Book at Bedtime’ on BBC R4.

Preface: Sally Beaman

**56. They Were Sisters by Dorothy Whipple** A 1943 novel by this superb writer, contrasting three different marriages. Preface: Celia Brayfield

**57. The Hopkins Manuscript by R C Sherriff** A 1939 novel ‘by Mr Hopkins’ about what happens when, in 1946, the moon crashes into the earth. Preface: Michael Moorcock, Afterword: George Gamow

**58. Hetty Dorval by Ethel Wilson** First novel (1947) set in the beautiful landscape of British Columbia; a young girl is befriended by the lovely and selfish ‘menace’ – but is she one? Afterword: Northrop Frye

**59. There Were No Windows by Norah Hoult** A touching and funny 1944 novel about an elderly woman with memory loss living in Kensington during the Blitz. Afterword: Julia Briggs

**60. Doreen by Barbara Noble** A 1946 novel about a child who is evacuated from East London to the country during the war. Her mother regrets it and the family that takes her in wants to keep her. Preface: Jessica Mann

**61. A London Child of the 1870s by Molly Hughes** A 1934 memoir about an ‘ordinary, suburban Victorian family’ in Islington, a great favourite with all ages. Preface: Adam Gopnik

**62. How to Run Your Home Without Help by Kay Smallshaw** A 1949 manual for the newly servantless housewife full of advice that is historically interesting, useful nowadays and, as well, unintentionally funny. Preface: Christina Hardyment

**63. Princes in the Land by Joanna Cannan** A 1938 novel about a daughter of the aristocracy married to an Oxford don; her three children fail to turn out as she hoped.

**64. The Woman Novelist and Other Stories by Diana Gardner** Late 1930s and early 1940s short stories that are witty, sharp and with an unusual undertone. Preface: Claire Gardner

**65. Alas, Poor Lady by Rachel Ferguson** Polemical but intensely readable 1937 novel about the unthinking cruelty with which Victorian parents gave birth to daughters without anticipating any future for them apart from marriage.

**66. Gardener’s Nightcap by Muriel Stuart** A 1938 pot pourri: miniature essays on gardening – such as Dark Ladies (fritillary), Better Gooseberries, Phlox Failure – which will be enjoyed by all gardeners.

**67. The Fortnight in September by RC Sherriff** Another novel by the author of *Journey’s End*, and *The Hopkins Manuscript*, PB No. 57, about a family on holiday in Bognor in 1931; a quiet masterpiece. Read on Radio 4. **Also a Persephone Classic**

**68. The Expendable Man by Dorothy B Hughes** A 1963 thriller about a young doctor in Arizona which encapsulates the social, racial and moral tensions of the time. By the author of *In a Lonely Place*. Afterword: Dominic Power

**69. Journal of Katherine Mansfield** The husband of the great short story writer (cf. *The Montana Stories*, PB No. 25) assembled this Journal from unposted letters, scraps of writing etc: a unique portrait.

**70. Plats du Jour by Patience Gray and Primrose Boyd** A 1957 cookery book which was a bestseller at the time and a pioneering work for British cooks. The line drawings and the endpapers are by David Gentleman.

**71. The Shuttle by Frances Hodgson Burnett** A 1907 page-turner about an American heiress married to an

English aristocrat, whose beautiful and enterprising sister sets out to rescue her. Preface: Anne Sebba

**72. House-Bound by Winifred Peck** This 1942 novel describes an Edinburgh woman deciding, radically, to run her house without help and do her own cooking; the war is in the background and foreground. Afterword: Penelope Fitzgerald

**73. The Young Pretenders by Edith Henrietta Fowler** An 1895 novel for adults and children about 5 year-old Babs, who lives with her uncle and aunt and has not yet learnt to dissemble. Preface: Charlotte Mitchell

**74. The Closed Door and Other Stories by Dorothy Whipple** Stories drawn from the three collections published during the author's lifetime. Five were read on BBC R4.

**75. On the Other Side: Letters to my Children from Germany 1940–46 by Mathilde Wolff-Mönckeberg.** Written in Hamburg but not sent, the letters provide a crucial counterpoint to *Few Eggs and No Oranges*, PB No. 9. Preface: Ruth Evans

**76. The Crowded Street by Winifred Holtby** A 1924 novel about Muriel's attempts to escape from small-town Yorkshire, and her rescue by Delia, alias Vera Brittain. Preface: Marion Shaw

**77. Daddy's Gone A-Hunting by Penelope Mortimer** 1958 novel about the 'captive wives' of the pre-war women's lib era, bored and lonely in suburbia. Preface: Valerie Grove

**78. A Very Great Profession: The Woman's Novel 1914–39 by Nicola Beauman** A mixture of literary criticism and historical evocation, first published in 1983, about the women writers of the inter-war period.

**79. Round About a Pound a Week by Maud Pember Reeves** Working-class life in Lambeth in the early C20th: witty, readable, poignant and fascinating – and still relevant today. Preface: Polly Toynbee

**80. The Country Housewife's Book by Lucy H Yates** A useful 1934 book on topics such as the storeroom and larder, garden produce, and game.

**81. Miss Buncle's Book by DE Stevenson** A woman writes a novel, as 'John Smith', about the village she lives in. A delightful and funny 1934 book by an author whose work sold in millions. Preface: Aline Templeton

**82. Amours de Voyage by Arthur Hugh Clough** A novel in verse, set in Rome in 1849, funny, beautiful, profound, and very modern in tone. Preface: Julian Barnes

**83. Making Conversation by Christine Longford** An amusing, unusual 1931 novel about a girl growing up which is in the vein of *Cold Comfort Farm* and PB No. 38 *Cheerful Weather for the Wedding*. Preface: Rachel Billington

**84. A New System of Domestic Cookery by Mrs Rundell 1816** facsimile edition of an 1806 cookbook: long, detailed and fascinating. Preface: Janet Morgan

**85. High Wages by Dorothy Whipple** Another novel by Persephone's bestselling writer: about a girl setting up a dress shop just before WWI. Preface: Jane Brocket

**86. To Bed with Grand Music by Marghanita Laski** A couple are separated by the war. She is serially unfaithful, a quite new take on 'women in wartime'. Preface: Juliet Gardiner

**87. Dimanche and Other Stories by Irène Némirovsky** Ten short stories by the author of *Suite Française*, written between 1934 and 1942.

'Luminous, extraordinary, stunning' said the reviewers.

**88. Still Missing by Beth Gutcheon** A 1981 novel about a woman whose six year-old son sets off on his own for school and does not return. But his mother never gives up hope...

**89. The Mystery of Mrs Blencarrow by Mrs Oliphant Two 1880s** novellas about women shockingly, and secretly, abandoned by their husbands, that were favourites of Penelope Fitzgerald. Afterword: Merryn Williams

**90. The Winds of Heaven by Monica Dickens** 1955 novel by the author of *Mariana* about a widow with three rather unsympathetic daughters who finds happiness in the end. Afterword: AS Byatt

**91. Miss Buncle Married by DE Stevenson** A very enjoyable sequel to *Miss Buncle's Book* (PB No. 81): Miss Buncle moves to a new village. Afterword: Fiona Bevan

**92. Midsummer Night in the Workhouse by Diana Athill** 'Funny, engaging and unexpected' (*Paris Review*): 1950s stories by the editor and memoir writer. Preface: author, who also read six of the stories as a *Persephone Audiobook*.

