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## The Autobiography of a Scots Professor

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John Laird

*The Autobiography of a Scots Professor*

(from the manuscript in the Aberdeen University archive)



# I

## Childhood and Schooling

I shall offer no excuse for this attempt at an autobiography. If it is ever published, it will be published posthumously, and I shall not burden my executors with any directions about it. I am fond of writing, and I am interested in myself and in my recollections.

I was born on the 17th of May, 1887 at or about 5 o'clock in the afternoon. So it is stated on my birth certificate, and my father was very meticulous about such entries. In this instance he was a first father.

I'm sure I don't know what in me is due to heredity and what to environment so I shall say something about both together.

My environment and the family traditions were nearly-scholarly. I was a son of the manse—of a largish Free Church manse adjacent to a tiny Free Church in the parish of Durris near the banks of the Dee. My father was a scholar *manqué*. He had been in business in early life and had gone to Edinburgh University too late to win high academic distinction. Or so it was thought. He had been very diligent in his divinity course at the New College in Edinburgh, and there he was first in his year; but he had little self-confidence and was rather desultory in application. His dreams, however, were of scholarship, and in that my mother agreed with him. She had a very lively mind with amazingly acute, although not very balanced, human perceptions. Her ideas were neither well-munitioned nor well-disciplined, and I don't suppose that her literary judgment was impeccable. She had romantic tastes in literature combined with a genuine love for old-time commentaries on the Scriptures, such as Matthew Henry's.

I had a long clerical ancestry. My paternal grandfather was a Moderator of the Free Church and was what was called a "Disruption Worthy". (Lots of people, when they were introduced to me said they had known my grandfather. John Buchan did, for instance, and there was a pause before he treated the remark as a joke. So I suppose my grandfather had some reputation). He was a committee-man, I am told, with an admirable capacity for speaking effectively on every subject and on every occasion. His father at the age of eighty-three had also been a Disruption Worthy—I suspect a very unwilling one. He had

masterful sons. I have always been entertained by what I have heard of him. He contrived to make quite a lot of money partly from the farmers' opulence in the Napoleonic Wars, partly by teaching the neighbouring gentry. In the end he bought an estate near the famous Drovers' Road in the Lothians. Having married a girl of fifteen—an English girl, I believe, who was a governess—he had a family of fifteen or thereabouts, half of whom grew up. He provided for all the survivors quite handsomely. I thought this very creditable, especially as Portmoak, his Fifeshire parish seemed to be largely composed of rabbit warrens. What interested me most about him, however, was his indomitable courage. He nursed three of his children in a typhus epidemic, and three in a cholera epidemic, segregating himself and them from the rest of the household. He wasn't successful as a nurse; for all the six died. But at least he was brave. I have also been told that, being in a catalepsy, he was twice laid out for burial before he finally died. I have some of his sermons. (He wrote them out and then learned them by heart). Judging from them I should say that his Doctorate of Divinity, from Marischal College in Aberdeen, an institution with which he had no direct connection, was probably obtained by influence. But what of that?

My maternal grandfather had also studied divinity but with less professional and financial success. He was, in fact, a "stickit" minister who had turned schoolmaster. I fear that he wasn't a very efficient schoolmaster for once when I went to Edderton in Ross-shire where he taught I was shown the school register. The best the inspector could say was that the "school continued to be amiably conducted". I think his interests were paternal, and human and agricultural.

I knew and liked both my grandfathers. Each of them impressed upon me the splendour, and also the possibility, of being a fine scholar "like my father". Since they were both men of the world (although of different worlds) I must conclude that the reason for their unanimity was that I was supposed to have a bookish turn. I don't remember much else that the former Moderator, Dr John Laird of Cupar, told me (I was nine when he died) expect that, like most old gentlemen at the time, he had an insatiable curiosity about the family history of his neighbours, and used to tell me about the births, marriages and deaths in every house that we passed as we walked about Cupar. He was very kind to me, much kinder, I believe, towards his grandchildren, than ever he had been towards his children. He taught me to hop, and competed with me in that exercise when he was over eighty. I possess a letter that he wrote to my father when he knew that he was about to die. It was a dignified letter. "My

malady is just old age and is, of course, incurable". It wasn't *just* old age, but it was incurable. My maternal grandfather, Mr John Stewart, had a charming way with children, telling them stories about pigs and markets (embroidering on the rhyme) that they dearly loved. But he judged it proper, when he remembered, to treat me as one who in due course would belong to the *very* highly educated classes.

Looking back, I suspect that my mother's mother had more toughness and good sense in her than any other of my forebears. She came from a little farm at the back o'beyont, the Cabrach in Aberdeenshire. What money there was came chiefly from what was called a "distillery"—I suspect, a pot-still. She lived to be over ninety, but, towards the end of her life thought rather too much, and spoke rather too much, about pills.

There was more curiosity about ancestors on my mother's side than on my father's, but the tales I have heard are rather vague, mostly about sudden death nearly always on the evening of some market day. One of my ancestors was still more foolish. He broke his leg when over eighty by attempting injudiciously to jump over a wall.

I don't know how long it took me to learn to speak, but my father began to teach me my letters systematically and daily when I was eighteen months of age. I gather (of course I don't remember) that he found the process more tedious than he expected. My mother had a story that when I was two I came to her one day with a heart full of gratitude, saying how good it was of papa to give me a holiday that morning. Her own explanation (carefully concealed from me) was rather different. I believe I found the recognition of the individual letters easy enough but took what my father thought an interminable time to tumble to the trick of combining them into syllables. Still, I was reading a great deal of large print by the time I was three. As the family increased (I was the eldest of five) we became a self-educating community. My father gave up. We could all write pretty early too.

I do not mean to suggest that any of us were precocious, or that my father wanted us to be precocious. On the contrary, one of his fixed ideas was that the university was the place for taking one's coat off, and that in school and before it, the best thing was to be rather slack. I think he regarded reading and writing as preliminaries to education, things that couldn't be begun too soon, and, when acquired, should be indulged as one listed. For the rest he was interested in his children, at any rate when they were little and when there were not too many of them to disturb the privacy that he deeply prized. I was just the first to stimulate his pride in paternity, and to beguile him into seeing

how a very youthful mind began to work.

All the same, I think it is true that the atmosphere in the Free Church manse at Durriss favoured the sort of bookish life I was later to lead. We had plenty of play in adorable woods; we had plenty of fresh air; best of all we were left to our own devices for most of the daylight in every twenty-four hours. We enjoyed stream, and flower, and wild animals and stars without being taught too much about them – for our parents knew very little about them. Despite all that, I don't think that the fact that most of my early recollections are in some sort literary is due to some peculiarity on my own part. The public events that were stressed in our presence were the deaths, say, of Tennyson or of Browning. The event of greatest interest when our parents visited Aberdeen was the books they brought back from a reading-club. I suppose I can't really remember, as I seem to remember, very many of Stevenson's books coming hot from the press; but we all felt that our writers were really doing something, and that their stories were the news of the day. The period before Christmas was peculiarly stimulating. My parents made presents of books—a good many presents. But first of all they bought the books and read them themselves.

They also thought of us when we were small. We had our proper ration of the Brer Rabbit stories and the like, and also of Hans Andersen, *Reynard the Fox* and their kind. Later, improving books, such as *Man and his Markets* were added. More generally we (or rather I) read voraciously, and for the most part unintelligently, anything that had an established reputation. My father collected that sort of book, preferably in a cheap edition and let me read what I liked. (He kept a locked cupboard too but I didn't know about that). By the time I was ten or so I was widely read in Shakespeare, Scott, Milton, Thackeray etc. etc. My motives, I daresay, were more showy than ambitious, and I was little the richer for what I read. I have never had good taste in literature. But I did have a very wide vocabulary which I was fond of using. I had a genuine affection for words and phrases, mostly borrowed from good writers. I was sprinkled, not soaked, with a literary mist, and although I am incapable of deliberately imitating any other writer or speaker, I naturally tend to assume the protective colouring of any mode of speech with which I have made contacts at any time. That is a defect when it is exaggerated, as it is in my case, but if the company be good the defect has compensating qualities. My company was almost too good, the company of dead men all highly praised. In all the above, I have spoken as if schooling didn't matter very much, and I don't think it did. But of course it had some effect which, such as it was, I shall try to set down.

I went to the nearest parish school, Crossroads, when I was five. The school was a mile and a quarter away. One had to carry a box of books, a slate, a bottle of milk and a “piece” i.e. a chunk of bread and jam, to reach the school by foot at nine (or was it half-past?), and return after three in the afternoon. The schooling therefore made demands upon one’s physique. In the severe winter of 1895–1896, for example, I had often to leave the road because of the depth of the snow-drifts and take to the fields which were barer.

The schoolmaster (or head-master, since he had a female pupil teacher of dubious attainments to help him) was a certain Alexander Macdonald, an elder in our church. He was much more of a man than most country schoolmasters are (or were) and the fact was adequately recognised in the press and in the *Times Educational Supplement* when he retired and, much later, when he died. If he chanced to be interested in anything that he happened to be teaching he imparted a dramatic quality into it. I remember for instance, that he staged a duel between himself, as the royal Saxon, and Roderick Dhu. He made pungent comments about the great. For example he called the then Prince of Wales “old drunken Neddy”. I have no doubt that I gained something permanent from the freedom, zest and originality, that radiated from him at his best moments. As I have said, I was imitative and susceptible to atmosphere. I think of him with great affection and with much respect. He did more for me than a better teacher would have done. But he was not a good teacher.

For one thing, he was rather lazy. He was listless when he was bored (which was common) and diligent only when he had a spasm of interest. Indeed, he would frequently retire to the schoolhouse and munch oatcake, leaving the school to its own devices plus the pupil-teacher. I don’t suppose these absences were very prolonged; for he had a conscience even about the school. Speaking generally, we picked up, or could have picked up, much that was interesting and much that was even exciting in the by-ways of our teaching, but straggled, and stumbled and dragged our feet along its highroads. Macdonald was something of an antiquary, of a botanist, of a political theorist, and of a journalist. He preferred to talk about what he liked, and didn’t much care whether the pupils attended or not.

I suppose I was quicker-witted than most of the others, and he had various good reasons for trying to make something of me. So by the time I reached my teens he gave me special tuition with a view to scholarships and the like. Understandably enough, such tuition was irregular and defective. Macdonald had taken his degree in Latin. So had my father; but neither of them had any practice in teaching it. They were aghast at my blunders, but they discouraged



rather than helped me. The same holds, *a fortiori*, for what they taught me of Greek. As for French, both were self-taught in the main, Macdonald altogether so. My father had travelled and could make himself understood in French, although his accent was vile. Macdonald had once spent a week end in Paris, and said that a Frenchman's lips were as mobile as a horse's. There was nothing Gallic about *his* lips.

Consequently when, rising thirteen, I went in for a local county scholarship and for Leaving Certificates I came hopelessly to grief except in English. I was *not* the bright country lad (on paper) of Macdonald's hopes. That didn't matter. What did matter to me, though it need not have affected a better man, was that I had had a bad start in linguistic studies. I never repaired the defect adequately; and I wish I had.

A momentous event in our family's history occurred in 1900 when my father received and/or wangled an invitation to "officiate" at the Scotch Presbyterian Church in Pau during the winter that was to come.

Our journey disturbed us in various ways. We entrained on an October afternoon and were loaded with grapes and with sweet drinks by sundry parishioners. There were similar scenes at Aberdeen station where our band of five children and two parents filled a third class compartment for King's Cross. My younger sister Mary (then aged seven) was habitually train sick. She succumbed before we reached Aberdeen. We were all sick, except the elders, before we got as far as Montrose, and continued in the same plight all the way to London. There a disappointment awaited us. We were going to sail to Bordeaux, and the boat was delayed for a day. We put up at a cheap hotel near King's Cross and had no night clothes. We saw the Tower and the Zoo during the day. I have never seen the Tower since. Next morning, of a Sunday, we joined the boat. I can't precisely remember the devious means my father chose to meet it. He was always an ingenious traveller. But whatever the staff-work was, it involved a walk *en famille* on our part through about two miles of London streets. There is a general impression that Londoners show less curiosity about odd-looking visitors than any other townsfolk in the world. They are surfeited I suppose; but I didn't think we went altogether unnoticed. My father, though untidy, never looked conspicuous anywhere; but my mother was not a good walker, was clumsy with hand-luggage, wore a dress rather injudiciously mauve, and was hampered by having to jerk my youngest brother Hugh along by hand (he was four, but also carried his piece of luggage). The rest of us were all pretty heavily laden, all complaining and disconsolate, all flustered and all straggling. I took a dislike to my overcoat which was very long

(for I was growing), pink rather than brown, and generally of an order that I chose to consider unmetropolitan. Two of the party were in tears long before the walking part of the journey was over. My father was haranguing us about the wisdom of his arrangements, my mother vainly and crossly attempting to restrain him.

