

**CLASSICS TO GO**

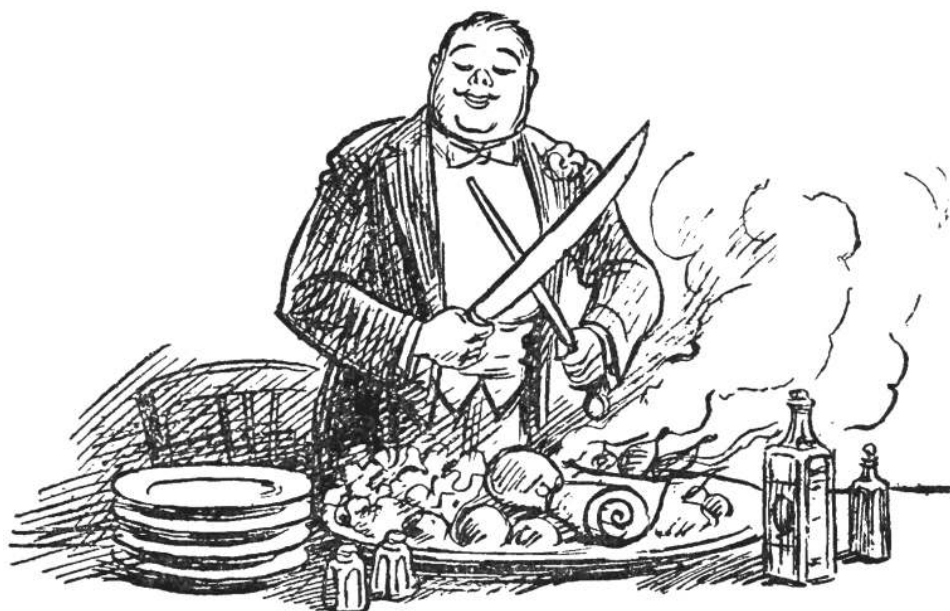
# **THE POWDER OF SYMPATHY**



**CHRISTOPHER MORLEY**

# **THE POWDER OF SYMPATHY**

**Christopher Morley**



## DEDICATION

TO FELIX RIESENBERG and FRANKLIN ABBOTT

DEAR FELIX, DEAR FRANK:—It is a pleasant circumstance that as one sets about collecting material for a book, scissoring night after night among scrapbooks to determine what may or may not be worth revisiting the glimpses of the press, there comes to mind with perfect naturalness who should carry the onus of the dedication. For a book is a frail and human emanation, and has its own instinctive disposition toward a certain kind of people. These Powders of Sympathy I hopefully sprinkle in your direction.

Another good friend warned me seriously, some time ago, against the danger of being too apologetic in a preface. For, said he, people always read prefaces and dedications, even if nought else; if you deprecate, you at once persuade them to the same attitude. And to you two, of all readers, I

need not explain just how these pieces were written, day by day, out of the pressure and hilarity and contention of the mind. I have made no attempt to conceal their ephemeral origin. They were almost all written for a newspaper, and contain many references to journalism. And, if I may speak my inmost heart, I have had a sincere hope that they might, in collected form, play some small part in encouraging the youngest generation of journalists to be themselves and set things down as they see them. If these powders have any pharmacal virtue—other than that of Seidlitz—it is likely to be relative, not absolute. I mean, it is remarkable that they should have been written at all: remarkable that any newspaper should take the pains to offer space to speculations of this sort. I have not scrupled, on occasion, to chaff some of the matters newspapers are supposed to hold sacred. And it is my privilege, by the way, to say my gratitude and affection to Mr. Edwin F. Gay, editor of the *New York Evening Post*, under whose jurisdiction these were written. With the generosity of the ideal employer he has encouraged my ejaculations even when he did not agree with them.

But a columnist (it is frequently said) is not a real Newspaper Man: he is only a deboshed Editorial Writer, a fallen angel abjected from the secure heaven of anonymity. That is true. The notable increase, in recent years, of these creatures, has been held to be a sign that the papers required more scapegoats, or safety valves through whom readers might blow off their disrespect. And that by posting these innocent effigies as decoys, the wicked press might go about its privy misdeeds with more security, and conspire unobserved with the dangerous minions of Capital (or Labour, or the Agrarian Bloc).