**93. The Sack of Bath by Adam Fergusson** A 1973 polemic, with photographs, raging at the destruction of Bath's C18th artisan terraced housing. Preface: author

**94. No Surrender by Constance Maud** A fascinating and path-breaking 1911 suffragette novel about a mill girl and her aristocratic friend. Preface: Lydia Felgett

**95. Greenbanks by Dorothy Whipple** 1932 novel by our most popular author about a family and, in particular, the happy relationship between a grandmother and granddaughter. Afterword: Charles Lock



- 96. Dinners for Beginners** by Rachel and Margaret Ryan A 1934 cookery book for the novice cook explaining everything in exacting detail: eye-opening and useful.
- 97. Harriet** by Elizabeth Jenkins A brilliant but disquieting 1934 novel about the 1877 murder of Harriet Staunton. Afterword: Rachel Cooke
- 98. A Writer's Diary** by Virginia Woolf Extracts from the diaries, covering the years 1918–41, selected by Leonard Woolf in 1953 in order to show his late wife in the act of writing. Preface: Lyndall Gordon
- 99. Patience** by John Coates A hilarious 1953 novel about a 'happily married' Catholic mother of three in St John's Wood who falls 'improperly in love'. Preface: Maureen Lipman
- 100. The Persephone Book of Short Stories** Thirty stories, ten by 'our' authors, ten from the last decade's *Biannuals* and ten that are newly reprinted. A Persephone bestseller.
- 101. Heat Lightning** by Helen Hull A young married woman spends a sultry and revelatory week with her family in small-town Michigan; a 1932 Book-of-the-Month Club Selection. Preface: Patricia McClelland Miller
- 102. The Exiles Return** by Elisabeth de Waal A novel, written in the late 1950s but never published. Five exiles return to Vienna after the war. A meditation on 'going back' and a love story. Preface: Edmund de Waal
- 103. The Squire** by Enid Bagnold In 1938 a woman gives birth to her fifth child: a rare novel about the process of birth. Preface: Anne Sebba
- 104. The Two Mrs Abbotts** by DE Stevenson This 'Miss Buncle' book, published in 1943, is about Barbara Abbott, as she now is, and the 'young' Mrs Abbott, keeping the home fires burning during the war.
- 105. Diary of a Provincial Lady** by EM Delafield One of the funniest books ever written: a 1930 novel, written as a diary, about everyday family life. Illustrated by Arthur Watts. Afterword: Nicola Beauman
- 106. Into the Whirlwind** by Eugenia Ginzburg A Russian woman is arrested in 1937 and sent to the Gulag. Filmed as *Within the Whirlwind* with Emily Watson. Afterword: Rodric Braithwaite
- 107. Wilfred and Eileen** by Jonathan Smith A 1976 novel, based on fact, set in the years 1913–15. Wilfred, badly wounded in France, is rescued by his wife. A 4-part television serial in 1981. Afterword: author
- 108. The Happy Tree** by Rosalind Murray A 1926 novel about the devastating effect of WWI on the young, in particular a young married woman living in London during the war years. Preface: Charlotte Mitchell
- 109. The Country Life Cookery Book** by Ambrose Heath A 1937 cookbook, organised by month (and thus by excellent seasonal recipes) illustrated with a dozen beautiful wood engravings by Eric Ravilious. Preface: Simon Hopkinson.
- 110. Because of the Lockwoods** by Dorothy Whipple A 1949 novel: the Hunters are patronised by the wealthy Lockwoods but Thea Hunter begins to question their integrity. Preface: Harriet Evans
- 111. London War Notes** by Mollie Panter-Downes These extraordinary 'Letters from London', describing everyday life in WW2, were written for *The New Yorker* and then collected in one volume in 1971. Preface: David Kynaston
- 112. Vain Shadow** by Jane Hervey A Waugh-ish black comedy written in the 1950s but not published until 1963 about the days after the death of a patriarch in a large country house and the effect on his family. Preface: Celia Robertson
- 113. Greengates** by RC Sherriff A 1936 novel about retirement: Mr Baldwin realises the truth of 'for better for worse but not for lunch' but finds a new life by moving to 'metroland'. Preface: Juliet Gardiner
- 114. Gardeners' Choice** by Evelyn Dunbar and Charles Mahoney Two artist friends collaborated over the text and drawings of this rare and delightful 1937 gardening book. Preface: Edward Bawden, Afterword: Christopher Campbell-Howes
- 115. Maman, What Are We Called Now?** by Jacqueline Mesnil-Amar The author kept a diary in July and August 1944: an unparalleled insight into the last days of the Occupation in Paris. Photographs: Thérèse Bonney. Preface: Caroline Moorehead
- 116. A Lady and Her Husband** by Amber Reeves A 1914 novel about a woman who realises that the girls in her husband's chain of tea shops are underpaid – and does something about it. Preface: Samantha Ellis
- 117. The Godwits Fly** by Robin Hyde A semi-autobiographical, lyrically written 1938 novel about a girl's rather fraught childhood by this major New Zealand writer. Preface: Ann Thwaite
- 118. Every Good Deed and Other Stories** by Dorothy Whipple A 1944 novella and nine short stories written between 1931 and 1961 which display the author's 'wonderful power of taking quite ordinary people in quite unromantic surroundings and making them live.'
- 119. Long Live Great Bardfield: The Autobiography of Tirzah Garwood** A touching, funny and perceptive memoir which has many wood

engravings by the author, and photographs (eg. of Tirzah's husband Eric Ravilious). Preface: Anne Ullmann

**120. Madame Solario by Gladys Huntington** This superb 1956 novel in the Henry James/Edith Wharton tradition is set on Lake Como in 1906; published anonymously and with undertones of incest, it was a *succès de scandale*. Afterword: Alison Adburgham

**121. Effi Briest by Theodor Fontane** An 1895 classic of European literature by the great German novelist: neglected in the UK yet on a par with *Anna Karenina* and *Madame Bovary*. Afterword: Charlie Lee-Potter

**122. Earth and High Heaven by Gwethalyn Graham** A 1944 Canadian bestselling novel about a young woman falling in love with a Jewish man and her father's, and Canada's, upsetting and reprehensible anti-semitism. Preface: Emily Rhodes

**123. Emmeline by Judith Rossner** A 1980 novel, set in the 1840s, about a 13-year-old girl working in the mills at Lowell; she is seduced, and tragedy ensues: a subtle, and unusual feminist statement. Preface: Lucy Ellmann

**124. The Journey Home and Other Stories by Malachi Whitaker** Four volumes of these startling stories came out in the early 1930s; we reprint twenty of them. Preface: Philip Hensher. Afterword: Valerie Waterhouse

**125. Guard Your Daughters by Diana Tutton** A 1953 novel written in a light, very readable style which has dark undertones: four sisters living in the country have to defer to their demanding mother.