I think our winter and spring in the Basses Pyrénées was a great spiritual success. It rejuvenated both my parents, and immensely stimulated all their children. From our flat in the Rue Porte Neuve we admired nearly all we saw, the ox-carts, the goats milked at the doors, the palms, the stir of town life. It was easy, too, to see and admire the mountains. I went to the Lycée de Pau, my brothers and sisters to a small and peculiar *École Protestante*. I have to confess that the expedition puffed me up in various unlovely ways. I returned giving myself airs as a travelled person and renowned French scholar—"a French tart" as a rude and unkind schoolfellow said. That was the foolish side of the affair. But six months in a French Lycée was very good for me as well as genuinely educative. I even began to have some understanding of Greek and Latin and advanced some little distance from the bottom of the class where I very properly began, not simply because I had at first some difficulty in using the medium of French. I was first in English, which was not a remarkable feat, and first in drawing which was. Indeed I shall always remember that incident. Our test was a charcoal free-hand drawing of a plaster-cast, and at that time I acquired the trick, never afterwards recovered, of drawing circles and other such figures, almost perfectly, with one sweep of the arm. So I produced my drawing in about two minutes, an hour being allowed, and then threw bread pellets (we used bread for erasing) at the other competitors who replied, but less spiritedly than I, being otherwise occupied. The drawing-master set out to annihilate me, but he looked at my drawing first, and then walked quietly away with a puzzled frown. He knew, and I knew, that I couldn't draw; but he knew and I knew that my drawing was bound to be the best. All he did was stop the pellet barrage.

When we returned, and after I had had a summer in which to become a little less uppish about my travels, I was sent to the Aberdeen Grammar School. The teaching there was very good. I was nearly, although not quite, at the top of my class, I made some very good friends, and I might have acquired a solid grounding in the classics and even in mathematics (except, I suspect, in geometry) had I not left the school after two years on account of another family migration. My father resigned his charge at Durris and we went to live in Edinburgh.

My father had long contemplated such a move. The congregation at Durris was dwindling, and was likely to become even smaller. The financial minimum required to keep it from becoming a mere preaching-station served by some short-time man had to come principally from my father's own pocket. In short, my father considered himself a failure and wanted to get away from the obvious signs of failure. To this end my parents had been rather frugal for many years. At one time we were the worst dressed children in the entire parish, unless on very special occasions. We were sufficiently but unappetizingly fed. Indeed there was one Christmas when the younger children had barley and milk for their Christmas dinner, my father, mother and myself being in Edinburgh at an aunt's wedding, where I was a sort of page but without a page's splendour. Such frugality helped to conserve the family's capital which was augmented by sundry intermittent legacies. At the time I am speaking about, my father had some £800 a year, enough to live upon in Edinburgh in those days and also enough to educate his family there. So to Edinburgh we went. As it happened my father was appointed sub-librarian of the New College at £50 a year. At long last he achieved a minor academic status, and may even have been glad that he had been rejected in the solitary application of a Canadian professorship he had ever made. In any case he could live in a bookish atmosphere, not too strenuously and gossip with the varied collection of people who, in some cases came to glance at the library and, in other cases, frequented it. At Edinburgh I went to George Watson's College. I was put in the top class, and skipped a year, owing to my prowess in Aberdeen, but, to keep me in my place, I was assigned, pretty much at random, to the upper (or proficient) division in some subjects and to the lower (or stupid) division in others. As before I hovered about the top, but not quite at it, whatever division I happened to be in. I think the masters regarded me as a boy who might go far but probably wouldn't.

The school, however, was then in a bad way. I soon learned that a metropolitan education might be definitely inferior to a provincial. The chief reason, I suppose, was that the recently appointed head-master, W.L. Carrie was not a success. Indeed the Governors got rid of him at the end of his third year as headmaster (which was my only year at the school) for a combination of ill-success and a tendency to lift his elbow. We were all very sorry for him and later were proud of him for conquering his failing and doing useful work in the Edinburgh Training College. (He died rather early and, I suppose, not unwillingly). Still, as I say, the school was in a bad way, lax in discipline and shoddy in its standards. Apart from that it wasn't at the time much more than

a glorified cramming establishment, and not so very glorified at that. I was not sorry to have only a year of it.

Some of my class-mates at Watson's were unusually interesting, especially a certain B. B. Gray. Gray was a nephew of the celebrated Dr Joe Bell whom we all admired in Edinburgh (and therefore called him "Joe") because he was supposed to be the original of Sherlock Holmes. Gray was tall with classical features, curling black hair and a white lustre of complexion. He was a great walker and with some companions (not me) would walk for over fifty miles in the twenty-four hours, he being then seventeen. Apart from such occasional feats, he was lazy, too lazy to make a success of anything. He strained after a spectacular Bohemianism. But he was very clever, and contrived, before he fell in the first Great War, to pack his life full of adventure, creditably persisting in eccentricity. One of his efforts was to tour Spain with a barrel organ (and *sans* the monkey that he acquired for the expedition but lost in London). He meant to write up his experiences; but I think the writing received a miss. He had the experiences, however, including sundry incarcerations in Spanish gaols for shortish periods and, I have no doubt, deliberately earned. Later he was the centre of some wild doings in Peru, but I never learned what they were in detail.

## II

### Edinburgh University

It has been my fortune, especially in the middle years of my life, to attend a large number of dinners in which the alumni and alumnae of Scottish Universities celebrate the departed felicities of their student careers. That sort of reverent stock-taking has many excellent qualities, not to speak of its slightish tendency to increase the Old Age Pension of an inevitably needy and rather grasping Alma Mater. I confess, however, that I find these occasions rather pathetic. I don't mean only that the tone of them is wistfully reminiscent and apt to show the sort of inexactitudes that are supposed to be appropriate to obituary notices. To be disappointed on these grounds would be to commit the *bêtise* of forgetting the spirit of the occasion. I mean rather that the attitude towards the past displayed by most of the speakers is largely conventional and very largely hollow. There is a superstition to the effect that youth is invariably a delightful season, that Universities are the only places where free young spirits have free young scope, where merit is seen to be just what it is and rewarded accordingly, and where everybody lives the life that befits an intelligent youth or an intelligent girl, where there is no pretence about high spirits and about enthusiasms invariably generous.

I cannot believe these things. I allow that it is rather hard for elderly speakers to recapture the quality that they say their lives once possessed even if they are speaking the truth when they say so. If, in fact, they recall and recount little more than futile half-remembered pranks with a sham order of youthful vitality there may be more than a fifty-fifty chance that they are failing to express a zest that they really did have and that there *was* a good deal of fun in what appears so silly and so trivial. It is possible, again, that what they say about their teachers was a genuine impression drawn out of the past, that the light that they say broke upon their souls really was effulgent or seemed to be. For the most part, however, I suspect that things didn't happen as, on these occasions, they are said to have happened.

In short I am inclined to attribute to conventional romance much, indeed most, that passes for genuine recollection at these dinners.

Here I may very well be generalising illegitimately from my own case. Up to a point, of course, I should be prepared to go along with these speakers. I

engaged in a good many pranks, believing myself to be asserting my glorious student status. No one had his suit more thoroughly or more determinedly ruined by ochre at a Rectorial Election fight than I. I was excited about a host of inconsistent ideas that were new to me. Sometimes I was almost uncontrollably excited about them, and seemed to have intellectual vistas that would fire me for ever. I was glad and indeed overjoyed, at seventeen, to believe that I had become a (young) man and that I had ceased to be a boy. So far my reminiscences would agree with the conventional ones, but the agreement would stop there. In that case it could be only a thinnish agreement.

Perhaps my student life was atypical. For one thing it may have been a pity that I was living at home. If I had been in digs, like most of my fellows, I might have seen a good deal more of “life” than I did. For another thing, I was much more studious than was good either for me or for my studies. I had formed the impression, due to my father, that one’s showing at the University obliterated everything that had happened before and shaped one for life. That is a common attitude among university professors. They seem to think that a good academic record is more than an earnest of subsequent performance. They think as if it were the true performance of a lifetime. This is not a common attitude among the young (who are saner). I had quite modest expectations about what my success was likely to be. What I took for granted—I cannot say “what I resolved”, for the thing was too deep for conscious resolution—was that I would grasp the time of opportunity as vigorously as it was in me to grasp it. Such an attitude leaves very little play for the exuberance and the high spirits usually associated with youth and never completely dissociable from it. When I found myself beginning to score in competition I grew more and more nervous about coming to grief in matters too high for me. They weren’t too high, judged by ordinary standards. They were adapted to the capacities of students who were not super-students. But that is the sort of truth (or truism) that is hidden from the idolaters of “a good university degree”.

In those days (1904–1908) an Edinburgh student in the Faculty of Arts had a pretty tough time between October and March if he wanted to seize all his opportunities. In each of his classes (except for honours classes where lecturing was less persistent) he had to attend a hundred lectures at the rate of five per week with a fortnight off at Christmas. I suppose one could have done well enough had one cut a fair proportion of the lectures. One might even have acquired a more or less liberal outlook. Hard-working people, however, reacted quite differently. They rushed to the counter of the reading-room, afraid only of being forestalled by some other hard-working wretch, or order

to consult any book that was mentioned, even casually, in a lecture. They pored over their lecture-notes as if the Archangel Gabriel had written them. They were told that originality was encouraged—as indeed certain forms of it would have been had such forms appeared—but they thought it was safer and more remunerative to know their lectures very well indeed, and to reproduce them with the reverence due to a far-off vision of a master mind. In my last winter at Edinburgh I worked on the average about seventy hours a week, a feat that was made easier, and rather less stupid, by an unexpected remark of my father's. He said, to my astonishment, that he didn't see why I shouldn't work on Sundays if I wanted to do so. In earlier winters I was rather less assiduous: but not much.

Our summers were very much easier. There was a summer session, but most of us took it in a happy-go-lucky spirit: and we didn't read much in the vacs, or, at any rate, didn't study very seriously.

My general programme was to study classics in my first year, to experiment in other subjects in my second year and to select an honours group from one of the experiments unless, through ill success, I had to fall back on classics; in the third and fourth years to study for honours.

It is plain that I was aiming at an academic post for my life-work, although I never admitted as much to others or, quite explicitly, to myself, the goal seeming so distant and so high. I think my attitude was as follows: an academic career is, in all probability, a forlorn hope but it is my heart's desire. So let me try for it, a little secretly, without actively expecting a miracle to happen. If I fail (as I expect I shall) something else may turn up. I admit, however, that I thought seriously in my second year of going to Canada and becoming a bank-clerk. A tout had been sent to gather such recruits, and he had some success.

I stuck very closely to my schedule. Indeed I never altered it by a hair. I did well enough at classics—better than I deserved because I could always make a better show in examinations than I could support by actual merit. The sort of thing that was tested in these examinations happened to suit me. I chose History and Logic for my experimental subject in my second year, adding mathematics for general utility but not for competitive achievements. I had no doubt at all that I would prefer logic and philosophy—unless the experiment proved to be a flop. It didn't flop, since I was first in the class of over two hundred. So this logic medal—a bronze affair—and a prize received from the hands of old Campbell Fraser himself, thin white hands with the veins very blue and like the pallid old face made still more impressive and saddening by

the magnificent red gown of an Oxford D.C.L., settled my career for me. I may add that luck and even iniquity took a hand. At a critical point in the race for this minor distinction, as I worked very late and the fire had gone out, I found that I was stiflingly hot. Investigation showed that I had a rash on my chest, in short that I had German measles. My mother entered into a conspiracy to conceal the matter. Indeed she egged me on with some help from the time of the week. It was of a Saturday night that I made my discovery, and the next Monday was Meal Monday, our one holiday of the term. On the Tuesday I regret to say that I was back at my classes feeling very ill indeed but with no tell-tale rash on my face. So I won the logic medal and had bronchitis for the rest of the year. I doubt if I would have had the courage to tell this story (for I know it is discreditable) if I had not discovered in the year in which I am now writing (1940) that this way of dealing with German measles at examination times is almost as much the rule as the exception. There was a very bad epidemic in the present spring.

Except for another medal in English in my third year (which was an extra taken to see whether I should be first in English in the University as I always had been in all my schools) I stuck to philosophy for the rest of my course. I didn't do nearly so well in ethics as I had done in logic or indeed in most other subjects. Indeed I found the approaches to philosophy (as opposed to mere logic) rather heavy going, and at one time John Baillie, now a divinity professor in Edinburgh was getting decidedly ahead of me. We ended equal as the class lists, still tricked out in gold in the Logic class room in Edinburgh, testify. But each of us had his first class with a good deal to spare.

George Saintsbury, Professor of English Literature was the only man among my Edinburgh teachers who seemed to me to approach greatness, and he was something of a misfit in the Ordinary Class of a Scottish University. He kept very indifferent order and was untortmentable only because he despised nine-tenths of his auditors—very justly but also very obviously. I doubt, even, if he was mortified by the reflection that his allusions to their unmannerliness were too witty to be generally understood. I do not say that he was a good lecturer. He was not. He used to read rather closely from well-thumbed sheets of cardboard, about notepaper size. These were only a digest of his *History of English Literature*, our unrevered text-book. If we had chosen we could have told him most of what was coming. But he made running comments too, full of gusto if he liked his author, and he found something to like in most of his authors. He had an amazing catholicity of literary enjoyment and the sight of him with his quizzical eyes, his rather dissipated face and nose, his straggling



beard with a black tie gleaming through it and his air of faint disdain lingers in the memory.