However that may be, and unsuspecting whether intended by his scheming employer as a decoy, or a doormat, or a gargoyle, or a lightning rod (how is he to

know, never having been given instruction of any sort except to go ahead and write as he pleases?) the columnist pursues his task and gradually distils a philosophy of his own out of his duties. Oddly enough, instead of growing more cautious by reason of his exposure, he becomes almost dangerously candid. He knows that if he is wrong he will be set right the next morning by a stack of letters varying in number according to the nature of his indiscretion. If he is wrong about *shall* and *will*, he will get five letters of reproof. If about some nautical nicety, ten letters. If about the Republican Party, twenty letters. If about food, thirty-two. If about theology or Ireland, sixty to seventy. In all cases most of these letters will be wittier and wiser than anything he could have composed himself. Surely there is no other walk of life in which mistakes are so promptly retrovolant.

I have christened these soliloquies after dear old Sir Kenelm Digby's famous nostrum, the Powder of Sympathy. But in spite of its amiable name and properties that powder was not a talcum. Its basis was vitriol; and I fear that in some of these prescriptions I have mixed a few acid crystals. It was either Lord Bacon or Don Marquis (two deep thinkers whose maxims are occasionally confounded in my mind) who told a story about a dog of low degree who made his reputation by biting a circus lion—thinking him only another dog, though a large one. Two or three times herein I have snapped at circus lions; and probably escaped only because the lion was too proud to return the indenture. Let it be remembered, though, that often you may love a man even while you dispute with him.

But the chief consideration (Frank and Felix) that seems to emerge from our friendship is that the eager squabbles of critics and littérateurs are of minor account; that the great thing is to circulate freely in the surrounding ocean of inexhaustible humanity, enjoying with our own eyes and

ears the gay and tragic richness of life. We have had expeditions together, not commemorated in print, that have been both doctrine and delight. The incident of the Five-Dollar Bill we hid in a certain bookshop will recur to your minds; the day spent in New York Harbour aboard Tug Number 18, and her skipper's shrewd, endearing sagacity. Then consider the Mystery of the House on 71st Street; the smell of Gorgonzola cheese on a North River pier; the taste of *asti spumante*; the arguments on the Test of Courage! These are matters it pleases me to set down, just as a secret among us. And though I am (you are aware) no partisan of the telephone, there are especially two voices I have learned to hear with a thrill. They say: "*Hello! This is Frank;*" or "*Hello! This is Felix!*" And I reply with honest excitement, for so often those voices are an announcement of Adventure.

Give me a ring soon.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

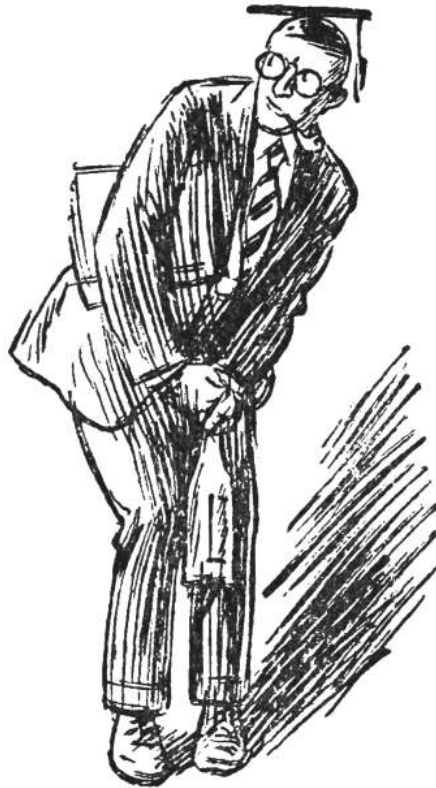
*New York City,  
November 24, 1922.*

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## **AN OXFORD SYMBOL**

WHEN in October, 1910, we arrived, in a hansom, at the sombre gate of New College, Oxford; trod for the first time through that most impressive of all college doorways, hidden in its walled and winding lane; timidly accosted Old Churchill, the whiskered porter, most dignitarian and genteel of England's Perfect Servants; and had our novice glimpse of that noble Front Quad where the shadow of the battlemented roof lies patterned across the turf—we were as innocently hopeful, modestly anxious for learning and eager to do the right thing in this strange, thrilling environment as ever any young American who went looking for windmills. No human being (shrewd observers have

remarked) is more beautifully solemn than the ambitious Young American. And, indeed, no writer has ever attempted to analyze the shimmering tissue of inchoate excitement and foreboding that fills the spirit of the juvenile Rhodes Scholar as he first enters his Oxford college. He arrives with his mind a gentle confusion of hearsay about Walter Pater, Shelley, boat races, Mr. Gladstone, Tom Brown, the Scholar Gypsy, and Little Mr. Bouncer. Kansas City or Sheboygan indeed seem far away as he crosses those quadrangles looking for his rooms.