**126. Despised and Rejected by Rose Allatini** A pioneering 1918 novel about a gay conscientious objector and his friendship with a young

woman who also opposes the war. Afterword: Jonathan Cutbill

**127. Young Anne by Dorothy Whipple** A quasi-autobiographical, extremely readable novel, her first (1927), about a young girl growing up. Preface: Lucy Mangan

**128. Tory Heaven by Marghanita Laski** A dark 1948 satire about a Britain under Tory rule with everyone divided up (by the As) into A, B, C, D, and E. Preface: David Kynaston

**129. The Call by Edith Ayrton Zangwill** A 1924 novel about a young woman scientist (based on Hertha Ayrton) who gives up her work for 'the cause' i.e. to be a suffragette. Preface: Elizabeth Day

**130. National Provincial by Lettice Cooper** A 1938 novel about politics in Leeds in 1935–6, surprisingly page-turning despite its often serious subject matter. Preface: Rachel Reeves

**131. Milton Place by Elisabeth de Waal** A novel set in a large house in the English countryside just after the war. A young woman from Vienna changes everything. Preface: Victor de Waal, Afterword: Peter Stansky

**132. The Second Persephone Book of Short Stories** Another volume (to follow our hugely successful first volume, PB No. 100) of thirty stories by women writers.

**133. Expiation by Elizabeth von Arnim** Previously omitted from the von Arnim *oeuvre*, a 1929 novel by the author of *Vera* about marriage and deception – we think it's her best book. Preface: Valerie Grove

**134. A Room of One's Own by Virginia Woolf** Based on the path-breaking 1929 lectures given at Cambridge. Preface: Clara Jones

**135. One Woman's Year by Stella Martin Currey** Recipes, poems,

observations, woodcuts: a delightful 1953 pot pourri.

**136. The Oppermanns by Lion Feuchtwanger** Written to alert the world to the horrors of fascism, an unforgettable novel about a Jewish family in Berlin from 1932-3. Foreword Richard J Evans

**137. English Climate: Wartime Stories by Sylvia Townsend Warner** Twenty-two short stories set from 1940 to 1946, few previously reprinted. Preface: Lydia Felgett

**138. The New Magdalen by Wilkie Collins** An 1873 'sensation novel' by the great C19th novelist about a 'fallen woman' and society's attitude to her. Preface: James Bobin

**139. Random Commentary by Dorothy Whipple** A 'writer's diary' (cf. Virginia Woolf's diary PB No. 98) covering the years 1925-45, selected by the author herself in 1965.

**140. The Rector's Daughter by F M Mayor** A 'beloved classic', first published in 1924, about the daughter of the rectory and an unrequited love affair. Preface: Victoria Gray

**141. The Deepening Stream by Dorothy Canfield Fisher** A classic of American literature (though neglected in the US) about the entrancing Mately in France in WWI. Preface: Sadie Stein

**142. As It Was and World Without End by Helen Thomas** Two volumes of memoirs, first published in 1926 and 1931, about the author's life with the poet Edward Thomas. Afterword: Isabel Raphael

**143. A Well Full of Leaves by Elizabeth Myers** A 1943 novel, poetic and beautiful, about four children damaged by their abusive parents and how they confront their destinies. Afterword: a 1957 memoir by Eleanor Farjeon

# OUR READERS WRITE

‘**P**atience is one of the few books I have ever re-read and I intend to do so again soon. There are probably many subtle layers to *Patience* that I have more or less missed – comments on religion of course, the role of women in society and family life, how siblings treat each other and so on. What I especially love about the book is how everything is written with humour and some irony, as the narrative rips along at breakneck speed. And yet it doesn’t – all that happens in the novel takes place over just a few days (apart from the closing paragraphs). Not to mention how truly romantic the book is as well – in fact, that is what I love about it most. At its heart is the premise that a saintly, unhappily married but dutiful woman can be loved so immediately and so immensely by a man who is not the father of her three tiny children (and a possible fourth ‘on the way’)!’  
*MB, London SE22*

‘I absolutely loved *Expiation*. I raced through it in three days and I keep thinking about it. What extraordinary insight she had – especially the way that she explained the several marriages within the family and how poor Milly, the most unlikely adventurer, unwittingly disturbs their lives and brings all their suppressed longing and disappointments to the surface. Poor Arthur, the subtle glimpse we’re given of the life that awaits

him with his ruthless mother-in-law and his manipulative child fiancée are chilling. Of all the characters, he’s the one I kept thinking about. What a truly dreadful future he had in store. She’s also very witty. I copied the tiny passage where Milly and her solicitor are sitting side by side on a bench on the Embankment: “Clearing his throat, he asked her, with the equivalent in a lawyer of that which in a doctor is a good bedside manner, with, that is, sympathetic yet controlled emprossement combined with a suggestion of limitless reserves of discretion, whether she didn’t think it was a fine morning.”’  
*HG, London*

‘As the Publisher’s Note that introduces *Random Commentary* explains, the beloved author Dorothy Whipple compiled this book in 1965, picking out what she thought readers would like to know about her writing life. The text is charming and enlightening, really spelling out the realities of a woman writer’s life – “If I were a man I should be able to shut myself up in a study with never a thought but for writing, but as I am a woman anybody, anything, can interrupt me – without even a faint apology.” – I loved the little details of where she got her ideas, characters and settings and the glimpses of other beloved writers: she’s as thrilled as I was to find that EM Delafield (‘so much

admired by me’) mentions *The Priory* in her *The Provincial Lady in Wartime*.’ *Adventures in reading, running and working from home*

‘**T**he *Fortnight in September* is a lovely novel, as charming and unassuming as one could hope for – a throwback perhaps to simpler times. During a seaside holiday at Bognor, Sherriff was inspired to develop a story centred on a family’s annual holiday there. On the surface the premise seems simple, yet the apparent simplicity is part of the novel’s magic: it is a story of small pleasures and triumphs, quiet hopes and ambitions, secret worries and fears – the illuminating moments in day-to-day life... In focusing on the minutiae of everyday life, Sherriff has crafted something remarkable – a novel that feels humane, compassionate and deeply affecting, where the reader can invest in the characters’ inner lives. A gem of a book – very highly recommended, especially for lovers of quiet, contemplative fiction.’ *Jacqui Wine’s Journal*

‘*Expiation* is a novel that looks at hypocrisy, especially of the smug family Bott. It’s about the cost of lies and deception. We follow Milly, indeed sympathise with her, as she tries to do the right thing by the Botts, but find ourselves questioning with her



when it is okay to lie, why are some lies not punished (I'll make you the happiest woman ever) and others are (finding happiness outside marriage). Frequently the family have to halt their discussions because it does not do to talk in front of the servants, from whom the truth must always be hidden. It's told with Elizabeth von Arnim's trademark wit, her ability to reveal hypocrisy, and with a certain amount of daring since she was writing in 1919 when adultery and divorce were not words to be breathed in mixed or polite company.'