I should like firstly, to say something about Scottish University education at the time I underwent it, and secondly about that education in philosophy.

In the nineteenth century, I suppose, the Scottish M. A. degree was an asset to a struggling nation. It fostered most of the desirable elements in a “good general education”. There were seven subjects, all compulsory and including classical languages, mathematics, physics and two courses in philosophy. The standard, no doubt, was humble, and there must have been a good deal of rather tricky steering in the passage from the plough to a master’s cap. The breadth of the curriculum, however, made some amends for that and a decent high-school standard (which was all that was attained) was a respectable achievement. The effect was that most Scottish schools, even remote ones, and nearly every Scottish manse was peopled by men whose education had neither been very hurried nor definitely nominal. The general advantage to the country was enormous. It put the commonalty of Scotland very high among the world’s inhabitants.

When the twentieth century began, Scotland, as compared, say, with England was losing many of these differential advantages because of the growth of new Universities in England. She had, however, stiffened her standards in some respects—by entrance examinations and the like—and had also broadened her curriculum by the inclusion of history, modern languages, economics and so forth. Since more than seven subjects could not reasonably be required, a certain elasticity had to replace the old rigidity. That had some advantages, and was, in any case, inevitable. All the same the pass degree in my time was still pretty rigid and was vastly superior, say, to a “pol” degree at Cambridge.

I don’t think the same qualified praise could be given to the Scottish honours degree at any time, and, more particularly at the time I am describing. The honours system had been grafted upon an older system and refused to unite with it. It may have gained from the fact that it was not wholly specialised. Some outside subjects, on the pass standard, had to be taken by every honours man. Thus mild obeisance was done to the ideal of a general education. Again there would be unfairness in the censure that the honours degree took too long i.e. that it took four years, although I suspect that the length of it was dictated principally by the professors’ convenience and not the pupils’. But the objections were serious, none the less.

My chief complaint about the honours schools were set in motion, and

kept in being, by a small staff which did little except lecture and very properly declined to lecture for an unconscionable number of hours. I allow that the honours curriculum was well planned, comprehensive and sometimes even ambitious. The standard would have been high had it not been chained, quite overtly, to the chariot wheels of the lecturing system. It was the professor's duty, or so he thought, to present and discuss in lectures every mortal thing that was liable to be tested in the final examination. Thus the standard, although at least as high on paper as the standard anywhere else, was a good deal less exacting than it looked. There was the further trouble that the student supposed that what he had been told was all that was worth telling. That is a danger everywhere, but it is diminished if there are many teachers. In Scotland there was just a professor or two in any given honours school with some assistance from lecturers and assistants who were sedulously docile.

These remarks, I concede, may be coloured by my experiences in the honours school of philosophy. So let me turn expressly to that school.

My teachers were the Professor of Logic, A. S. Pringle Pattison—who had been Andrew Seth before the estate of the Haining in Selkirkshire was left him by will whereupon he changed his surname—his brother James Seth the Professor of Moral Philosophy, R. P. Hardie and Henry Barker (lecturers) and John Handyside (assistant and lecturer supernumerary). Handyside was just beginning and seemed very unlike the type of man to fight and fall as an infantry officer in the Great War. Yet such was to be his fate. Barker was an able man, and I shall have something to say of Hardie later. Substantially, however, the school *was* Pringle Pattison. His brother James was universally loved. He was the sort of man that is called “very human” and I have heard a parson say that he was “a great soul”. My neighbour whispered “but a poor creature”. The balance between the parson's statement and my neighbour's would come, I think, pretty near the truth.

Seth had a gift for elementary teaching, always supposing that suggestion and vivacity can compensate for a certain lack of precision. No one could say that he was a considerable philosopher, and his honours teaching was thoroughly disappointing. I remember Baillie saying with a sort of puzzled resignation “Seth was no better than anyone else in the class”. In short, Seth was an attractive pedagogue who had spent the best years of his life in America. So Pringle Pattison was the school.

When Andrew Seth, as he then was called, came very young to the chair in Edinburgh, having vacated the chair at St Andrews in the early '90's, he was (as I have always been told) the most attractive lecturer in the whole

university. Fine features, a fine beard and an admirable voice helped him, but the main factor in his success was the elegant prose of his lectures. (He always read them, being no speaker.) Here his training had helped him. His duties at St Andrews had included English literature as well as philosophy. He had been a leader-writer for *The Scotsman*, and all his life his writing had a journalistic quality, but of so high a grade as to be very near indeed to being literature.

In my time there was a change. His larger classes had become more restive than most. His lectures to them were type-written and they sounded stereotyped. The same was true of his honours lectures which had found finality, it would seem, and so, because they were not proceeding, were dead. In his youth he had had the reputation of being a bold and rebellious innovator. In maturity a smooth equipoise had been sedulously established. I discovered later, on a visit to the Haining and on other occasions, that there was another side to all this. He read avidly in recent philosophy. He had an adaptable mind and had views of his own. But little of that appeared in his lectures. The whole course smelt of lavender.

The underlying assumption of the lectures was that there was one great philosophical tradition, *philosophia perennis*, subtle and varied as its disguises might be. The business of philosophers was to master the tradition, the business of students to obtain an inkling of it. The tradition made some concessions to modernity and even to national fashions. In essentials, however, it was Greco-Cartesian-Hegelian with certain concessions regarding its Hegelianism.

In a broad sense there was much to be said for such a conception of university teaching in philosophy. Anyone who neglects the tradition, or traditions, in philosophy that may justly be called “great” does so at his peril. In most cases he will be struggling with ideas that are far less novel than he supposes and will be ignorant of the replies to them. He will be like a chess-player who has neglected the study of opening moves and of end-games. In short, there is a very good case for an honours degree in the history of ideas. Such a degree, however, is not a degree in philosophy. In it the students are taught to practise a wary docility. They do not understand, or at any rate they do not feel, that “idealism”, monism, materialism, determinism and the like are disturbing and explosive notions that stir men’s minds and tear them in sunder. At best they learn that such disturbances sometimes happened in the past. Instead there is a detached and even an antiquarian interest about the way in which “philosophy” deals with such topics. Such an attitude is mischievous; and it was ours.

I have mentioned R. P. Hardie. In later years I was to see a good deal of

him, and, quite frequently, to be a member of a rather charming golfing party he used to have at St Andrews at Christmas. It included Oxford professors such as Joachim and J. A. Smith, young dons such as Hardie's nephews, some divines and some philosophers. But I am thinking now of earlier days. During my time at Edinburgh Hardie was the only one of our teachers who treated his senior students as equals, socially and intellectually, who happened to be rather younger than he was. That, I suppose, is the perfection of the Oxford, perhaps of the Cambridge spirit. It was rare in Scotland in those days and, even now is commoner among the English-bred than the Scottish-bred university teachers in Scotland.

One of Hardie's greatest services was to have a small philosophical society in his rooms, held together by R. P. H. This society should have been of the greatest assistance to me. The fact that it wasn't is not very creditable either to me or to my Edinburgh training. Here is what happened. G. E. Moore, later Professor at Cambridge and the man who (as I suppose) has had a greater effect upon British philosophy than any other in his generation, was living in Edinburgh at the time, and regularly attended Hardie's club. He was then at the height of his powers and had written some famous papers as well as his *Principia Ethica*.

He impressed us, of course. I shall always remember the light yellow of his hair, his immense excitement about anything he was saying, the number of matches he used per pipe. There was nobody else that we knew to whom breath and philosophy seemed to be the same thing, or who argued with the same vehement pertinacity whoever the opponent might be. But we had been told (I won't say by whom) that "of course he was all wrong". So we listened to him with the indulgence of those who knew what philosophy was. We were quite willing to hear what certain people were doing in Cambridge, for instance Bertrand Russell about the principles of mathematics. But of course they were all wrong too. The whole affair seemed to be interesting gossip and no more—which was a pity.

One of the good things about Edinburgh University at this time was the prestige of various debating societies such as the Diagnostic and the Philomathic. Most of us, in short, learned to speak, in the sense that we were not tongue-tied when we stood up in public. The Union debates attained a fairly high level. Ian Macpherson (later Lord Strathcarron) used to turn up occasionally as some other young barristers did. I remember some admirable speeches from Sir Frederick Whyte (as he now is) including one in which the handsome and gesticulating speaker dealt his seconder an unintended but

vigorous smack on the face. The Union itself was a doubtful benefit. I like billiards and I like cards; but there was too much of both in the Union.

When I graduated I very nearly arranged, with Professor Seth's connivance, to go to Cornell with a studentship, take my Ph.D and try my fortune in America. In the end I chose the better if the more usual course of going to Cambridge. Trinity took me in, and I spent a part of the intervening summer as a matriculated student at the University of Heidelberg.

It was the first time I had been abroad since our celebrated winter in Pau. I sailed with my father from Leith to Antwerp in bitter April weather; but we had a jolly time in Antwerp, Brussels and Cologne despite the inclemency of the spring. At Cologne I entrained alone for Heidelberg knowing no German at all but with a grammar and a dictionary in my pocket. With the help of these I fixed up a lodging in a German pension in the Anlage, and contrived to fill in rather lengthy documents at the University about my parentage, religion and so forth. There was no difficulty about matriculating. My Edinburgh degree, handsomely attested with seals, saw to that. (It didn't admit me to Cambridge).

It may seem pretty fatuous to attend lectures in a language one doesn't know. Our Scottish Entrance Board today insists upon an examination in "Special English" for those who have another native language. And I can hardly pretend that I learnt much German in the ten days before lectures began, though I managed to make myself understood, in a week or less, in all-German society. As to the lectures, however, the process resembled the learning of a new language from the study of its New Testament. One knew what was coming. Besides German philosophy had then a double vocabulary, Latin-derived and German-derived; and lecturers, when they say anything say it several times over in slightly different words. The double vocabulary must have been a great boon to the German teachers.

Moreover I picked up a good deal of German, though nobody could puff me up about it more than by saying that I spoke *fließend* and with a reasonably good accent. (The latter is easy for a Scotsman). Oddly enough the German student with whom I conversed *au pair* had had a similar exchange with another aspiring Scottish philosopher during the preceding summer. My predecessor had been Bowman of Glasgow, and I learned that Bowman had been a prodigy of industry as well as of ability. He began at five in the morning and went on for the rest of the day, advancing hourly. "You are a clever man" I was told very politely "but you are not as Bowman". I wasn't on any showing, but I may have had more of the holiday spirit than Bowman had.

If I learned some German I learned very little philosophy. The lectures

(by Windelband who had, and had deserved, quite a high reputation) were old stuff adapted to a large and, for the most part untrained audience, quite largely composed of Poles and Russians. His seminar should have been better, but it was about Aristotle's *Metaphysics, Book I*, and R.P.Hardie had known more about it than Windelband did.

So much of the present century has been occupied in bitter conflict with Germany that a sinister interest attaches to all contacts with that country before the First Great War. So far as I remember, the war spirit was not very obvious in Germany in 1908 though it was present. It was quite usual if one was introduced to a man to be told that we should probably meet quite shortly on the battlefield; but there didn't seem to be much feeling about it, except a feeling of inevitability which I didn't share.

Of course, I picked up English and American acquaintances. We had a rowing club, mixed German and English, where we rowed scarcely at all but had boats which we attached to the trains of barges that would tow us some eighteen miles up the Neckar, after which we floated back. I had also an excellent walking tour in the Schwarzwald with a Scottish companion. For the most part, however, I stuck to the Germans, and I came to know some of them rather well. I attended Kneipen, or beer-parties, and contrived to swill some five litres of lightish beer in the course of an evening. I also saw a *Mensur* (or duelling contest) in the Hirschgasse, but only once. I didn't like it. The combatants, body-protected, eye-protected, ear-protected, nose-protected and second-protected (for the seconds were interminably striking up the swords even when there wasn't a *Pause*) presented a grotesque appearance, *furchtbar unästhetisch*. But the thing demanded lots of pluck. The strikable surface was small but tender—the left cheek and the lips. One of the combats, I remember, was a shocking spectacle. The Burschenschaft (or club) that had invited me was relatively new to the business, and its leading swordsman was something of a novice. His opponent was seasoned and skilful. For a few minutes (including *Pausen*) there was some superficial semblance of equality. Then skill told and every stroke drew blood from the weaker swordsman, the stronger being untouched. The duel was stopped before its allotted time was up, and the vanquished had twenty six stitches. It is not true that he never winced, but he gave a very good imitation of a Red Indian who had had a piece of bad luck. In a Burschenschaft one had to fight at least three duels. So the German people tested its courage.