But even Oxford, one was perhaps relieved to find, is not all silver-gray mediæval loveliness. The New Buildings, to which Churchill directed us, reached through a tunnel and a bastion in a rampart not much less than a thousand years elderly, were recognizably of the Rutherford B. Hayes type of edification. Except for the look-off upon gray walls, pinnacles, and a green tracery of gardens, and the calculated absence of plumbing (a planned method of preserving monastic hardiness among light-minded youth), the immense cliff of New Buildings might well have been a lobe of the old Johns Hopkins or a New York theological seminary. At the top of four flights we found our pensive citadel. Papered in blue, upholstered in a gruesome red, with yellow woodwork, and a fireplace which (we soon learned) was a potent reeker. It would be cheerful to describe those two rooms in detail, for we lived in them two years. But what first caught our eye was a little green pamphlet lying on the red baize tablecloth. It was lettered

NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD  
Information and Regulations  
*Revised October, 1910*

Our name was written upon it in ink, and we immediately sat down to study it. Here, we thought, is our passkey to this

new world of loveliness.

First we found the hours of college chapel. Then, "All Undergraduates are required to perform Exercises." In our simplicity we at first supposed this to be something in the way of compulsory athletics, but then discovered it to mean intellectual exercises. Fair enough, we thought. That is what we came for.

"Undergraduates are required, as a general rule, to be in College or their Lodgings by 11 p. m., and to send their Strangers out before that time.... No Undergraduate is allowed to play on any musical instrument in College rooms except between the hours of 1 and 9 p. m., unless special leave has been obtained beforehand from the Dean.... No games are allowed in the College Quadrangles, and no games except bowls in the Garden." Excellent, we meditated; this is going to be a serious career, full attention to the delights of the mind and no interruption by corybantic triflers.

"A Term by residence means pernoctation within the University for six weeks in Michaelmas or in Hilary Term, and for three weeks in Easter or in Trinity (or Act) Term."... We felt a little uncertain as to just what time of year Hilary and Act happened. But we were not halting, just now, over technicalities. We wanted to imbibe, hastily, the general spirit and flavour of our new home.... "Every member of the College is required to deposit Caution-money. Commoners deposit £30, unless they signify in writing their intention to pay their current Battels weekly; in this case they deposit £10. An undergraduate battling terminally cannot withdraw part of his Caution-money and become a weekly battler without the authority of his parent or guardian." We at once decided that it was best to be a weekly battler. Battling, incidentally, is a word that we believe exists only at Eton and Oxford; dictionaries tell us that it comes from "an

obsolete verb meaning to fatten.” Sometimes, however, in dispute with the Junior Bursar, it comes near its more usual sense. We wondered, in our young American pride, whether we were a Commoner? We were pleased to note, however, that the alternative classification was not a Lord but a Scholar.

We skimmed along through various other instructions. “A fine of 1s. is charged to the owner of any bicycle not put away before midnight.” The owner, or the bicycle, we mused? Never mind—we would soon learn. Coals and faggots, we noted, were variable in price. “The charge for a cold bath is 2d., for a hot 4d., inclusive of bath-towel.” The duties of a mysterious person named as the Bedmaker (but always, in actual speech, the Scout) were punctually outlined. But now we found ourself coming to Kitchen, Buttery, and Store-Room Tariffs. This, evidently, was the pulse of the machine. With beating heart we read on, entranced:

Beer, Mild	half-pint	1½
Beer, Mixed	“	2
Beer, Strong	“	2½
Beer, Treble X	glass	3
Beer, Lager	pint	6
Stout	half-pint	2
Cider	“	1½