*Book Word*

Is there anything more beautiful than a Persephone book? I think not! It's been a really long time since I read anything other than contemporary literature and this was such a beautiful way back in to more of a period piece. ***The Rector's Daughter*** is a quiet, subtle yet magnificent book. For a novel that on the surface seems to be a very simple one, it is so rich with gender politics, class and the world being on the brink of change in the early 1920s, that it really feels incredibly ahead of its time. The character of Mary is so considered and richly layered...I actually think it's been a very long time since I've read not only a character written in this way but a book that is almost Dickensian in its detail. I really wasn't prepared to be swept along so completely by this.'

*Bookworthreading*



*Dahlias painted by Dora Carrington in 1925*

“Some dim comprehension of the courage, the isolation of each human soul, the inevitable loneliness in spite of love, reached Rachel. The room was quiet, the ticking of the clock the only sound. Rachel was aware, for a moment, of the mystery of herself, her grandmother, eternity before and behind them both.” ***Greenbanks*** is a quietly profound and moving novel, concerned with the relationship between Louisa and her granddaughter. It is the story of women across generations, their growth, and the factors

that hinder this, all set within the context of a sprawling upper-middle-class life between (roughly) 1910 and the 1920s. This timeframe allows Dorothy Whipple to explore the changing roles and experiences of women and men at a time of great upheaval. I felt it was very strong on how family relationships are often most harmonious between grandparents and their grandchildren, where the inevitable distance in years can bring greater understanding and acceptance of necessary growth and change. There

is both great humanity and unflinching honesty in this book. Human foibles are understood and presented with compassion, but there are no simplistic resolutions to life's dilemmas, just hard choices to be either made or shied away from. The novel does not end with resolution of difficulties, but with some degree of hope for some of the characters. Perhaps this reflects life as we experience it, and perhaps this is enough.' *Ynott on Instagram*

‘**Y**oung Anne is my first Persephone read of 2022.

To eke out my collection of Dorothy Whipple's books, I allow myself to read only one a year. They appear to be cosy early-to-mid century fiction but they are much more than that. They are feminist novels in my opinion. Her protagonists tend to need/want more from life than being only a housewife of good social standing welcoming the local ladies for At Home tea parties. Dorothy Whipple too was not a snob and always illustrates the cringe-worthy class consciousness of England during the last century. *Young Anne* is a coming of age story and Anne faces a lot of upheaval in her short years. We see her, strong willed and exuberant, lose her way a bit but she reins it in for a hopefully ever after happy ending.' *Caro reads books on Instagram*. And *Sultanabun* commented: 'There is something

about Dorothy Whipple's writing that draws the reader in. Her phrasing is so clean and rhythmic. There's genius to it. I truly believe she's as good as any writer I've ever read. She can tear at my heart as much as Fitzgerald, make me laugh as much as Austen, make language sing as much as Hemingway, and tell truth like Steinbeck. Part of me wishes some organisation would give her a posthumous award to bring her to a bigger audience, but another part of me enjoys belonging to this little clique of devoted fans.'

‘**M**iss Pettigrew was an absolute delight to read and was much needed in a stressful week at work. It marked a lovely change to my usual bleak, dark fiction and non-fiction choices and I will be making an effort to find more joyful fiction like it. Winifred Watson wrote such a powerful stream of consciousness for Miss Pettigrew so you fully felt all of her nerves, excitement and joy. There were fabulous descriptions of the glamorous fashions of the day, which, through the eyes of poor Miss Pettigrew, seemed even more opulent and chic. I enjoyed the way the novel looked at modern (well 1930s) standards of beauty and the pressures on women (eg. early nose jobs). Miss Pettigrew was incredibly sheltered and naive but quickly becomes indispensable to her new employer. I loved this novel

and would highly recommend to anyone looking for a fun read. However, please note that there are some comments that are misogynistic, as well as two anti-Semitic stereotypes, often found in 1930s fiction, which are jolting to a modern reader.' *Bleadenreads on Instagram*

‘**D**orothy Canfield Fisher was a serious and committed novelist, and worked assiduously in many fields to improve the lives of working people in the US. Eleanor Roosevelt named her as one of the ten most influential women in America. DCF is also an accomplished storyteller and *The Deepening Stream* (her own favourite among her novels) is absorbing and compelling. It is a long read but DCF's child-centred vision of family life is refreshing. The Quaker component of the novel is central to its theme, and will interest Quaker historians.' Kate Macdonald in *The Friend*

‘**S**till Missing was recommended to me by the lovely bookseller at Persephone. It tells the story of Alex Selky who goes missing one morning in Boston and the agony his mother goes through. It's an understandably heart-rending read but deals with the aftermath so truthfully, so thoughtfully and so unflinchingly that in no way did it feel mawkish or sentimental or indeed manipulative. I strongly

identified with Susan here and I thought the cop character was well portrayed too, as were the more minor characters. It was written in the 1980s and there are attitudes towards homosexuality that feel really obnoxious but as I said it's unflinching and I think it probably reflects attitudes of the time. This is such a powerful book and made me cry but hats off to Beth Gutcheon for creating something so visceral and true.' *Zoe Somerville on Instagram*

‘**T**he interweaving of fabric and invention is the basis of *High Wages*, Dorothy Whipple’s irresistibly shrewd novel of business and love. First published in 1930, it’s about a plucky young woman who succeeds in the clothing business, in part by anticipating the huge changes about to wash over the industry as a result of mass production. The year is 1912. Seventeen-year-old Jane Carter, a Lancashire orphan who’s had to leave school to earn a living, gets a job at a draper’s shop called Chadwick’s, one of the better stores in the fictional town of Tidsley. She quickly distinguishes herself by her intelligence and ambition and Tidsley can barely contain her. On a trip south to Manchester on her afternoon off, she is in heaven, soaking up business insights and even appreciating the ugliness of the place as a sign of its dynamism, for ‘it was no feeble, trickling ugliness, but a

strong, salient hideousness that was almost exhilarating.’ In the big city she discovers that some of the best shops dress their windows all in a single colour for maximum impact. Chadwick, not surprisingly, is unimpressed. “‘The windows do very well, Miss Carter,” he said with dignity. “I have dressed them myself for twenty years, and I don’t think you can teach me anything about window-dressing.”” Windows prove to be the least of Mr. Chadwick’s problems, as Jane foresees the ready-to-wear revolution. When she manages to browbeat Chadwick into some grudging changes in this direction, profits roll in even as her wages barely budge. But a kindly older friend offers to lend her the money to open a shop of her own and she jumps at the chance. Jane’s experience will be familiar to anyone who has started a business – especially women. DW chronicles all the enthusiasm and work and worry attendant to any start-up, but also unwanted sexual advances during a buying trip to London. *High Wages* is a marvellous book and, for the most part, Dorothy Whipple writes with tremendous authority and restraint, spinning her tale with flawless pacing and thrilling emotional dexterity. It’s apt that her independent-minded heroine makes a success of a store selling ready-to-wear garments. The mass production of textiles and clothing, hard as it has been on

its workforce, nonetheless created paid employment for countless women, opened opportunities for their advancement in retailing, and democratised apparel.’ Daniel Akst in *Strategy and Business*.