### III

## Cambridge

I had what military apologists call a “set-back” just before I went to Cambridge in the autumn of 1908. I had been expected, and had myself expected to win the Ferguson Scholarship in philosophy open to recent graduates in all the four Scottish universities; but I wasn’t even second. That was saddening. I was twenty one and was anxious not to be a burden on my parents. But when I went up to Cambridge all I had to relieve their expenses was an Edinburgh Scholarship of £100 for three years of which more than a year had already elapsed. These financial matters, however, speedily improved. In December 1908 I won the Shaw Philosophical Fellowship which is also open to the four Scottish Universities but a bluer ribbon than the Ferguson Studentship and much more lucrative. It is a bluer ribbon because of the larger range of competitors. The period at that time was within five years of graduation instead of within two as with the Ferguson Scholarship; and all or nearly all of the recent Ferguson scholars competed for it. It was worth £150 a year for five years while the Ferguson was but £80 for two years. At the first available opportunity at Cambridge, viz. in March 1909, I was awarded a Major Scholarship at Trinity, and that was another £100 for five years if I chose to remain so long in residence. So I was well endowed.

The impression prevails that Cambridge men very seldom attempt to give a pen-picture of Cambridge while Oxford men are prone to that employment. It may be so, and if it is so I shall follow the fashion. In the main, I have to speak not about Cambridge undergraduates in general, but about a particular class of such graduates, those namely who assume beginner’s status at Cambridge after graduating in some other place. To be still more precise I shall be thinking of Scottish graduate-undergraduates in Cambridge and not of Welshmen, or Australians, or graduates from Hindostan.

Such demoted undergraduates were and still are fairly numerous. Outside the sciences it was rare for Scottish graduates, who went to Cambridge, to read forthwith for a higher degree. For the most part they preferred to go through the mill again. The reason was that a high place in the Tripos had a meaning all over the world (which the new-fangled higher degrees never had) and that it was much more likely, even in Scotland, to lead to a University assistantship, or

some other such post, than a Scottish degree however good. There was also, of course, a better chance of a career in Cambridge itself.

On the whole I think that this practice is regrettable. It means that graduates are competing with undergraduates. If they fail through slackness or sheer weariness of seven years of examinations, the failure is devastating. Also there is considerable waste of their time—although nowadays most of these people accept the privilege of being excused one of their three Cambridge years. Many of these graduate-undergraduates could get a first class in the Tripos without any attendance at all and with a minimum of special preparation. Three years or even two years is a long time under such circumstances. It is marking time in order to gain seniority, and youth should be obviously as well as actually on the march.

I allow that here is another side to the question. Speaking broadly all British universities have different actual curricula, plans and ideas, and in some of them, such as Cambridge, there is a distinctive ethos of the place in almost every branch of study. Elementary work—which is often the most essential of all, especially to a would-be professor—may have a new meaning when one returns to it under new teachers and in the atmosphere of a different tradition. In any case recruits cannot easily be too well drilled, and it is largely their own fault if they feel that they are being too much drilled. Moreover it is an advantage not to begin academic teaching too young; (but there are other ways of avoiding that).

When I was at Cambridge many if not most of the Scottish graduate-undergraduates (and nearly all the Aberdonians) kept themselves pretty much to themselves, admiring without envying the wealth and grandeur of England but, in Rousseau's phrase, preferring to be "strangers among the citizens". I knew these people and liked them and spent many pleasant hours in their company; but I thought that their exclusiveness, whether it was intended or not, was a great mistake and a mistake that I ought to avoid. On the other hand it was idle to suppose that I could either pretend to be, or could really be, just like the other freshmen. I was always rather out of things. It might have been different, I daresay, had I been able to play rigger or to row in the boats, but I had chronic and hereditary trouble in both knees, and so had to avoid these things. Consequently I remained a little aloof, being extremely anxious not to do so. I am not a good mixer by temperament, and am fond of the joys of solitude. Except for Broad, who was later to become so eminent in philosophy, I had no close friends.

I shall make some incidental remarks about life at Cambridge before I go



on to say something about what I thought at the time of its philosophers and of their philosophy.

The Union, as compared with the Edinburgh Union was a wholly different place—no billiards, no cards, and very little talk. Its austerity, however, was relieved by the copious light literature in its library. I and many others read a novel a day on the average. The debates I thought were good. I remember J.M. Keynes who was then a don and a past President though his brilliance at that time was harsh and his manner nervous and awkward. “Ronnie Knox”, as he was generally called, came over from Oxford and delighted us all with his humour. When I heard him many years later in the pulpit of a catholic cathedral it did not seem to me that his skill in preaching approached his skill in debate. Geoffrey Butler, a President of the Cambridge Union in my time, was also a delicate humourist; but he read his stuff. So did Norman Birkett if my memory does not deceive me. He had a great speech about the need for the revival of Puritanism in the country which he worked off at a Union debate after rousing his college (Emmanuel I think) on the subject. He never looked back and I have often gone to hear him at the King’s Bench, delighting in his masterly cross-examinations and comparing him then with what I remembered of him earlier. (I never heard him in a criminal trial and never attended one. I hated the idea of being present in such a grim place and could never accommodate myself to the idea that the verdict of guilt or innocence seemed to depend almost as much upon the barrister as upon the evidence). It was also rather marvellous to find that so many eminent men were willing to take part in the Visitors’ Debate at the Union each term.

In College the various small societies, frivolous, serious or frivolous-serious seemed, from what I saw of them, to be rather peculiarly admirable. I thought also that the sociality in term-time was not excessive, in short that most of the men had learnt how to mix work with friendliness during term and also to make due use of the vacations for study. That, at the time was one of the chief differences between Scottish and English University life. The English seemed to me to be the masters of their own technique. Another important contrast was that in Cambridge we had examinations but once a year. In Scotland we were lucky if we avoided an examination (probably trumpery) for so much as a clear fortnight. Scottish students, in consequence, were much better versed in the tricks and low cunning of examinations; but they were little the better for that and, on a long view, much the worse.

I had very little personal acquaintance with the men of my time who later became most famous. I saw, but did not meet, Rupert Brooke, looking very

splendid with his golden hair and fresh complexion though perhaps rather too plump for an ideal poet. We had no doubts in our minds about his fame even then. Similarly I did not meet Lytton Strachey, who was senior to me (though he came up pretty often), and had his future as a man of letters still before him. His sparse reddish beard, and his gaunt shambling frame were very definitely noticeable whether he were paddling a punt or strolling on the Backs with a friend. I saw something of Flecker (who came up from Oxford for a term). He admired Broad and had to endure Broad's friend. It may be guessed that I didn't like him, though I suppose there was a lazy profundity in about half of what he said. I think he was afraid of the phthisis to which he succumbed so early.

One quaint little incident seems to stick like a burr in my memory. I was dragged by someone or other to some kind of society that was airing its anti-female-suffrage views. The argument seemed to be that politics always depended on face, and so that the forcible sex should alone have the vote. This batch of opponents of women's suffrage was composed almost entirely of Jews. I like Jews for the most part, but I didn't like these ones. They seemed to be grim and personally unmartial. I disputed their thesis on philosophical grounds, little thinking of the era of violence that was to come so swiftly and to last for so long.

But let me turn to Cambridge philosophy (if I may use the singular) as I thought of it at the time.

The lectures had rather a loose relation to the Tripos questions, although, of course they had some relation. That, I hold, is as it should be except in the case of beginners who should, in general, be drilled though not in mnemonics. The scope of the Tripos examinations was very restricted as compared with Scotland, but the examination itself was correspondingly more exacting and more finicking. I think that Part II of the Tripos was quite definitely over-specialised. Indeed people from other schools could and did take it in a single year, knowing no philosophy to start with, and if they were bright and industrious could extort a first-class. Eminent people like Moore and Russell did so; but others also who could never approach eminence. For my part if I had to examine a Moore or a Russell I would give him a first class with a star if his actual study of the subject had been confined to a single Long Vacation, but I would not give a first to a merely talented candidate unless he had adequate, and therefore prolonged preparation. If the nature of the examination tied the examiner's hands in this matter, so much the worse for the examination.

Our contacts with our teachers were much friendlier, more personal and even more collaborative than in Scotland. That was due in part to the smallness of the philosophy school at Cambridge. But only in a small part. In the main it was the tradition of the place in all Triposes. It was also very healthy to see that none of my teachers, Ward, J. M. Keynes, McTaggart, Johnson, Sorley and Myers agreed with one another though they tried not to parade their differences in front of their pupils. All however seemed to be very nearly united on two points. The first was that outside Cambridge there was very little contemporary philosophy. There was Bradley at Oxford, and Ward would have included some Germans as well as M. Bergson; but Ward was the only one who conceded so much (Moore and Russell were not at Cambridge when I went up but I am counting them for present purposes as Cambridge philosophers). The second point was that inside Cambridge all the teaching philosophers were very good (though McTaggart made at least one reservation).

The essential difference between Cambridge philosophy and Edinburgh philosophy was that in Cambridge one took it for granted that the problem was the thing, in Edinburgh one took it for granted that tradition and background were pretty nearly everything.

I am exaggerating slightly, of course. Even in Cambridge, traditional philosophy did come in. It was tradition, in the main, that had selected the problems that we attacked. Tradition had underlined their centrality. Nobody in Cambridge tackled brand-new problems hitherto neglected by all mankind. Nevertheless the attempt to isolate, track and kill single problems instead of attempting to reach a general, massive and rather tepid “system” that would answer almost every problem, or at any rate enable one to speak in a superior way about every special topic and argument, was quite distinctive, and was not the attitude of a traditionalist although it may very well have been the attitude of the *dii majores* in the tradition itself.

The problem-tacklers felt very much alive. It may be doubted whether the traditionalists ever did. In Cambridge one thought one was seeing (philosophical) things and going (philosophical) places. It was not that we thought that so-and-so had settled such-and-such a problem for ever or that we might do so, although even that idea might occur. The point was that we seemed to have landed in a manageable field, and not to be bathed in a vague if superior atmosphere. And starting from the problems—no doubt carefully selected—we seemed to be dealing with something that mattered in spite of (or perhaps because of) the austerity of its abstraction. Is *esse percipi*? If so,

what about tables and electrons and one's friends and oneself? No evasions please. No solemn remarks about what somebody said about what Reid said about Berkeley. Is the "will" free or isn't it? If it isn't must we be fatalists, and, if not, why not? No quibbling please. Say "Yes" or "No" if you can, and if you can't, explain why in the world you can't. Here be straight problems. Try to keep your thinking straight. It was a slap-dash method, perhaps, and very different from the labyrinthine methods of modern analysts who prefer geodesics to Euclidean straightness, and, I daresay, are nearer the light than we were. But it was a heartening business.

In my time James Ward was recovering from an operation. He lectured very seldom and only to students for Part II. My acquaintance with him, all too brief, came after I had left Cambridge. I wish I had known him in his prime. In his age he seemed to me a miracle of candour, a saint among intellectuals, sometimes harsh, seldom urbane, but always a man.

McTaggart was the man who influenced us most. His unusual appearance did him no harm. He had several double chins at the time I am speaking of, and was much too corpulent for a man in the early forties. He was odd in his gait, I believe, from some species of mild agoraphobia. He was even more untidy than most of the dons. On his tricycle, his only form of exercise, he added to the gaiety of Cambridge. Seated on his chair, and sunk in his double chins, he contrived to look like a fatted mystic, as an excellent photograph by Mottram showed. It was published, and McTaggart was very proud of it.

This oddity in his appearance had something to do with notoriety that he certainly achieved and, I think, rather liked. I have always understood that they made him President of the Union on the strength of one captivating and successful speech, but half in jest since he looked so quaint. As a lecturer he perambulated incessantly and very stumpily, reading the while from foolscap manuscript. In debate he was sharp and determined to score, but he was also profound in about ten per cent of his successful rejoinders, and he had a curious way of convincing his interlocutors that there was some sort of world-significance in the logic that he chopped so often and with such gusto. Cambridge used to flock to his popular lectures at the beginning of every session. They were always the same lectures, and the flock was also the same. It invariably came near to vanishing before the course was through. Yet the thing was a triumph. For the course was on metaphysics, and not on cheap metaphysics although sometimes it was cheaply illustrated. It was, so to say, an institutional course in Cambridge.

McTaggart was a Hegelian—some would say "Heaven knows why". He was

certainly very unlike most Anglo-Hegelians, and he was English all through. But he was also both a rationalist and a mystic (as perhaps Hegel was) and had a passionate determination to prove the diuturnity of the human soul, including the soul of John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart, both before the birth and after the death of that historical person. (Since he wanted something deeper than time I suppose I should speak about super-diuturnity, scholastic *aevum* only rather more so). Impelled by this desire and convinced that nothing but rigorous proof could satisfy it, the English empiricism with which he began (namely, J. S. Mill's which he devoured at Clifton) was entirely useless to him. A *very* high-flying idealism was his only resource. This he found in Hegel who was nothing if not ambitious. Having found it he took an impish pleasure in showing, or in trying to show, how very wrong most Anglo-Hegelians were. McTaggart made himself into a profound and exact commentator upon every part of Hegel's philosophy that really interested him, and delighted in turning the current English notions about Hegel inside out. For him the dialectic *was* Hegel and was a genuine and quite special logical instrument. For the others it was little more than a device. For him the wooliness of Hegel was superficial and easily discounted. He thought that the others (excepting Bradley in three pages of his *Logic*) were all wool. For him Hegel was a spiritual pluralist; for the others a watery monist. So McTaggart, as I say, turned the other Hegelians inside out, I won't say upside down. If I did, I should be suggesting that McTaggart was rather like Marx, and there never was a pair of philosophers more unlike one another than McTaggart and Marx.