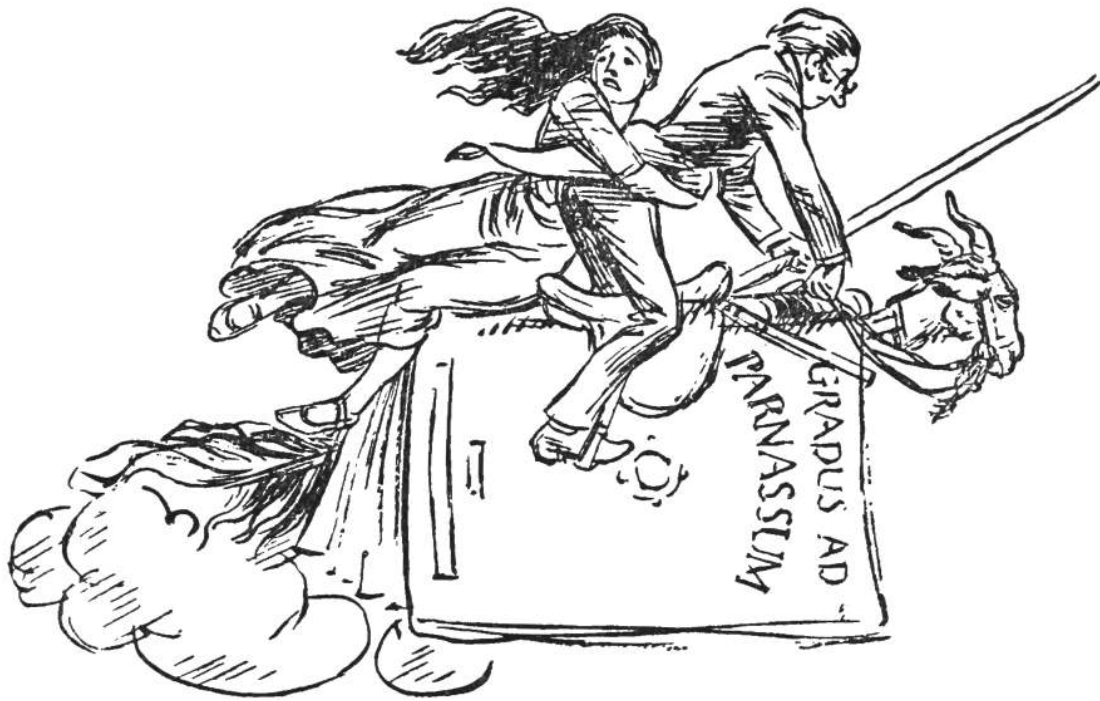
There was something significant, we felt by instinct, in the fact that Treble X was obtainable only by the glass. Vital stuff, evidently. Our education was going to come partly in casks, perhaps? In the Kitchen Tariff we read, gloatingly, magnificent syllables. *Grilled Sausages and Bacon*, commons, 1/2. *Devilled Kidneys*, commons, 1/. (A “commons,” we judged, was a large portion; if you wanted a lesser serving, you ordered a “small commons.”) *Chop with*

*Chips*, 11d. *Grilled Bones*, 10d. *Kedgeree*, plain or curried, commons, 9d. (Oh noble kedgeree, so nourishing and inexpensive, when shall we taste your like again?) Herrings, Bloaters, Kippers, each 3d. (To think that, then, we thought the Junior Bursar's tariff was a bit steep.) Jelly, Compôte of Fruit, Trifle, Pears and Cream. Creams ... commons, 6d. "Gentlemen's own birds cooked and served ... one bird, 1/. Two birds, 1/6."

We went on, with enlarging appreciation, to the Store Room and Cellar Tariffs: Syphons, Seltzer or Soda-water, 4½d. Ginger-beer, per bottle, 2d. Cakes: Genoa, Cambridge, Madeira, Milan, Sandringham, School, each 1/. Foolscap, per quire, 10d. Quill Pens, per bundle, 1/6. Cheroots, Cigars, Tobacco, Cigarettes—and then we found what seemed to be the crown and cream of our education, LIST OF WINES.

Port, 4/ per bottle. Pale Sherry, 3/. Marsala, 2/. Madeira, 4/. Clarets: Bordeaux, 1/6. St. Julien, 2/. Dessert, 4/. Hock or Rhenish Wine: Marcobrunner, 4/. Niersteiner, 3/. Moselle, 2/6. Burgundy, 2/ and 4/. Pale Brandy, 5/. Scotch Whisky, 4/. Irish Whisky, 4/. Gin, 3/. Rum, 4/.

It is really too bad to have to compress into a few paragraphs such a wealth of dreams and memories. We sat there, with our little pamphlet before us, and looked out at that great panorama of spires and towers. We have always believed in falling in with our environment. The first thing we did that afternoon was to go out and buy a corkscrew. We have it still—our symbol of an Oxford education.