‘**T**he *Fortnight in September* is an absorbing reflection on time and especially how it changes shape in periods like a vacation – or even a pandemic – that aren’t bounded by normal routines. There’s more than a dash of resemblance between *The Fortnight in September* and Virginia Woolf’s time-conscious masterpieces, *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* which were published a few years earlier. But there’s also a dash of Winnie-the-Pooh’s Hundred Acre Wood magic here. Like RC Sherriff, Pooh’s creator, AA Milne, served and was badly wounded in WWI. Little wonder then that, after the war, both traumatised men wound up creating tales set in time-out-of-time havens, where the small pleasures of everyday life – like honey, a hot bath and a clear blue early autumn sky – are seen for the gifts they are.’ Maureen Corrigan on *NPR Radio*



# ‘GOOD BEDS – MEN ONLY’

Here is the lodging-house standing awry in the rain. Above the open door swings an enamel sign : ‘Good Beds – Men Only.’

Two vagabonds stand outside in the gusts, arguing; a tall thick man of forty or so, and a woman with her back to thirty but holding bold beauty yet: Chris and Sue.

These homeless partners have been so long abroad on the roads together that they have forgotten how they ever met. Sometimes the red birds in their desperate hearts are singing in unison but often Chris and Sue are engaged in a blazing row.

They dictate to one another: they come to blows. It is a rough house all the time. Why don’t they separate then?

Well, why don’t *you* and *your* husband separate? You wrangle the live-long day, but you share the same candle at night! And that is just the answer too – the candle that is shared at night.

So Chris and Sue stand quarrelling in the creaking wind.

‘See what it says: “Men Only”,’ bawls Chris. ‘I can’t walk no more either: I got sore heel. You’ll have to go on to some place else, Sue?’

‘Why must I?’ demands Sue, truculently.’

‘Cause it’s Men Only’ere,’ shouts Chris, getting ready to hit her. ‘Can’t you read nothin’, you? It says “Good Beds – Men Only”! Give us that shillin’. It says Beds a Shillin’. Come on.

I’m done for.’

‘What about me?’ Sue asks, near to her temper.

‘You! Oh – you walk on to hell! But see that you meet me outside ’ere sharp eight in the morning. You’ll have to help me get some breakfast, so you better doll up. *Where’s that shillin’?*’ Blast you for a mean contrary bitch!’

Sue dashes down a shilling into his outstretched hand. It is all the money they have. Chris, without any enquiry as to how Sue will fare, without so much as a ‘Good night’ or a ‘Kiss me foot,’ straightaway limps into the lodging-house. Sue mounts the steps and peers in after him. She moistens her lip, prepares to run, then calls in a name that makes even Chris turn and tingle.

Sue wanders off into the rain. She will have to walk about the whole night, for she has no money for a bed, and the coppers are only too smart at givin’ you the bum’s rush if you settle down in some damn doorway!

She pulls up the collar of her disastrous coat, thinking about Chris with rage and disgust.

You’ve had your bellyful of this sort of life! It’s time to give over and go – where? *Somewhere*. Get a home – a room. Clean yourself up and get a job! Once, why once you was a waitress. A waitress is Somebody. She got civic rights. But you, Sue, you got no claims on lawful protection. Just the opposite! They’d run you in as soon as look at you, ’cause you got no ’ome, see! That’s the

Law. People are put in prison for havin’ no ’ome. So you’ll get one, somehow. Turn respectable. Wear hat again.

She puts her thin narrow hand on her soaking hair, swearing terribly in a low voice.

She thinks of the future with deep despondency. No, you can’t stand no more.

Why is Chris such a bastard to travel round with? They *could* be ’appy. But, no – the ’igh ’anded ’ound – he wants it all his own road. Like all men.

‘Good Beds – Men Only!’ That was just the way things went. Whatever was good was for Men Only! They always got it soft; there was always some poor bitch of a woman pathetically ready to be a mug for ’em.

She wants to cry out in her impatience and despair. She wants to get away from Chris who is crushing her life. She wants something new and strange to happen. She wishes to destroy for ever the incomprehensible and relentless continuity of all men. Good Beds – bloody Men Only!

She viciously kicks something out of her path, then stoops and picks it up. She examines her find under a gas-lamp; it is a wallet crammed with bank-notes – at least one hundred pounds, at least that. She walks on bursting with laughter.

Here’s the escape you wanted! Who said you never had luck? So you need never go back to Chris now, my beauty! You’re free.

Go where you want, you! Buy hat! Buy hundreds hats!

She flattens her face against the window of a travel-agency. You can go to America and start somethin' over there. Or you can go to Turkey and blinkin' China if you can stand that war racket and birds'-nest soup!

You can open a shop. You can open the whole world. Best of all you're shot of Chris. No more goin' hungry so that he can get a bellyful. No more trampin' the town on windy nights while he sleeps on Good Beds – Men Only.

She continues gleefully on.

When Chris flops out of that lodging-house in the morning *you* won't be there. You'll be Gone. Sure-o. Mug for no man!

He'll soon understand what he's lost. He'll call and call and you'll never come. You can put over a fast one as well. Take too much for granted – some blokes. Look after himself in future. How pitiful he'll be. What a hell of a mess he'll make of things. Who'll give him a wash? The dirty boozy monkey – he'd never wash if you didn't scrub him sometimes. Who'll mend his clothes and get him food? Blubber like a child without his victuals.

She suddenly brings up against a lamp-post. No. No. You can't leave him. You can't. But – why? What's a-matter, donkey? You – you don't *love* the so-and-so, do you, Sue? *Do you?*

You poor fool: it's got you all right. You'll never go to America. 'Cause you can't do without Chris. You been partners too long to walk out on him casual.

With a sharp intake of breath, Sue sees his troubled blue eyes – his dark questing face. She thinks of his hugeness, the haven of his strength that, a minute ago, was a horror to her.

Now she is in a long narrow street edged on the one side by steep, crazily-leaning warehouses, and on the other by a low brick wall below which the railway-lines stream steadily away into the country. A train bolts into a tunnel with a protesting shriek. She would like to yell with it. She, too, is doused in a tunnel – the tunnel that is Chris and all their dark tottering life together.

Tears drop out of her eyes: tears of chagrin as she perceives how she is fettered.

Why don't you take Chris with you, then? No need for all this parting. Money would make a new man of him. You daresay! He'd be a different man, dressed proper and with his worries halved. It was the life they led made him such a swipe to get on with.

Still he wouldn't thank you. It's be tonight's tale of the shillin' all over again. He's taken money off you, with no conscience, all the time, all the time. He'd get this lot off you, an' all. That was his sort. He wouldn't change. Did the leopard?

Yes – but – he'd look lovely dressed like a toff. Then other women 'ud want him. And he'd soon give you the go-by if a change came in his fortune.

Get wise to yourself, darling. While Chris is derelict he'll stick to you all right, all right. But if he got wealth he wouldn't want

*you*. For a handful of notes you can buy a young girl – lovely, vivacious, a-shine. That's life.