McTaggart had no followers, or as good as none, and he did not expect to have any. His great influence (which extended throughout his teaching career at Trinity) was in method, not in doctrine. There was a keen dialectical tang in the air whenever McTaggart was about. No other classroom was half as stimulating. That is true even of his lectures on the history of philosophy which were poor unless he happened himself to be interested in the man he was discussing. I told McTaggart something of the sort in later years (omitting the qualification). McTaggart said that he hoped it was so, and that, if it was so he had indeed been successful. He had.

Broad and I attended a short course of lectures from him that was, in fact, the embryo of his later magnum opus *The Nature of Existence*. The course was called "The Dialectic of Existence". I don't suppose that our criticisms had much effect upon McTaggart, or that they deserved to have; but Hegel's dialectic, in its stricter sense, was hedged about with several reservations in the completed work.

Moore and Russell were McTaggart's most brilliant pupils, and there is no doubt about his influence upon them. Both are dialecticians. They practised their dialectic upon McTaggart when they were undergraduates, pitting Bradley against McTaggart. That was the natural course of events. They opposed McTaggart within narrow limits, and Bradley was the only English contemporary that McTaggart respected.

Moore and Russell, however, developed a philosophy of their own, Moore being the originator, Russell after he had become a rather tardy convert produced his great *Principles of Mathematics* in 1903 and so inaugurated a forward movement in analytical philosophy that has continued ever since.

In my time Moore's ideas, backed up by Russell's achievements had captured young Cambridge. We thought, rather parochially, that the pair of them were a match for the rest of the world. In my first years at Cambridge they influenced us entirely *in absentia*, but Russell returned to Trinity in my last year, having expatriated himself for some seven years in Oxford, and Moore returned shortly after I left.

We welcomed Russell with the loyal admiration one accords to a prince and a great man. He on his part, if not altogether modest, was frank and friendly and aristocratically uncondescending. We hung upon his lips which at that time were protected by a luxuriant black moustache. (I think he made a mistake when he abolished it, and came to look too much like the March hare in Tenniel's pictures in *Alice*). At the time he had just completed his admirable *Problems of Philosophy* and was engaged upon *Principia Mathematica* with Whitehead who came up spasmodically from London for the purpose, having ceased to be a Trinity don. We had the felicity of admiring Whitehead's Victorian looks, and of enjoying his gentle and witty conversation. But Russell was our idol. His manner of lecturing seemed to us to be, as indeed it was, perfect in a difficult kind. It was easy, gay, witty, telling, lucid, orderly and instructive. He gave some of us, and not necessarily the best of us, precious uncovenanted hours of private unpaid tuition *à deux* in his rooms in Nevile's Court. He kept open rooms for us on Thursday evenings. There was never a better host.

I don't pretend that I mastered Russell's philosophy—which was changing rapidly—or Moore's—where the changes were slower. Indeed I suppose that my reaction was rather crude. I thought that Moore and Russell had, at long last, put a stop to the overweening pretension of epistemology, that is to say to a tendency that had overshadowed three centuries of European philosophy, the idea, namely, that a study of the ways of knowing was not only the best

but also the only legitimate method of trying to understand the ways of being. “Know thyself. Thus shalt thou know the world”. These authors, I thought, had deflated epistemology in a salutary way, by abating its excessive presumption while at the same time leaving it a legitimate sphere. Minds, I held, were minds and could know; but they didn’t mentalise *anything* by the mere fact of knowing it, and there was no reason why they could not know quite non-mental things “as they are in themselves”. The result was to emancipate metaphysics. If reality were composed of spiritual beings (as it might be), the thing had to be proved by arguments that were *not* epistemological. Our understanding might make science, but it need to make Nature. The universe might be super-spiritual as well as super-material. It might contain much that was neither mind nor matter. It might, in large tracts of it, be sub-material. The gates were opened and philosophers, entering them, need not enter them in epistemological blinkers.

In substance I still retain these crude opinions, though I have a better understanding now of the reasons that incline so many philosophers to find them dissatisfying. When I was at Cambridge I had no doubts at all. To say, as Bradley and Joachim both said, that these things were half-true, the sort of matter-of-course, that had to be considered but overcome, seemed to me to be an evasion or worse, I believed them just to be true.

So I became a Cambridge realist, pattern 1910. I tried to dispel what I thought were the mists of my previous training, hoping to discern a few clear outlines and content if I came anywhere near to doing so. I retained my interest in the history of wide ideas, but declined to admit that these should be my major interest. That is what I still think about myself. I tend to choose a largish theme, and then I poke about with a smallish torch.

Some philosophers, I suppose, are born, not made. Many of my friends have told me about the intimations of metaphysics that gleamed through their childhood. A lady of my acquaintance (who is a poetess and also a mother) thinks that metaphysics should be one of the early school subjects. I can recall no such early intimations, expect a tiny one about dreams. I dreamed very little as a child, and I dream quite seldom now. As a small child, the word “dream” conveyed only a hearsay meaning to me. But one night I woke up suddenly having “seen” (as I thought) a grenadier with a red hat in my room. It came upon me like a flash that there had been no soldier in the room. But how could I have seen a red hat in the room when there was no red hat there? It must have been a dream; and lo! I had discovered what other people meant by dreaming. I was vastly excited; but I don’t remember any other occasion on which I was

a metaphysical boy. When I read Berkeley as a student I simply assumed that he was wrong, and that his ingenious paradoxes (as I thought them) were just academic playthings. In short I was a made, not a born philosopher if ever there was one. Philosophy has now become second nature to me, and a second nature more engrossing than the first; but the process was slow and was not in an advanced stage even after I had done with Cambridge.

For the most part, people with a philosophical bent come to the study of serious philosophy along one or other of two roads. One of these roads is the road of the sciences. There are some minds who find the perplexities, and still more frequently the unadmitted perplexities of the sciences a gadfly that stings them into wider speculations. My friend Broad was one of them; but I had no scientific education or as good as none. So I did not belong to this particular class.

The other road is religious-theological. Men turn to philosophy in the hope of resolving their doubts about Christianity. That did not happen to me. I had no troublesome doubts about this subject because I had no active beliefs to perturb. What I heard about such things never seemed to me to be more than a fairy story. Therefore atheism and agnosticism neither alarmed me nor excited me. It is true that I “joined the Church” when I was about seventeen, and so had to make some tepid acknowledgement of personal belief. The thing seemed to me a formality like standing up when the band played “God Save the King”. In a wider way, I daresay, my philosophy, such as it was, had a theological origin. I was at least familiar with what was said about these deep matters, and was nourished on the metaphysics of them. When my father talked to us seriously he talked theology. God, he would tell us, had put us into the world for a purpose. We ought to try to fathom that purpose, as well as to play up to it. That sort of statement used to impress me despite my lack of conviction. But it was not till I was fifty and writing Gifford lectures that the strength of theism as a metaphysics began to impress me. I found its impressiveness rather disturbing.

One interesting part of my time at Cambridge was a rather frequent set of trips to London where I learned how the rich lived. The reason was that I had a wealthy uncle there, and could enjoy his table and his pictures and the luxury of the place as well as some quite expensive amusements of the town. There was also his shooting in Scotland although I had had some experience of that before. I wouldn't like to be rich, and I would not envy the life of Edwardian merchant princes (retired) if such a way of life could ever happen again. But I am glad to have known what it was like. After my uncle died (in 1911) two



of his brothers who were bachelors kept on the establishment but gradually let it fall into decay. The elder of them lived till 1935 after which I inherited some of the pictures and a share of the remnants of a much depleted fortune. So I was affluent for a few years before the second Great War. That was pleasant too, although, if even that modest degree of comfort will never recur to British *rentiers*, I cannot think that they have any just reason for complaint. All the same they may have regrets.

## IV

### St Andrews

While still at Cambridge I had agreed to go to St Andrews to assist A. E. Taylor, the Professor of Moral Philosophy there. I began work in October 1911. At the same time, Broad, who had just been elected a Fellow of Trinity, also went to St Andrews to assist G. F. Stout the Professor of Logic.

We began rather sumptuously since St Andrews was celebrating its five hundredth anniversary—its Quingenary as *Punch* called it. In an academic sense, and in most other senses, no expense was spared. There were, for instance over eighty honorary graduates including Asquith himself and, in philosophy Diels, McTaggart and Royce—“a preachy old boy” as Taylor called him. We heard Rosebery orate (reading his manuscript) and we heard Balfour speak—an unprepared effort that seemed always to be about to get going and never did. (In general, when Balfour spoke in public about philosophy he would spend about twenty minutes in waiting for ideas to come, and then, for ten minutes or so, would be really brilliant. On this occasion, however, he wasn't speaking about philosophy). Asquith wasn't asked to speak at all. It would seem that Prime Ministers were cheap at a quincentenary. We had an enormous banquet, or rather a banquet at which an enormous number of banqueters were present. I would have been a very good banquet if food didn't have a tendency to cool.

That was in September, before the session started, and St Andrews in its ancient, comely and delicately sober grey looked even more adorable than usual. McTaggart, I remember, greatly admired the red gowns of the students. In Cambridge he said only the doctors had their red gowns, and very few of them had the complexions that the colour demanded. In those days there was a dignity about St Andrews that it has since partly lost. Its subsequent growth has been its aesthetic misfortune. Even the least perceptive of philosophers must have sensed that dignity.

There is a very keen pleasure in emerging from a position of tutelage and in becoming a salaried worker. In those days, too, an assistant was expected to work for his £150 a year. Owing to a change in regulations several classes had to be split up and had to study different programmes. So I had complete charge of one of the ordinary graduating classes for two terms out of three. I had also

to correct all the essays and examination papers of Taylor's larger graduating class, and, in the summer, to take over quite an appreciable part of the honours course. After some ups and downs at the beginning, the downs being rather low, Taylor began to be fairly confident that things were going well enough.

Students of St Andrews, I think, have a deeper and naiver loyalty towards their University than in any other place in these islands unless it be Trinity College in Dublin. There is no division of loyalties between university and college as there is in Cambridge. For in St Andrews the "colleges" (excepting Dundee) have retained no corporate sense to speak of. As compared with other Scottish University towns, the students' loyalties are not dispersed by the size of the cities in which they reside. I allow that nothing could be more idolatrous than the attitude of most Glasgow students towards Gilmorehill. But Glasgow is a big place. Tram, railway and bus estrange, despite the warmth of Glasgow hearts and the febrile temperature of Glasgow enthusiasms.

I hardly think that the residential system that St Andrews has recently developed much more fully than anywhere else in Scotland will intensify this loyalty. In my time there were no residences except the women's. All the same, the men, in all effective senses, lived corporatively just as much as in a Cambridge college. They "bunked" and "co-bunked" within a very restricted area. Again the juniors among the teachers were friends and acquaintances of the students, much as young dons were at Cambridge. (And the girl students should not be forgotten). It was a good place for assistants and lecturers and their kind.

Regarding Professors and other seniors the story may be more complicated. There were very bitter feuds between some of the professors (and between their families). A small place favours such feuds and makes their concealment impossible. Some professors had to cut other professors dead for a lifetime, and one knew one had to exercise a certain caution if one spoke about Professor X to Professor Y. Apart from such serious trouble, however, the wheels of life turned very smoothly even for Professors. There were small informal clubs. There was much friendliness among the teachers without respect to rank, and although the universal St Andrean habit of ranking every single professor, lecturer or assistant, after a few months' probation, as either a world-leader or an illiterate goose was almost incredibly naive, there were compensations when swan met swan, as happened on every pavement.

It took some time before I passed for a swan, and I was never quite so swan-like as some. But in about three months I was a kind of a swan.

I gained a great deal by the change from Cambridge to St Andrews. On

earlier pages I have spoken of the contrast between traditionalism and problem-tackling in my philosophical itinerary. At St Andrews I was introduced for the first time into the vigorous working atmosphere of another and of a better kind of traditionalism, a live traditionalism in which the great masters, being dead, are supposed to speak for all time and incidentally to our present age. In that sort of traditionalism Taylor was unequalled in these islands. And, in the matter of Greek philosophy, did not John Burnet live just beside the harbour?

When I was his assistant, Taylor had abandoned his excursions into general philosophy, where his *Elements of Metaphysics*—a sort of Bradley-for-the-million combined with much informative vivacity about contemporary scientific philosophy—had earned its unusual success. He had turned to the main interest of his irrepressible literary career, the re-discovery (as he thought) of the historical Plato and of the historical Socrates, of the Platonic tradition, and of the unconscious Platonism of the modern world. Here he out-Burneted Burnet, but without very much active discussion with Burnet.

*More suo*, he imposed a certain strain upon his interlocutors who were expected to make intelligent remarks about Greek dowries, or any other sweeping from the Platonic epistles. But even if one couldn't help, one could admire and be excited. I had never met, or at any rate had never known a philosopher to whom the Greek or any other past philosophy had been the burning heart of present existence, fresher than the morning's news. A traditionalism of that kind, especially when combined with such a range and versatility of application would stir the intellectual pulses of the humblest.