## SCAPEGOATS

THE man who did most (I am secretly convinced) to deprive American literature of some really fine stuff was Mr. John Wanamaker. It was in his store, some years ago, that I bought a kind of cot-bed or couch, which I put in one corner of my workroom and on which it is my miserable habit to recline when I might be getting at those magnificent writings I have planned. Every evening I pile up the cushions and nestle there with *The Gentle Grafter* or some detective story (my favourite relaxation), saying to myself: "Just ten minutes of loafing"....

But perhaps Messrs. Strawbridge and Clothier (also of Philadelphia) are equally at fault. When I wake up, on my Wanamaker divan, it is usually about 2 A. M. Not too late, even then, for a determined spirit to make incision on its tasks. But I find myself moving towards a very fine white-

enamelled icebox which I bought from Strawbridge and Clothier in 1918. With that happy faculty of self-persuasion I convince myself it is only to see whether the pan needs emptying or the doors latching. But by the time I have scalped a blackberry pie and eroded a platter of cold macaroni au gratin, of course work of any sort is out of the question.

So do the Philistines of this world league themselves cruelly against the artist, plotting temptation for his carnal deboshed instincts, joying to see him succumb. Once the habit of yielding is established, Wanamaker, Strawbridge and Clothier (dark trio of Norns) have it their own way. Just as surely as robins will be found on a new-mown lawn, as certainly as bonfire smoke veers all round the brush pile to find out the eyes of the suburban leaf burner, so inevitably do the Divan and the Icebox exert their cruel dominion over us when we ought to be pursuing our lovely and impossible dreams. Wanamaker and Strawbridge and Clothier have blueprints of the lines of fissure in our frail velleity. As William Blake might have said:

Let Flesh once get a lead on Spirit,  
It's hard for Soul to reinherit:  
When supper's laid upon a plate  
Mind might as well abdicate.

But one of the things I think about, just before I drop off to sleep on that couch, is My Anthology. Like every one else, I have always had an ambition to compile an anthology of my own; several, in fact. One of them I call in my own mind *The Book of Uncommon Prayer*, and imagine it as a kind of secular breviary, including many of those beautiful passages in literature expressing the spirit of supplication. This book, however, it will take years to collect; it will be entirely non-

sectarian and so truly religious that many people will be annoyed. People do not care much for books of real beauty. That anthology edited by Robert Bridges, for instance—*The Spirit of Man*—how many readers have taken the trouble to hunt it out?

But the *Uncommon Prayer Book* is not the kind of anthology I have in mind at the moment. What I need is a book that would boil down the best of all the books I am fond of and condense it into a little bouillon cube of wisdom. I have always had in mind the possibility that I might go travelling, or the house might burn down, or I might have to sell my library, or something of that sort. I should like to have the meat and essence of my favourites in permanent form, so that wherever I were I could write to the publisher and get a fresh copy.

This thought came with renewed emphasis the other day when I was talking to Vachel Lindsay. He was saying that he had lately been rereading Swinburne, for the first time in nearly twenty years, and was grieved to see how the text of the poet had become corrupted in his memory. He had been misquoting Swinburne for years and years, he said, and the errors had been growing more and more firmly into his mind. That led me to think, suppose we had only memory to rely on, how long would the text of anything we loved remain unblurred? Suppose I were on a desert island and yearned to solace myself by spouting some of the sonnets of Shakespeare? How much could I recapture? Honestly, now, and with no resort to the book on the shelf at my elbow, let me try an old friend:



Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
That alters when it alteration finds  
Or bends with the remover to remove.  
Oh no, it is an ever-fixed mark  
That looks on tempests and is never shaken—  
Love is the star to every wandering bark  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be  
taken.

Then there's something about a sickle, but I can't for the life of me quite get it. Presently I'll look it up in the book and see how near I came.

Before opening the Shakespeare, however, let's have one more try:

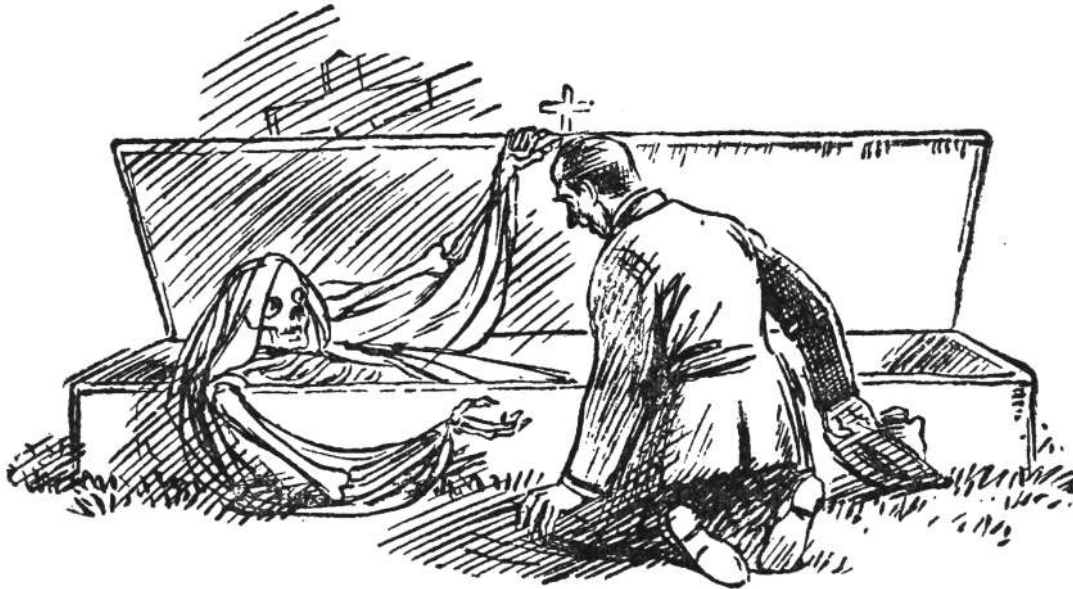
When to the sessions of sweet silent thought  
I summon up remembrance of things past,  
I wail the lack of many a thing I sought  
... my dear time's waste—

And all the rest of that sonnet that I can think of is something about "death's dateless night." A pretty poor showing. Of course, I should do better on a desert island: there would be the wide expanse of shining sand to walk upon, and I could throw myself into it with more passion and fury. The secret of remembering poetry is to get a good barytone start and obliterate the mind of its current freight of trifles. The metronomic prosody of the surf would help me, no doubt, and the placid frondage of the breadfruit trees. But even so, the recension of Shakespeare's sonnets that I would write down upon slips of bark would be a very corrupt and stumbling text. Favourite lines would be

scrambled into the wrong sonnets, and the whole thing would be a pitiful miscarriage of memory.

The only sagacious conduct of life is to prepare for every possible emergency. I have taken out life insurance, and fire insurance, and burglary insurance, and automobile insurance. I have always insured myself against losing my job by taking care not to work too hard at it, so I wouldn't miss it too bitterly if it were suddenly jerked from under me. But what have I done in the way of Literary Insurance? Suppose, to-morrow, Adventure should carry me away from these bookshelves? How pleasant to have a little microcosm of them that I could take with me! And yet, unless I can shake off the servitude of those three Philadelphia mandarins, Wanamaker and Strawbridge and Clothier, I shall never have it.

When I think of the plays that I would have written if it weren't for those three rascals.



## **TO A NEW YORKER A HUNDRED YEARS HENCE**

I WONDER, old dear, why my mind has lately been going out towards you? I wonder if you will ever read this? They say that wood-pulp paper doesn't last long nowadays. But perhaps some of my grandchildren (with any luck, there should be some born, say twenty-five years hence) may, in their years of tottering caducity, come across this scrap of greeting, yellowed with age. With tenderly cynical waggings of their faded polls, perhaps they will think back to the tradition of the quaint vanished creatures who lived and strove in this city in the year of disgrace, 1921. Poor old granfer (I can hear them say it, with that pleasing note of pity), I can just remember how he used to prate about the heyday of his youth. He wrote pieces for some paper, didn't he? Comically old-fashioned stuff my governor said; some day I must go to the library and see if they have any record of it.

You seem a long way off, this soft September morning, as I sit here and sneeze (will hay fever still exist in 2021, I wonder?) and listen to the chime of St. Paul's ring eleven. Just south of St. Paul's brown spire the girders of a great building are going up. Will that building be there when you read this? What will be the Olympian skyline of your city? Will poor old Columbia University be so far downtown that you will be raising money to move it out of the congested slums of Morningside? Will you look up, as I do now, to the great pale shaft of Woolworth; to the golden boy with wings above Fulton Street? What ships with new names will come slowly and grandly up your harbour? What new green spaces will your street children enjoy? But something of the city we now love will still abide, I hope, to link our days with yours. There is little true glory in a city that is always changing. New stones, new steeples are comely things; but the human heart clings to places that hold association and reminiscence. That, I suppose, is the obscure cause of this queer feeling that impels me to send you so perishable a message. It is the precious unity of mankind in all ages, the compassion and love felt by the understanding spirit for those, its resting kinsmen, who once were glad and miserable in these same scenes. It keeps one aware of that marvellous dark river of human life that runs, down and down uncountably, to the unexplored seas of Time.