Oh gor, Sue, ain't you just perfect. You been belly-aching all night 'cause you can't live *with* Chris, now you're belly-aching 'cause you can't live *without* him. Oh, gor! Oh, gor! You peach! You poor mug! Life's bloody hell with him, but without him – what would you do – where would you go? It would be strange for you not to get a beating, and strange, too, without those rough hungry kisses.

Well, Chris ain't the only fellow in the world, is he? Don't forget, this money would put you among the swells. Swells take their sex with saccharine. Feather beds, soft lights, sweet music! But you couldn't do with that. You'd burst out laughing in the middle! Those people wouldn't have the same feeling for life as you. Eh – Sue? Besides, you ain't concerned with sex. Sex ain't love. Life would be a damn sight easier if it was.

So you'll never be able to leave Chris. Well – the hell! Who's talkin' about leaving, anyway? What's brought all this on? What *could* part Chris and you? Why – the money you've found; whichever way you used it, you'd lose Chris.

You got a fortune there, honey! Yes – but a fortune looks like it's going to ruin you! That's funny, ain't it! So what, Sue? So what?

See here – it'll never be 'Good Beds' for you, but I think you got strength, if it ain't in your arm. You got the courage to pay cheerfully for what you want.

You're going to give up this fortune you just found, you're going to forego ease 'n' comfort, as your price to keep Chris. Well – get on with it! What you waiting for now?

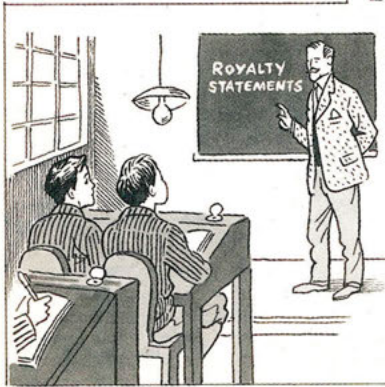
Sue opens the wallet and looks for the owner's name; then

she spends the rest of the night tramping to his distant address. She forces the wallet through the letter-box, and by eight o'clock of the new day she is lounging against the lodging-house, smoking half a cigarette she has picked up from the pavement,

waiting for her 'purchase' to flounder out and probably knock her down by way of a loving greeting.

*First published 1948 in Good Beds – Men Only: Stories of Outsiders by Elizabeth Myers*

Literacy & Numeracy



**Exercise 1.**

The published price of a hardback book is **£15.99**  
The publisher has agreed to pay the author **5%** for the first **7500** copies  
**7.5%** thereafter.

The copies sold over a 6 month period are:  
**603** Home Sales @ **5%** of **£15.99**  
**1200** Home High Discount sales @ **2.5%** of **£7.95**  
**528** Special sales @ **2.5%** of **£7.95**  
**300** Export Discount sales @ **2%** of **£7.95**

What is the author's income for the book expressed as gross monthly earnings?

**Answer:** \_\_\_\_\_



**Exercise 2.**

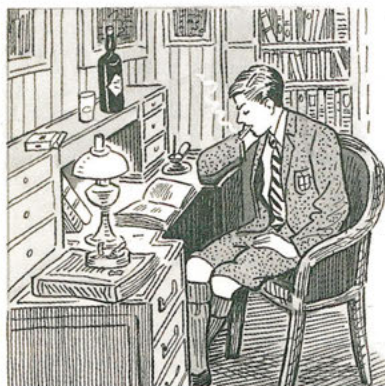
To make a profit a shop must sell **£500** of books per square foot and each member of staff must sell **£100,000** of books per annum.

If a shop of **20,000** square foot



employs **65** staff, each selling **£110,000** per annum, will it make a profit?

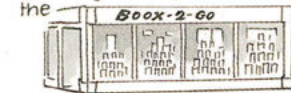
**Answer:** \_\_\_\_\_



**Exercise 3.**

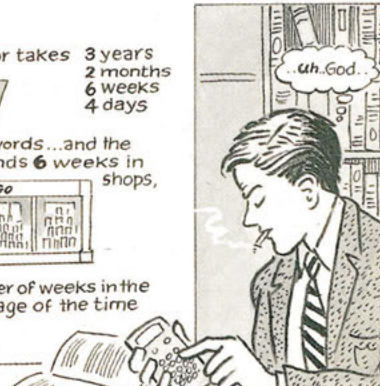
If an author takes **3 years**  
**2 months**  
**6 weeks**  
**4 days**

to write **97,468** words...and the resulting book spends **6** weeks in the



shops, ... express the number of weeks in the shops as a percentage of the time spent writing.

**Answer:** \_\_\_\_\_



This was published in the Guardian on 8th November 2003



# DCF: CONTEMPORARY REVIEWS

‘Once in a lifetime comes a novel like this one, and for the reason that it has been a lifetime in the making. *The Deepening Stream* is a completely satisfactory book. Dorothy Canfield Fisher is too wise to hurry; her maturity and wisdom are fully exemplified, and the result is an amazingly fine piece of work.’ *New York World*

‘DCF’s admirable novels have a quality that is more genuinely explanatory of America, or at least of the great body of serious, middle-aged Americans, than the books of any other author. The consciousness that “life means intensely and means good” can most easily slip (and frequently does, as so many American novels prove) into sentimentality of a peculiarly sickly kind. DCF is saved from this by her passion for truth, her intelligence and her powers of observation, which show her how hardly this good is won, how painfully kept.’ *New Statesman*

‘No one can question DCF’s ability as a novelist. She knows her characters in every detail of their lives – for their backgrounds, tastes, opinions and spiritual struggles vary scarcely at all from book to book. She writes smoothly and colourfully and her command of form is masterful. However complex her stories may be, however crowded with characters, they never

digress from the main current of their conception. They proceed logically and dramatically to a rounded conclusion, which is both mechanically and artistically justifiable.’ *New York Times*

‘DCF is among those novelists who stand for sane perspective rather than sensationalism, for verity rather than realism, for selection of facts focused upon an indwelling universal law rather than a chaos of facts-for-facts-sake, for limited free will rather than complete determinism. Thus, amidst the stultifying and stale conventions of naturalism, DCF is radiantly and dynamically unconventional. Her present novel is the peer of any she has written.’ *Bookman*

‘DCF’s novels have always been forthright and courageous, but in none, I think, has she achieved the sustained intensity that she pours into this story of a hurt child and stifled young girl and the quiet victory of love and honesty.’ *Books*

‘*The Deepening Stream* is a great novel, full of human warmth and understanding. Its humour is never trivial, its earnestness never strident. DCF’s own stream has here deepened to a full flowing river.’ *Christian Century*

‘To anyone who loves and admires the French, DCF’s fine interpretation of French life and character is welcome. But the novel seems to this reviewer chiefly noteworthy because, in the midst of “realistic” writing, it presents fairly and simply the picture of people who are brave and kind and good, and makes them real.’ *Outlook*

‘*The Deepening Stream* is one of DCF’s major works. And if the reader has the patience to study it with unflagging attention, he will be rewarded by many observations of human life and character, and by an acquaintance with real people.’ *Saturday Review of Literature*



14 St James's Square is on the right hand side, second along, with a triangular pediment over the door.

# POEMS BY HILDA BERNSTEIN

## *Apartheid*

South Africa can hold her head up high  
Only the foreign press revile our name  
They never tell the truth, and so we try  
To lie to them, and beat them at their game  
    Apartheid will lead to prosperity  
    When we all have C.N. education  
    Whatever is good for the Volk  
    Is good for the rest of the nation.