Besides, Taylor was much more than a Grecian with a darting eye for all the Atticisms of the modern world. He refreshed himself continually from many other wells in the philosophical and cultural tradition, and, at the time I am recording, had become engrossed in another of his major interests, St Thomas Aquinas. There we did not try, or pretend to try, to follow him; but he seemed to assume, quite undaunted, that we were respectable medievalists as well as passable Grecians. He always spoke as if his own enthusiasms extended over all the literate earth. We, for our parts, thought that Taylor's excitement about St Thomas was just an aspect of his attitude towards Christian theology and the Christian religion, an attitude that we didn't share. In his boyhood, I believe, Taylor had been a Methodist lay preacher, or as much of one as a boy was permitted to be. Not very much later he became a high-church Episcopalian, a member of the Church Catholic though never a Roman Catholic. In our eyes that was an eccentricity but I dare say that our eyes were holden. We were not greatly moved by Taylor's new scholasticism.

I shall never forget these days of my assistantship. On any given afternoon, and there were very few afternoons when Taylor did not walk and talk with his assistant as a matter of kindly course, the odds were that one discussed Greek medicine, Dante's genius, the character of Bishop Bonner and the delight that was Max Beerbohm. Mrs Taylor would join us at tea-time and conduct a cross conversation about Dickens and Anthony Trollope. Some quick thinking was necessary to keep both streams of conversation going, and I fear that I did not always mix my "Yes's" and my "No's" quite accurately. In that case there was a lull, sometimes a surprised lull, but not for long. For self-protection I read rather widely at that time.

G. F. Stout, one of the chief British philosophers of his generation was, as I have said, the Professor of Logic at St Andrews. He also was a traditionalist but always, in intention, a constructive traditionalist. I once knew a man who, being offered some books to read when stranded in a country cottage went to bed because, as he said morosely "he had read all books". That, in a way, was Stout's attitude towards philosophy. He had read and mastered (as he thought) all the books that mattered in the two thousand years of philosophy's mature history. Selecting from the chief of them (and his preferences were for Locke, Leibniz and Kant) he had elaborated an independent philosophy that they had nurtured, not forgetting the psychological foundations of the subject. Little except the psychology, it is true, had been published. Little of it, except a belated volume of Gifford Lectures (re-typed about half a dozen times) was destined to be published. The point was that the truth was there, unmodifiable except in detail. Stout had grasped the right end of the right stick.

The gods had sheltered Stout from his cradle in South Shields. They had fashioned him on a minute physical scale, with hands and feet to correspond and without making the head too large. There was nothing indecently intellectual about the look of the head; but it was a very good head indeed. Despite their kindness, the gods had allowed him to become deaf very early; but he used his deafness adroitly. Especially in debate, where he heard just what he wanted to answer. Indeed the gods had been niggardly to his special senses, those special senses that he discussed so faithfully in his psychology. His eyesight, in particular was very bad—he suffered from cataract in later years, and I have seen him reading a detective story line by line with the aid of two pairs of strong glasses and a special reading lamp. In this respect he showed the greatest patience and the greatest fortitude. In the main, however, he was so obviously unfitted for the hurly-burly of life that he attained a position of privilege by a sort of natural right.

In himself, his resources were vast. What he could have done for himself when he was by himself, I do not know. When I first knew him over a dozen years had passed since Mrs Stout had left the benches of his psychology classroom to share his life, to teach him the use of the bicycle, to mother him as well as to make him a father, to type for him, to search in the waste paper basket for contributions to *Mind* that had gone astray, and to induce a semblance of punctuality in his editing of that journal. Good, honest, bustling, Stout-conscious Mrs Stout. We used to smile at the self-sufficiency of the Stout household. But its self-sufficiency was so frank and so little ashamed that it was accepted as something too natural to amuse except in an idle hour, and it was combined with the greatest kindness to all juniors and, indeed, to all others.

Stout used to perch himself on the arm of a chair, sitting cross-legged upon it. So poised, he would placidly expound the most breath-taking generalisations about the universe. As one gasped, the calm obstinate clever voice went steadily on. There was no shaking his inner imperturbability, and although he liked to score in debate and was very well qualified for doing so one felt that such trivial successes were only the by-products of a going concern.

I should also like to say something about David Morrison, another member of the philosophy teaching-staff at St Andrews.

Morrison's career was like that of an old-timer among Scottish University teachers than it was like anything modern. I have always understood that he went to St Andrews at a later age than most undergraduates, and that even then he assumed the air of a man of the world. After a student career that (I suppose) was respectable he was unable to find a profession that suited his genius, and, having just enough private means to support him frugally, he settled down in St Andrews to a few odd jobs such as examining and helping Stout with the editing of *Mind*. His principal employment was to be an arm-chair critic of those who had posts in the University. A year or two before I went to St Andrews he had been assimilated, being then forty or so, into the St Andrews teaching staff and taught logic there, relieving Stout of most of the work of the Ordinary Class. Stout had little interest in that body and, besides, could seldom be heard owing to the continuous concert that went on unreproved by the deaf Professor. Later Morrison became successively University Lecturer (after Broad) in Dundee and, when Taylor went to Edinburgh, Professor of Moral Philosophy at St Andrews.

During my time at St Andrews Morrison found it was harder to teach than

to criticise other teachers. Consequently, although he taught well enough, he was more subdued than he had been before and than he became at a later date. On the other hand he was a sort of magnet for the junior teachers, holding court in his comfortable house till all hours of the morning, and expressing opinions, mostly romantic, with immense emphasis, in a voice that almost anyone could mimic afterwards in a way that had to be recognised. As a professed man of the world he had little competition in the University of St Andrews; and it was true that he had seen a good many European cities and visited a good many theatres. The truth was, however, that Morrison never went on a journey, even to Cupar or to Dundee, without encountering some adventure that continued to gain in the telling until it was superseded by another of the like kind. Everything he did was magnified and everything he suffered (for he had ailments like other people) was magnified still more. Paratyphoid was the least of his complaints and he once explained that he must have been quite seriously ill because the doctor had diagnosed *rigor mortis*. In his last years the shadow of his infirmities was long and black and grim. He had had two strokes, or, as he said, he was “two down with one to go”. Even then, however, he narrative impulse found ample scope and he would tell of the amazement of the medical profession in Bath at his journey there “with over an ounce of undigested blood in my brain”. At the end he gave up his house and lived uncomfortably in rooms. He collected debts in a way that would have affrighted most people, though I don’t think he had much conscience about them.

I was only a year at St Andrews, but I often went back to it on one pretext or another or on no pretext. The more I saw of it, the more I liked it. Indeed I liked the place very much better after I had ceased to be domiciled in it professionally.

A part of this was sentimental. I began my professional career at St Andrews and as I have said, enjoyed the beginnings of responsibility, even if the said responsibility was not very grand. It was something for instance to belong to the same profession as, say, Bosanquet and Sir James Frazer, both of whom came to St Andrews at that time, Bosanquet on a visit from Edinburgh where he was Gifford Lecturer and Sir James Frazer who was Gifford Lecturer at St Andrews. Bosanquet’s distinction of person and of manner was inescapable, but I made a *gaffe*, I remember, by attempting to find something good in Proportional Representation. Frazer (and Lady Frazer who was very deaf, an enthusiast for French plays and a tout for her productions of the same) were less impressive and I didn’t attend many of Frazer’s lectures. So far as I can

recall, they dealt with some particularly bloody cults that were supposed to have something to do with the idea of immortality.

Another privilege was membership of the Scots Philosophical Club which included all teachers of the subject in Scottish Universities *ex officio*. Nowadays I find no particular thrill in attending its meetings although the discussion is usually better than in most other similar societies, and although they are preceded by a dinner that is almost always pleasant. At the beginning, however, I was an enthusiast. Perhaps the level of discussion was higher. Perhaps interest was enhanced by the presence of famous men, such as A. J. Balfour and Haldane who usually attended the meeting at Christmas time.

I well remember the first meeting I attended. It was in Edinburgh and Stout was to have given the paper. But Stout was lazy and persuaded Broad to deputise for him. Broad, who was then writing his first book, refused to take the occasion too seriously, and read us a college paper about McTaggart's views about time which he had written for McTaggart himself some years before. McTaggart's views about time were elaborate and closely argued and not at all well known outside Cambridge. In short Broad's was a very esoteric performance.

Broad's paper was shortish for him. It took less than an hour to read. When he had finished Haldane remarked that there was often an awkward pause on such occasions. So he himself would step into the time-breach. He proceeded, as if from the Woolsack to give a summary of Broad's argument and took fully three quarters of an hour to do it. The summary wasn't quite accurate. Under the circumstances complete accuracy would have been a miracle. But it was an astonishing effort of memory. Having given his summary Haldane left the meeting. After all he was a Minister of the Crown. Balfour remained, as he would have done whether in or out of office. As always, his remarks were as keen as a blade. As a dialectician in philosophy he outshone the professionals, and with ease.



## V

### Nova Scotia

In the early summer of 1912, news went round that Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia wanted to acquire a Professor of Philosophy from this side of the Atlantic. There was no advertisement; but there were feelers. Various “kennt men” in Scotland, as Stevenson’s Alison would say, were being asked to give advice, and each was addressed as if he were the only referee. One such person in Edinburgh told my father that he was recommending me. Subsequently he changed his mind and recommended Bowman of Glasgow instead. He did not tell my father about this slight alteration. It didn’t matter. I never counted unhatched chickens, even when I could see no good reason against their incubation.

Another incident of this kind was rather more amusing. The Scots Philosophical Club met in Aberdeen that summer, and Baillie, the Professor of Moral Philosophy there, very kindly asked me to stay with him in his luxurious house at Norwood. Another guest was John Watson of Kingston who was then giving Gifford Lectures in Glasgow.

Watson was all compact of bluntness and honesty. He had been an honest stonemason, I believe, before he went to the University of Glasgow as a student; he was an honest philosopher when he turned to that subject. But there was plenty of blunt candour about this visit. Watson offended his hostess, I remember, by telling her that “the inferior sex” was indeed excluded when she complained, *pro forma*, that the Club had no gallantry about it, being then exclusively male when it dined. He also found me very trying. I argued with him, not very wisely and, I suspect, not very well, but certainly volubly, subjecting him to a sharp and varied bombardment of Cambridge realism, a type of philosophy which he detested because he thought it was all a sham, and, what was more, a treacherous sham. Baillie was benign, and very much amused.

At the end of the visit, Watson told me that he understood I was thinking of going to Dalhousie, and that he would recommend me. I passed the matter over lightly, believing he was just being generous. But Watson, honest man, could not be generous in any casual way. He was, in fact, the plenipotentiary in the business. Looking back on this incident, I think he put up with a good

deal, had the sense to distinguish between the impertinence of keenness and the impertinence of a merely swollen head, and that he had the supreme intellectual virtue of being able to suspect that even his most cherished convictions might, after all, be mistaken.

So I didn't think much of my Canadian prospects and went up to Cambridge for the Long. It was time for me to write. I had at least to fulfil the conditions for the Shaw Fellowship, and give a course of lectures in Edinburgh. I meant to publish the lectures, and also thought I might submit them for a Trinity Fellowship.

I had decided to write about personality and I thought, rather too easily perhaps, that I had sound ideas on the subject even if they weren't very new. I agreed with Descartes that the self was immaterial. A mere negative however was of little moment. There might be much in the universe that was neither physical nor mental. What was important, therefore, was to describe the actual integrity of selves, and so to distinguish them from all else that was, or might be, non-physical. I thought that this could be done. The stuff of our minds, I thought, was just our acts of attending, desiring and the like. These were just what we experienced them to be—not "sub-conscious" since the sub-conscious was sub-intelligible. They always formed a personal unity, even if there were temporal gaps during sleep and trances. That, I laboured to say, yielded a perfectly good sense of our immaterial "substantiality", and the principal thing that had to be done was to avoid fictitious descriptions that had obscured the whole topic, for example a "self" that "owned" its experiences but was not they, or a "pure" ego that was contrasted with an "empirical me". I had no more sympathy with the last of these than I had with the notion of contrasting a pure metaphysical sandbag with an empirical non-metaphysical sandbag. I agreed with Bradley that a self that pretended to be more than its "psychical filling" was a "mere monster" but I also thought that Bradley's objection to the sort of self that was not a monster were ill-grounded.

I thought, and I still think that it was quite important to put these ideas upon paper, although the justification, of course, depended upon what one put upon the paper. Commonplace ideas may rise above the commonplace if their exposition is faithful and patient and, with luck, acute. I thought I might be able to express myself very soberly and very clearly, and I had a useful lesson about that at this time. At St Andrews I had supposed that it was quite easy to produce work about as good as appeared in the current philosophical journals. One had only to sit down and write, as one might write an examination paper. So I sat down and wrote. I found, however, that more than one editor was

very sticky. They said they couldn't publish anything so badly arranged. I had to rewrite the thing four times before it eventually appeared (in the *International Journal of Ethics*). That experience was salutary.