You seem a long way off, I say—and yet it is but an instant, and you will be here. Do you know that feeling, I wonder (so characteristic of our city) that a man has in an elevator bound (let us say) for the eighteenth floor? He sees 5 and 6 and 7 flit by, and he wonders how he can ever live through the interminable time that must elapse before he will get to his stopping place and be about the task of the moment. It is only a few seconds, but his mind can evolve a whole honeycomb of mysteries in that flash of dragging time. Then the door slides open before him and that

instantaneous eternity is gone; he is in a new era. So it is with the race. Even while we try to analyze our present curiosities, they whiff away and disperse. Before we have time to turn three times in our chairs, we shall be the grandparents and you will be smiling at our old-fashioned sentiments.

But we ask you to look kindly on this our city of wonder, the city of amazing beauties which is also (to any man of quick imagination) an actual hell of haste, din, and dishevelment. Perhaps you by this time will have brought back something of that serenity, that reverence for thoughtful things, which our generation lost—and hardly knew it had lost. But even Hell, you must admit, has always had its patriots. There is nothing that hasn't—which is one of the most charming oddities of the race.

And how we loved this strange, mad city of ours, which we knew in our hearts was, to the clear eye of reason and the pure, sane vision of poetry, a bedlam of magical impertinence, a blind byway of monstrous wretchedness. And yet the blacker it seemed to the lamp of the spirit, the more we loved it with the troubled eye of flesh. For humanity, immortal only in misery and mockery, loves the very tangles in which it has enmeshed itself: with good reason, for they are the mark and sign of its being. So you will fail, as we have; and you will laugh, as we have—but not so heartily, we insist; no one has ever laughed the way your tremulous granfers did, old chap! And you will go on about your business, as we did, and be just as certain that you and your concerns are the very climax of human gravity and worth. And will it be any pleasure to you to know that on a soft September morning a hundred years ago your affectionate great-grandsire looked cheerfully out of his lofty kennel window, blew a whiff of smoke, smiled a trifle gravely upon the familiar panorama, knew (with that antique

shrewdness of his) a hawk from a handsaw, and then went out to lunch?



## A CALL FOR THE AUTHOR

BUT who will write me the book about New York that I desire? The more I think about it, the more astonished I am that no one attempts it. I don't mean a novel. I would not admit any plot or woven tissue of story to come between the reader and my royal heroine, the City herself. Not to be a coward, should I try to write it myself? It is my secret dream; but, better, it should be written by some sturdy rogue of a bachelor, footfree, living in the very heart of the uproar. Some fellow with a taste and nuance for the vulgar and vivid; a consort of both parsons and bootleggers; a *Beggar's Opera* kind of rascal. I can think of three men in this city who have magnificent powers for such a book; but they are getting perhaps a little elderly—yes, they are over forty! Ginger must be very hot in the mouth of my imagined author. He must be young (dashed if I don't think about 32 is the ideal age to write such a book), but not one of the

Extremely Brilliant Young Men. They are too clever; and they are not lonely enough. For this is a lonely job. It's got to be done *solus*, slowly, with an eye only upon the subject. It has got to show the very tremble and savour of life itself.

The man who will write this book will not necessarily enjoy it. To get into the secret of Herself he has got to have a peculiar feeling about her. For years he must have wrestled with her almost as a personal antagonist. He must have vowed, since he first saw her imperial skyline serrated on blue, to make her his own; a mistress worthy of him, and yet he himself her master. But he must know, in his inward, that in the end she triumphs, she tramples down mind and heart and nerve. Loveliest enemy in the world, implacable victor over reason and peace and all the quieter sanities of the spirit, her mad, intolerable beauty crazes or silences the sensitive mind that woos her. If you think this is only fine writing and romantic tall-talk, then you know her only with the eye, not with the imagination. With good reason, perhaps, her poets have, for the most part, kept mum. Enough for them to see and cherish in imagination her little sudden glimpses. A girl, slender, gayly unconscious of admiration, poises on one foot at the edge of the subway platform, leaning over to see if the train is coming. That gallant figure is perhaps something of a symbol of the city's own soul.