Emergencies are taken in our stride  
And if some malcontents should make a fuss  
The Government just slaps them all inside  
Which puts the wind up all the rest of us.  
    Apartheid will lead to prosperity,  
    For the Calvinists, rejuvenation  
    Whatever is good for the Volk  
    Is good for the rest of the nation.

Our blood is pure, our laws are very just,  
And we are all such very moral men  
Our nominees are human, so they must  
Get caught with pants down every now and then.  
    Apartheid will lead to prosperity  
    Remember your race and your station  
    Whatever is good for the Volk  
    Is good for the rest of the nation.



*Hilda Bernstein, author of *The World that was Ours*, PB no. 50, was an anti-apartheid activist who was detained in the State of Emergency declared after the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960. That year she wrote a dozen poems.*

## *Ballad of Number Four*

(Number Four is the African name for the Fort, the prison in Johannesburg where the white detainees were kept.)

I didn't know by golly  
That jail life was so jolly  
With supper every night at three-fifteen  
With meat that's so delicious  
And that mealie-rice nutritious  
And lots of lovely pumpkin in-between.

Our lunch is so surprising  
Served when other folks are rising  
And getting dressed to face another day.  
While if vitamins are lacking  
You may set your jaws a-cracking  
On bread that fractures teeth the easy way.

Oh, how the girls all savour  
The inimitable flavour  
Of mealie-meal and mealie-rice and bread.  
And milk that's all a-float  
With the dropping of a goat  
And coffee so darn strong it turns your head.

How I love to bath by number  
And do my nightly rumba  
On a piece of mucky floor that's just two feet.  
I'm so glad they made me sign up  
To stand in the nightly line-up,  
And bed at six is such a lovely treat.

Oh, I didn't know by golly  
That jail life was so jolly  
And I think I know it pretty well by now.  
If I was out, I'd sin again  
Just so they'd let me in again.  
Would I? Oh, boy – just let me show them how!

## *Requests to the Super (At the Fort)*

We want to know if we may have some books,  
We left a lot at home we haven't read  
Our relatives will gladly bring them in  
We'll even swap them for the prison bread.

The Colonel has considered your request  
He wrote it in the book I'll have you know  
The answer's here for everyone to see –  
NO.

We can't arrange our classes or our baths  
We badly need a watch to help our flock  
The day's disordered when we cannot check  
We'd swap the cabbage for a kitchen clock

The Colonel has considered your request  
It only took two weeks – that isn't slow  
He's given careful thought, and here it is:  
NO.

We want to know why we have been detained  
We haven't done a thing to cause this fuss  
We ask for our immediate release.  
May we go home – the bloomin' lot of us?

The Colonel has considered your request  
I'll read it out before I have to go,  
The answer's short and simple and direct –  
NO.



*A Fishing Vessel in the Mediterranean Sea' by Dora Carrington undated*



# THE HOPKINS MANUSCRIPT

## BY RC SHERRIFF PB NO. 57

There is a paradox at the heart of RC Sherriff's wonderful 1939 'cosy catastrophe', *The Hopkins Manuscript*: how is it that the novel triumphs despite several factors that would seem to militate against its success? For a start, the story is narrated by the stuffy, snobbish, bumptious and poultry-obsessed Edgar Hopkins – not at all a sympathetic protagonist. Secondly, Sherriff undercuts the *dénouement* by describing the fate of Europe in the foreword. Thirdly, the premise of the novel, that the moon is somehow nudged from its orbit and crashes into the Atlantic Ocean, is a scientific impossibility. It would seem that Sherriff has shot himself in the foot on three counts. It's a testament to his skill as a storyteller, however, that the author employs these negatives to produce a glorious affirmative.

Edgar Hopkins is a bachelor in his fifties who comes from 'an old and honourable family of Worcestershire squires'. He lives a contented life in a cottage on a hilltop in rural Hampshire, whiling away his days rearing and showing prize poultry, a character as far from your usual action hero as can be imagined. Through Hopkins, Sherriff satirises English prejudices and petty concerns, setting up a complacent society about to be torn apart by the imminent cataclysm. And yet, as the story unfolds and Edgar

Hopkins confronts the end of all he has known, and then bravely attempts to help rebuild society, the reader comes to realise that, despite his many flaws, Hopkins is essentially a good man with whom we sympathise and, to an extent, identify.

In the novel's foreword, we learn that the Royal Society of Abyssinia discovered *The Hopkins Manuscript* quite by chance a thousand years after the disaster. Humankind has risen from the ashes, and civilisation now resides in Addis Ababa. Edgar Hopkins's account of the time 'is the only personal day-by-day record yet discovered that gives us the intimate feelings of an Englishman during the days of the Cataclysm' – despite its author being 'a man of such unquenchable self-esteem and limited vision that his narrative becomes almost valueless to the scientist and historian'. Chapter One opens with the evocative line: 'I am writing by the light of a piece of string which I have pushed through a fragment of bacon fat and arranged in an egg-cup' and proceeds to describe Hopkins scabbling a living in the ruins of London. It would seem that Sherriff has defused any narrative tension by describing the fate of the narrator and of society at large. And yet, again, the author has made a virtue from an apparent weakness. The inevitability of

humankind's fate imbues the novel with a compelling pathos: we watch Hopkins struggle against the odds, rebuilding his life, suffering set-back and tragedy, yet carrying on in the face of terrible adversity.

As for the scientific implausibility of the moon crashing into the Atlantic... By the time the moon hits the Earth and disintegrates, creating a land-bridge between Europe and North America, the reader is so absorbed in the story – thanks to Sherriff's humanity, humour, and psychological insight – that the conceit is forgiven. Indeed, it becomes yet another triumph: in the novel's bleakest passages, the moon, rich in oils and precious minerals, is fought over by the surviving rag-tag nations of Europe, echoing the author's own experiences of the Great War and his famous play *Journey's End*.

*The Hopkins Manuscript* shows humanity at its best and worst, and was a significant influence on later novels such as John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* and John Christopher's *Death of Grass*, as well as two recent disaster films, *Moonfall* directed by Roland Emmerich, and Adam McKay's *Don't Look Up*. But it would be a disservice if the novel were to be considered only for the influence it cast rather than as a timeless classic in its own right. © Eric Brown, science fiction writer & reviewer



# FINALLY:

The painting on the front cover of this *Biannually* is set in 14 St James's Square, Bristol. A photograph of the square appeared in *The Georgian Buildings of Bath* in 1952. But it was doomed. The next twenty years were the peak period for local councils to allow demolition of historic buildings, for road builders to have their way, for the conservationists to wring their hands. The turning point was the early 1970s, which was in fact when Adam Fergusson published *The Sack of Bath* PB no. 93. So the cover painting is especially poignant as St James's Square so nearly survived. In the event it was demolished to build a road and a roundabout, they were thought much more important than historic buildings. (Interestingly, the painting, attributed to Thomas Pole, is only dated 1805 because a curator at the Bath Museum of Costume was able to date the dress the girl is wearing.)