Well I went to Cambridge in the heat of summer, and began to write for many hours a day in my shirt sleeves. But I had only about a fortnight of that. Bowman accepted a post at Princeton where he was to teach brilliantly for many years. I was appointed to the post at Halifax. I was to sail in a few weeks. So I said Good bye to composition for the time being; and to my slender hopes of a Trinity Fellowship for ever.

While I was at Cambridge I had rather sparingly fed my appetite for foreign travel in the summers, but I had never gone on a long voyage, and the crossing of the Atlantic, although not really a long voyage, seemed to be something of an adventure. It was longer and more adventurous than some Atlantic voyages. Very few boats, and these small, called at Halifax in the summer. I sailed on one of them, a 5000-ton vessel called the *Mongolian* in mid-August. About half an hour after we had left our dock in the Mersey, the cable attached to our tug broke and we buried the ship's nose on a mudbank. We got off on the next tide with the aid of a dozen tugs or more, but had to put back to dry-dock in Liverpool and so had two days' delay. After that we took twelve days to reach Newfoundland. There were very strong head winds. One day we only made forty knots.

The voyage, I suppose, was very uncomfortable; for the boat was crowded. To me however it seemed almost luxurious and I had no more sea-sickness. The passengers were a mixed lot—Newfoundland people who seemed to me to be romantic because they lived in Newfoundland, a journalist taking his family to some crazy adventure in mid-Canada and presenting us all with some little books that he had published, some ladies whose past seemed a mystery, several commercial travellers who could vamp on the piano and tell interminable smutty stories in the smoking room, some bridge fiends, a French Canadian priest, a bride-to-be, and so forth. I think I composed some light verse, or what passed for such, that was sung at the ship's concert. I know that I was in the highest of high spirits. When we dropped anchor in Newfoundland, slipping, as it seemed, through the narrowest rocky aperture and then seeing what looked like a town of cards in the bright sunshine, I felt gladdened by the new world. (But, for that matter I had been excited by the porpoises, blackfish and whales of the last twelve days). The Devonian-Scottish look of the island, and a short excursion over abominable roads took my fancy mightily.

I don't suppose I should have been intimidated had the population of Halifax been 100% Canadian, though I should have been saddened had it been obviously plutocratic or too obviously American. It was neither. The Maritime Provinces in those days were very much less Americanised than central Canada, and there was no ostentatious opulence. Indeed there was no opulence at all. There were also strong links with Britain, and, for that matter, with Scotland. The younger men, it is true, were Canadian schooled and bred. They spoke Canadian. They felt Canadian. They looked to the West or to the States for their careers. Their fathers, on the other hand, had very often been educated in England and still more frequently in Scotland. Nova Scotia was still in large part Caledonian.

When I landed at Halifax of a pleasant Sunday afternoon, the President of the University and two of the Governors met me, drove me about in a car, fed me, whiskied me and deposited me at a hotel or boarding house near the Arm and not too far from the University. The President was a physicist called MacKenzie. He had been a professor in New York but he told me confidentially that most people thought there was too much of the God-darned Britisher about him. It did not seem so to me. The two Governors had Scottish names and one of them had a Scottish tongue as well as strong Scottish sympathies.

Birchdale—for that was the name of the boarding house—had a lovely site among the fir trees. It was run by a genial Mr Bowes, formerly a journalist, or rather, I suppose it ran itself under his management. Bowes published a little journal for the place; and most of us contributed. By “us” I mean naval and military officers, an odd professor, a banker or two. I learned to play what might pass for bridge, being the weakest in a very good four that played every evening.

I found the life very jolly, though my dislocable knees were a sad trial when the winter came. Even then, however, I found curling feasible and a grand game it was on the perfect surface of the (indoor) rinks. Professional ice-hockey was an entrancing game to watch. With the puck always in play (for it rebounded from the fence which was the touchline) the excitement never wavered and the feats of the players were astonishing to me. They would relax a yard or two from the fence, going at top speed, and take no hurt. They would jump over one another and if it came to a fight as it sometimes did the sharp-angled hockey sticks were desperate weapons. I had other relaxations too and even made a successful speech at a St Andrews dinner. I mention this because it was the only successful speech I ever made in my life. I still remember the

joy of it. I told all the stories I had heard at St Andrews, an anecdotal place. The first went off well, and all the rest was easy.

Such recollections, I fear, are only chicken feed, and I have nothing full-grown or historical to record unless it be meeting Lord Milner. He was very reserved in his manner and when he mounted the platform made one of the worst speeches I have ever heard. He spent twenty minutes explaining that platform work was a perpetual torment to him, a fact that needed no explaining. Then, for the rest of the hour, he made apology for the misdeeds of F. E. Smith. He had to. Smith had been talking about Canadian elections, and had told the world that all Liberals were traitors. The Canadian liberals were hard to appease, and insisted that *their* brand of liberalism was their own affair.

I may be expected to say something about Canadian education at the time. Well, I was in Canada for one session only, from September to April, and I have no records of the sojourn. So I hesitate to set down recollections that are rather hazy.

Nova Scotia in those days was very much over-instituted. I think there were five universities in the Maritime Provinces, and although amalgamations were in prospect (some of which have since occurred) the process was slow. At Dalhousie there were about 500 students in arts engineering, medicine and science. I forget about law but am not including the flourishing Presbyterian College at Pine Hill.

I don't remember whether Logic was compulsory or whether, through the influence of the Scottish tradition, it was just generally taken. In any case the elementary class in Logic was large—as I recall, over 70. The other (three) classes that I conducted were a good deal smaller. In addition I had three honours students, earnest young men, one of them lively, with an eye to an American career, perhaps in philosophy. My work, I remember, was rather pleasantly divided—Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning, then a break till Wednesday afternoon and so on till Saturday morning. It appals me now to think of the amount of work I cheerfully took on—for I had never lectured on any of my four courses or on the honours work either. Still I had been well drilled, and just carried on with the day's work.

I meant to enforce the standards to which I had been accustomed in Scotland—at any rate according to the best of my belief. That was inconsiderate. The Halifax students had to take twelve courses for degree instead of seven as in Scotland. On the other hand, a Logic course on the Scottish plan is not above the capacity of any student who doesn't slack; and lectures on the

subject fall into an even tempo that, like brick-laying, is seldom hurried. My students at Halifax had not been very well taught in school, but no schools teach logic, and I did not find them very different from the St Andrews men. I may have been too kind to them; for most of them passed. But that, in one way or another, happens in most Universities.

On the whole I should have to admit that a young professor, younger than quite a large proportion of his students, without an external examiner to check him, with fluid standards in the University, and working under pressure has a rather ampler discretion than is altogether wise. I am opposed to the system of appointing outside examiners. It paralyses by stereotyping the entire system of education in the region from which outside examiners are drawn. In the guise of fairness it casts a slur upon the individual teacher. If he is fit to teach, he is fit to assess the results, and although in practice the outside man nearly always accepts the views of the inside man, that working arrangement is not satisfactory. I allow, however, that there are cases in which an outside man has his advantages. As I have said, I believe that I decided fairly upon the elementary work. I am sure I was too lenient to the more advanced pupils. Regarding the honours students I decided in a way that with ampler experience I would have avoided. It is possible that my youthful criterion, namely evidence of ability with or without solid knowledge, was right in itself and capable of being pushed to extremes without great hurt. I have not heard how the men did in later life; but some of them, I think, had rather a raw deal at the start.

The Faculty meetings at Dalhousie gave me my first insight into University business. I have had plenty such experience now, and hold a low opinion of collective academic wisdom. A collection of academic experts, in my opinion, seldom forms a good academic team, especially on matters of general policy. A good many are incapable of appreciating any general principle at all, unless, perhaps in their own monographs. Very few appreciate the importance of consistency. Nearly all are fertile in objections, sometimes for the fun of the thing, sometimes for reasons that are only ostensibly public. On the whole I think that the Faculty meetings at Dalhousie compared rather favourably with most others. They were free and easy, and most of the members were part-time people with positions in the town and a habit of getting things done. The exceptional case was that in which local and personal interest plainly came in. One such case occurred in my time. It was very unpleasant and quite unashamed. I say this although I was only a spectator.

I left Halifax in mid-April on the *Royal Edward*, the first boat available after

the session ended. That was not because I wanted to leave the place. On the contrary I would gladly have spent several years in it, including most of the summers. I still have an affection for it. I was just a miser of my time. I needed, I thought, a whole free summer to get on with my writing. Edinburgh had given me a year's grace for my Shaw Lectures; but only a year was left, and the winter would be all too busy.

I never saw Halifax again though I had some later glimpses of Canada. On this occasion, except for a pleasant visit to Toronto and Montreal at Christmas time and a solitary expedition to Sydney in Cape Breton Island (where I made a very bad speech) I had really seen very little except Halifax and its environs. When I left the ice was breaking in the Arm, and the changes in temperature were remarkable. Once there was a drop of fifty degrees between my going to my afternoon lectures and my return from them two hours later. Despite that, I had a settled affection for the maritime provinces.

## VI

### Northern Ireland

I went to St Andrews to write my book, and despite an Amateur Championship and other distractions—I was not, of course, a competitor in the Championship—I made some progress.

Soon it became known that all the world wanted to go to Belfast, that is to say all the juniors in British philosophy who wanted to better themselves. The Chair of Logic and Metaphysics in the Queen's University of Belfast was vacant.

I shared the general belief that he should push himself who could. In due course I was notified that they wanted to interview me. Seven others—or was it eight—were told the same thing. The usual reason for so long a list is that nobody seemed to be outstanding.

The expedition promised some amusement. I had never been officially interviewed before; I had never been in Ireland before; and my sister was doctoring in Lurgan where she was assistant surgeon at the infirmary. So I went to Lurgan, finding great interest in rural Ireland, and in the “No surrender signs” which competed with King William on his white horse on the gable ends of so many houses. The most romantic thing about Lurgan, I think, is that it is near Lough Neagh.

The interview duly took place. The day was fine. The candidates—most of whom were described by the porter as “gentlemen from abroad”—were or seemed to be very friendly towards one another, and were all, on the surface elaborately unconcerned about the result. I made my first acquaintance with an Irish jaunting-car at the Great Northern Station, and was rather surprised to see a look of bewilderment on the driver's face when I asked him to convey me to the University. After consulting his colleagues, who were also bewildered, he concluded that the University must be somewhere near University Road. So he drove me there, rather behind time, and made enquiries. He was at the University, and he laughed almost to suffocation. He had known the place all his life as the “Queen's College”, and had not heard of its three-year-old acquirement of University status. I didn't laugh since I was late.

The interview itself may have been unusual. The President had paralysis agitans and shook his head all the time when he was questioning. How old



was I? Twenty six. A shake of the head. What experience had I in teaching? Two years. Another shake of the head. Did I think I could keep order? Yes. The head shook even more. Everybody seemed to be very kind and rather commiserating. They knew very little about philosophy, and were obviously unwilling to give themselves away upon that subject. So the questions were desultory, and my answers, I am told, were very nervous. I could have sworn that I was carefree and entirely at ease. Certainly I had no burning desire to leave Canada or to live in turbulent Ulster. But a behaviourist would have said I was very nervous, and behaviourism I am told is all the fashion in psychology

They reduced our numbers to three and adjourned for a week. H.O.Meredith, the Professor of Economics and an elector, very kindly invited the survivors and also the rejected to lunch at a restaurant. At that function there was rather less insouciance and rather less amity than before the decision. Most of us sailed by the afternoon boat. The sea was rough, and I was the only one of the party to remain on deck. My sister, who was crossing too, was alarmed at the appearance of one philosopher. But he recovered.

A week later, and in my opinion quite against the weight of evidence, I was selected, and private information was sent round to Cambridge and to other places. But not to me. The committee's decision had to be ratified by the Senate whose next meeting was some weeks ahead. It was improper to say anything to me. So for a time I was being widely congratulated by people who knew more about the matter than I did. The ratification was not a matter of course, but, after a row, the committee's decision was upheld. So Good bye! to Nova Scotia.

There was no inaugural lecture, but there was an informal inauguration ceremony. The incoming professor was seized and chaired by a mob of students, mostly not his own. I tried to escape by labyrinthine ways; but my guide, a porter, knew what he was about. So I was delivered to the customary ritual. They carried me through the streets to the great delight of a girl's school and of its headmistress who stood by the window laughing. Her expression changed when they tried to deposit me in her school. Then the school took hasty defensive measures and, in the end, I was left in its grounds.

Ulster in these days was strenuously resisting the threat of Irish Home Rule. I never saw the province calm in all the eleven years that I spent in it. First there was the Ulster Volunteers; then the Great War; then the murderous exploits of the I.R.A. But I doubt whether anyone now alive has seen or will see the province calm.

I don't suppose the Ulster Volunteers were ever intended to be a serious

challenge to the British Empire. A remark that was made to me at the time by a strong supporter of the movement is evidence enough of that. Speaking of Winston Churchill he said "The bloody fellow now wants to take a gunboat to us". The Volunteers were the outward and visible sign that Ulster was in earnest, or, at any rate, in greater earnest than a mere political struggle, however bitter, would warrant. Much might have happened (and much more than was intended) if the European War hadn't put an end to the business. Even so the gun-running at Larne seemed to us to be intensely exciting and what people call "historical".