There must be many who feel about Herself as I do—and, more wisely, are tacit. There are many whose minds have trembled on the steep sills of truth, have felt that golden tremble of reality almost within touch, and rather than mar the half-apprehended fable, have turned troubled away. But there is such poetry in her, and such fine, glorious animal gusto—why is there not some determined attempt to set it down, not with “rhetoricating floscules,” but as it is? Day after day one comes to the attack; and returning, as the sloping sunlight and fresh country air flood the dusty red



plush of the homeward smoking-car, readmits the expected defeat. Here is a target for you, O generation of snipers. Let us have done with pribbles and prabbles. Who is the man who will write me the book I crave—that vulgar, jocund, carnal, beautiful, rueful book!



*Pepys' House  
at Brampton*

*Pepys' House at Brampton*

## **MR. PEPYS'S CHRISTMASSES**

CHRISTMAS being the topic, suppose we call upon Mr. Samuel Pepys for testimony. The imperishable Diarist had as keen a faculty of enjoyment as any man who ever lived. He wrote one of the world's greatest love stories—the story of his own zealous, inquisitive, jocund love of life. Surely it is not amiss to inquire what record be left as to the festival of cheer.

On seven of the nine Christmases in the Diary, Mr. Pepys went to church—sometimes more than once, though when he went twice he admits he fell asleep. The music and the ladies' finery were undoubtedly part of the attraction. "Very

great store of fine women there is in this church, more than I know anywhere else about us," is his note for Christmas, 1664. But in that generously mixed and volatile heart there was a valve of honest aspiration and piety. One can imagine him sitting in his pew (on Christmas, 1661, he nearly left the church in a huff because the verger didn't come forward to open the pew door for him), his alert mind giving close attention to the sermon of his favourite Mr. Mills, busy with sudden resolutions of virtue and industry, yet happily conscious of any beauty within eyeshot.

The giving of presents was not a large part of Christmas in those days. In 1662 Mr. Gauden gave Pepys "a great chine of beef and three dozen of tongues," but this had its drawbacks. Pepys had to give five shillings to the man who brought it and also half a crown to the porters. Drink and food were the important part of the festival. At Christmas, 1660, Mr. and Mrs. Pepys, with Tom Pepys as guest, enjoyed "a good shoulder of mutton and a chicken." This was a brave Christmas for Mrs. Pepys—she had "a new mantle." We must remember that the fair Elizabeth, though already married five years, was then only twenty years old. Not all Mrs. Pepys's Christmases were as merry as that, I fear. On Christmas, 1663, she was troubled by anxious thoughts—

My wife began, I know not whether by design or chance, to enquire what she should do, if I should by any accident die, to which I did give her some slight answer, but shall make good use of it to bring myself to some settlement for her sake.

Why haven't the ingenious life insurance advertisers made use of this telling bit of copy?

Christmas, 1668, seems to have been poor Mrs. Pepys's worst Yule, but perhaps it was only her natural feminine

frivolity that caused the sadness. Samuel says:

Dinner alone with my wife, who, poor wretch! sat undressed all day, till 10 at night, altering and lacing of a noble petticoat.

This noble petticoat was perhaps to be worn at the play they attended the next day, "Women Pleased." What a pleasant Christmas card that scene would make: Mrs. Pepys sitting, *négligée*, over the niceties of her needlework, with Samuel beside her "making the boy read to me the Life of Julius Cæsar." But we do not "get" (as the current phrase is) Mrs. Pepys at all if we think of her as merely the irresponsible girl. For, at Christmas, '66, we read:

Lay pretty long in bed, and then rose, leaving my wife desirous to sleep, having sat up till 4 this morning seeing her maids make mince-pies.

Ah, we have no such mince pies nowadays. Mrs. Pepys's mince pies were evidently worthy the tradition of that magnificent delicacy, for at Christmas, 1662, when Elizabeth was ill abed, Samuel records—with an evident touch of regret—that he had to "send abroad" for one.

Which brings us back to the Christmas viands. In 1662, besides the mince pie from abroad, he "dined by my wife's bedside with great content, having a mess of brave plum-porridge and a roasted pullet." We are tempted to think 1666 was Samuel's best Christmas. Parson Mills made a good sermon. "Then home and dined well on some good ribs of beef roasted and mince pies; only my wife, brother, and Barker, and plenty of good wine of my own, and my heart full of true joy." After dinner they had a little music; and he spent the evening making a catalogue of his books