Sadly, the price of our books has gone up by £1, but as we all know in the UK, everything has become increasingly expensive over the last few months. Yet, during this time we have been settling very happily into Bath. Despite the horrors all around us we try to be a little oasis of calm.

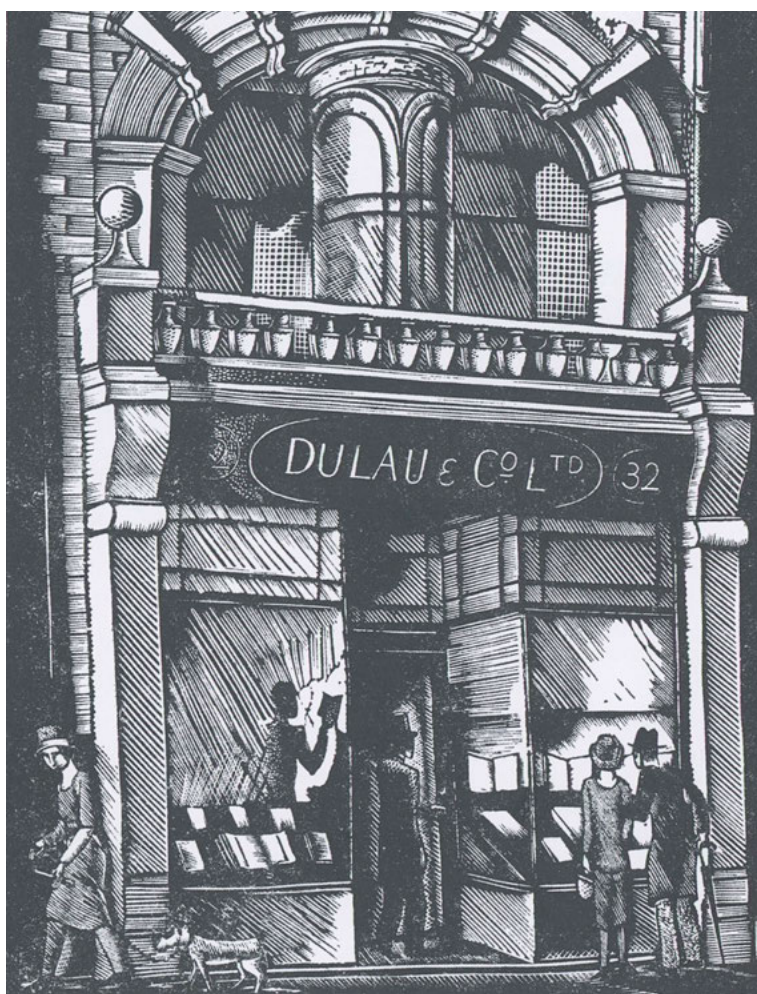
Re-Wrap in Mysore, India, the women's co-operative which supplies our canvas bags, is making napkins out of the blue

Phyllis Barron fabric; we hope to have these in the shop by the time the new books are published on April 21st, to join the rather lovely *Far Cry* napkins.

The October books are *The Other Day* (1936), a memoir of her childhood by Dorothy Whipple, Persephone's most beloved author, and *The Waters Under the Earth* (1965) by John Moore, a novel set in the 1950s about 'the going

down of an old England and the rising up of a new' (the author's own words).

And, lastly, do try to come to one of our book groups which are on the second Wednesday of the month at 6.00pm and the third Thursday at 10.30am. Refreshments are served and the cost is £10. We are reading through the grey books and the Classics in order.



Eric Ravilious front cover for the Dulau & Co Book Catalogue 1927

# EVENTS

**O**n **Thursday May 12th** there will be a screening of the hour-long documentary by Adrian Munsey about **EM Forster**. Tea and scones will be served at 4pm, and the film screened at 4.30pm, afterwards there will be a glass of madeira.

**O**n **Monday May 16th** at 6pm, as part of the Bath Festival, the founder of Persephone Books, **Nicola Beauman**, will give a talk looking back at 25 years of rediscovering and reprinting C20th women writers.

**O**n **Wednesday May 18th** at 6pm, also as part of the Bath Festival, **Francesca Beauman** will talk about her latest book, *The Literary Almanac: a year of seasonal reading*.

**T**o celebrate the reprinting of *They Knew Mr Knight*, on **Wednesday May 25th** we will show the 1946 film. Tea and scones will be served at 4pm, and madeira afterwards.

**O**n **Thursday June 9th** at 4pm there will be an illustrated talk about the **Bath Suffragettes** by the Bristol-based writer and historian Lucienne Boyce; homemade scones and tea will be served.

**A** century since James Joyce's *Ulysses* was published, on

the day the novel is set in 1904, **Thursday June 16th**, we shall celebrate what has come to be known as Bloomsday: **John Mitchinson** of the Backlisted podcast will be in conversation with Nicola Beauman about the literary canon and why some books such as *Ulysses* become classics and others are ignored. Tea with Banbury cakes will be served at 4 pm, Irish beer later.

**O**n **Wednesday June 22nd** at 12.30pm there will be



a Lunch at which the novelist **Harriet Evans** will be in conversation about her writing life and her novel *The Beloved Girls*, newly in paperback.

**O**n **Tuesday June 28th** the biographer **Anne Sebba** will give an illustrated talk about her latest book *Ethel Rosenberg*:

*A Cold War Tragedy*, published in paperback in June. Tea with homemade scones will be served at 4pm. The ticket price includes a signed copy of the book.

**O**n **Tuesday July 5th** at 6pm there will be a screening of the 2009 film of Eugenia Ginzburg's book **Into the Whirlwind**, PB no. 106, with Emily Watson, a very rare film, upsetting but extraordinary, set in a Siberian gulag. Wine and cheese straws will be served.

**O**n **Wednesday September 21st** at 6pm there will be a screening of **Ethel and Ernest** by Raymond Briggs (the book is one of 'the 50 books we wish we had published'). Wine and cheese straws will be served.

**O**n **Thursday October 20th** at 12.30pm, 150 years to the day since Flora Mayor's birth, her great-niece Victoria Gray will talk at a Lunch about PB no. 140 *The Rector's Daughter*. We shall also listen to an extract from Simon Gray's BBC dramatisation of the novel.

**O**n **Wednesday October 26th** at 4pm there will be a Tea to celebrate our publication of PB no. 144 Dorothy Whipple's *The Other Day*. There will be a short talk; tea and homemade scones will be served.

All events are £10, except the lunches and the Ethel Rosenberg tea which are £20. Please ring the shop on 01225 425050 to book.