It is safe to say that there was less excitement in Ulster than about Ulster especially in foreign countries. I remember an incident that happened in Venice in the spring of 1914. I had gone there on a trip with my brother, and like other tourists was beguiled into watching the process of glass manufacture and eventually of making a purchase that I afterwards regretted. The salesman was aghast when he heard where I lived. "You live in Ulster. You live in Belfast. Now you are come here". The enormity of the action almost overcame him, but, belatedly he remembered his manners. "I tink it is all right. Askveet he tink about it".

I don't think these political disturbances made much difference to the spirits or to the application of my students. Outside the University one's other acquaintances looked askance at any Briton, like myself, who did not conceal his liberalism however determined he might be to be professionally non-political. Such an one they either thought should be in with them, or get out and stay out. I was treated indulgently, however, by almost everyone though I have little doubt that I gave more provocation than I need have given.

I found my students rather too docile but very willing to learn. I had only a handful of them, however. The University at that time had not succeeded in becoming *the* place of learning in Ulster. Those whose parents could afford it went to Trinity, Dublin, or to Oxford. The medical faculty in Belfast was large—about 500 students—but the other faculties were much too small for a large city and district. In Arts there were only about a hundred. What was worse from my point of view was that the University seemed to regard philosophy as a luxury. It had found its models in the North of England, in Liverpool, say, or in Leeds. That was hard on a philosopher who had been accustomed to Scotland and to Nova Scotia. Indeed the framers of the Arts curriculum in Belfast seemed to have suffered from schoolmaster's myopia. They regarded the Arts Faculty in a University as the continuation of instruction in school subjects, and compelled five-sevenths of the ordinary degree to consist of

such subjects. One requirement was a double course in English. For that there may have been a partial justification. The students with a few notable exceptions were ill-read in their own language. Ulster lived almost without libraries, for private libraries were few, and there were no Carnegie libraries as in Scotland. Nowadays I suppose, when people read so little and hear so much “on the air”, something approaching general illiteracy is characteristic of Scotland and of England as well as of Ulster. In 1913, however, Ulster was much more illiterate than Scotland—though it had some native writers of merit, and a flourishing stage. Nevertheless a University is not a continuation school, and I am confident that the curriculum was badly devised.

My colleagues were interesting people. The most famous of them was Sir Samuel Dill, an Olympian from Ballymena, exported from Belfast to Corpus in Oxford. Dill had resigned the headmastership of Manchester Grammar School in a huff and was rather lucky to find a vacancy in the Professorship of Greek at Belfast just when he sorely needed a job. That, however, was soon forgotten and all Ulster was proud of his fame as a writer and scholar. In himself he had a splendid urbanity, and his fascinating conversation matched the urbanity especially when he talked of Mark Pattison and John Morley and an Oxford that even in those days seemed incredibly remote. His appearance was as distinguished as his manner, and he was solicitous of his physique. I remember walking into town with him, on hot streets and in hot gusts of sooty air one sultry July morning when he was seventy five or so. We both perspired, but Dill was apologetic about it; he thought it a crime not to be fitter.

Powicke the medieval historian was the only one of us who was destined to achieve the highest academic distinction. It took no great discernment to see that such a future was likely; but some were blind. Meredith the economist had a most versatile genius. He excelled in everything that he undertook—until he tired of it, which was usually pretty soon. (This includes economics). I never remember talking to him for any length of time without hearing him say something that seemed to me to be memorable, or at any rate worth remembering for several weeks. A. C. Dixon the Professor of Mathematics was a Wesleyan Senior Wrangler who fulfilled his early promise in the abstruser branches of his art, was generally able to see where the rest of us were wrong on matters of common business, but was quite unable to elucidate the mistakes he detected. (Events usually showed us how he was right.) D.L. Savory the Professor of French was an enthusiast who lived by rules, largely concerning phonetics, that he never questioned. One wondered, indeed, whether he had ever questioned anything; but his card-index system was too elaborate and too

well organised to challenge easily. He spoke better English than an Englishman, better French than a Frenchman, and better German than a German. Such is the virtue of phonetics. Gregory Smith the Professor of English was a shy man whose shyness escaped into vanity. He could be charming in private but his public appearance, especially when he meant to be genial, was more brittle than I have observed in any other human being. He spoke to most of us from beyond a great gulf. For he had written some scholarly books.

Our leader in University politics was our remarkable professor of Latin R.M. Henry. Belfast trained, the son of a minister whose conscience had forced him to leave one church after another (but always taking most of his congregation with him), Henry loved to be a rebel wherever rebellion could be. He was an ardent Home Ruler in 1913, later something like a Sinn Feiner and invariably an All-Ireland man. He was so quick, so devastating, so formidable and so unscrupulous in debate that his talents were wasted on a mere university. It may be doubted, however, whether his influence on the University was beneficent. He despised and harassed the governing body (i.e. the Senate, which was chiefly composed of local dignitaries) and rallied the Professors (i. e. the Academic Council) to the colours every second month. We heard very little about what went on in the Senate but were always told that we had to stand up to the Philistines on such and such an academic issue. Henry was the obvious man to become the next Vice-Chancellor. Equally obviously this would be an impossible appointment. He never achieved that dignity although, when he retired, he was for a time Acting Vice Chancellor. Then, superannuated as he was, he became Professor of Latin at St Andrews and some half expected that he would finish up as Governor General of Ireland. At the time I am writing (1940) that hasn't happened.

The outbreak of the Great War in 1914 was, I should suppose, the biggest thing in the life history of any of my contemporaries, unless it was the beginning of the next Great War (which I have to consider but a continuation of the first). I do not intend to discuss its effects upon my own feelings and character, although I allow that some such discussion is reasonably to be expected even in the most reticent autobiography. Again I shall not discuss my own inaction. In a more general way, what one recalls most easily is the contrast between 1914 and 1939. 1914 brought our world into ruins, but there was excitement at the start, a not unjustified belief that somehow we might muddle through, an expectation that the war would be short, and that even a defeat would not be irreparable. In 1939 all was grim. We all knew we could gain nothing, and felt that disaster, if it came might well be permanent. It is

well that in 1914 we could not foresee the course of European history in the interim of the peace. We did not realise how much had been shattered by the fact of the first Great War. As I write now I cannot bear to look forward.

The province of Ulster rallied briskly to the British flag. Its divisions were fine troops and its military war effort was thoroughly creditable to its patriotism and good sense under difficult conditions. What might have happened in the rest of Ireland is a matter of speculation. There was sad mismanagement there, and the Easter Rebellion of 1916 surprised nobody. One of its effects was that Ulster had to be prepared to meet internal as well as external trouble. Conscription was never enforced in Ulster although nominally introduced in 1918. Wages were high and there was no rationing except in sugar. We had war-bread and tobacco was sometimes scarce; but in general Ulster never felt the pinch of the conflict and so was very different from Great Britain. The war seemed very remote. A few German submarines were about. The navy and an odd sausage balloon could be seen at sea. Of course, since the province contributed as largely in men as the rest of the country did in a voluntary way, the war was very close to very many homes, and there was no great slackening after the first enthusiasm of the struggle had passed and its grim and dreary diuturnity oppressed everybody's thought. Still the war seemed more remote in Ulster than in most other places.

The University was much depleted of students, but more at the beginning of the war than in its later stages. In the later stages most of the young men (and women) had made up their minds about their action, the choice being theirs. In the earlier stages, and particularly in the first year, there was a steady efflux of students. About a third of the boys in my logic class took infantry commissions during the first year of the war. I think they all fell, usually pretty quickly.

For the rest the University machine continued to work. I had for instance quite a creditable little honours school, and could feel that something was being done for the future of the country if not for its immediate needs. And several of my best students, men and women, would not have been conscriptible under any system.

Universities in war time naturally suffer from arrested development except in technological matters required for the struggle. For one reason, most changes need money, and neither private purses nor government grants are available *inter arma*. In Belfast, however, we could not stand still because our new University (which had achieved University status less than seven years before the war) had to overhaul its methods in the light of experience.

Unfortunately our teaching staff in the University was a mutilated body since several of its members were away on military or government work. The rest of us had rather frayed tempers and made, I fear rather frayed decisions. In particular we suffered from the Irish disease, although few of us were Irish. The aetiology of the disease is this. Motives not principles are supposed to govern everyone's conduct. Such motives need not be selfish and need not be despicable but are always supposed to be personal. Therefore nobody is supposed to mean what he says. Argument is only a trick and a façade. So tricks should be met with tricks. On the stage, all stage-play is equally legitimate. This disease, to be sure, is not exclusively Irish; but in Ireland it is so prevalent that it isn't even noticed.

My Shaw lectures on personality were accepted for publication, though not by the first publisher who approached me, about six weeks before the war; and my first proofs came in just about the time when the war seemed to be as good as inevitable. The early exhilarations of authorship, accordingly, were sadly mutilated in my case. I could scarcely feel that my proofs were the first thing that mattered, that every phrase was a hostage to a potentially eager world, that I had the right to be heard, that if my lamp went out the world would be appreciably darker. In fact the publication of the book was delayed until 1917 by which time my interest in it and its fate, while still lively, had enormously abated. The book was called *Problems of the Self*. Having already explained what I wanted to say in it, I shall say no more about its contents.

Years afterwards, I read a story in which a young author faithfully recounted his experiences in the first few weeks after first publication. He expected a spate of clippings from his press-cuttings agency, to begin almost as soon as publication, a large fan- (and anti-fan) mail and so forth. Instead he began with a brief and tepid notice in the *Times Literary Supplement*, collected a few other scrappy and slighting *obiter scripta*, and waited in vain for the fuller review that the *Times*, in those days, accorded to any book that it thought worth anything at all. The fate of this fictitious author was so very nearly mine, especially in the matter of the *Times*, that I had to smile rather wryly as I read. True, in matters of philosophy, the daily press is not, for the most part very serious in its comments or very conscientious in its silences, and the same is true of the weekly press. Still one gains an idea from these sources whether the book is readable or not, and I had hoped to be read. Nor could I cheat myself into the belief that the war had spoilt my chances. Paper shortage had indeed compelled certain restrictions, but people read widely in those days, partly for distraction, and were not averse to distracting themselves with something

pretty stiff. The review columns, indeed, were fairly full, and the reviewers for the most part, quite competent. So I had every reasonable chance.

As time went on my early depression lifted. For the first six months or so I had to confess that whatever serious attention I received was largely due to influence either local or, in the case of a review in the *Nation*, academic (for I am tolerably sure that Bertrand Russell must have been the author). It made no difference that I never suggested or arranged such matters (I have never done so, or attempted to do so, in all my life). But later reviews, especially in the technical journals did something to restore my spirits. There was influence there, no doubt, but on the whole a proper influence. Such journals exist in the main for professional readers and the editors select according to their professional conscience. I had a friend to review me in *Mind* viz. Broad who was very kind to me and, as usual, not short. But I had not pulled any wires in that business, and nobody could deny that Broad was one of our very best reviewers. Still later Bosanquet, who had a habit of discussing new authors as if they were better than new paid me quite lengthy attention. Dean Inge said that Bosanquet had “gibbeted” me. But if I was executed, I was at least beheaded in state.

I have no other literary events to record in the war years. I published a few articles, but, for the most part, wrote and destroyed, re-wrote and re-destroyed. What I didn't destroy I might as well have destroyed, for I never looked at it again.

At long last the war came unbelievably to an end, and life seemed to begin again, November though it was. Soon afterwards I married. Of that event I will only say that if I had a hundred lives I could not expect to be so fortunate matrimonially in the other ninety nine.

I soon began to write another book and my *Study in Realism* appeared in the spring of 1920. On a previous page, when explaining the sort of beliefs I came to entertain about the end of my stay in Cambridge, I said enough (I think) to explain what the book was about. It was, I suppose, my best book, certainly the book that was supposed to stamp me more than any of the others. If known at all, I became known as a “realist”. That was not altogether an advantage, for it is quite usual to say “So and so is a realist. Therefore he must hold this or that. Therefore the sticks that belabour other realists raise immense weals upon his shoulders or upon his behind”. That happened pretty often to me, and was unfair insofar as the realism that I “studied” was expressly declared to be only a theory (or description) of knowledge and was not a realistic metaphysics. The theory of knowledge, in my contention, had

very few implications regarding the nature of things that were not knowing things. It *prevented* certain common inferences of that order, but that was about all it did in the metaphysical way. My later speculations, it is true, such as they were, tended more and more in the direction of a metaphysical “realism”. Here my views about theory of knowledge interposed no obstacle, but my more metaphysical “realism”, if defensible, had to be defended (and as I believe, was defended) upon independent grounds. So I may have deserved a drubbing for reasons outside my *Study*, but I admit I should prefer to have my *Study* castigated for reasons that pertained to it, and not on account of presumptions that had nothing to do with that work.

The times, I think, were propitious for such a book. The English philosophical idealists had become tired after a very long innings. They may have mastered the googly bowling of the early pragmatists but were not vigilant enough in the presence of straight good-length stuff from the new realists. The new realism in England (as I thought) and especially the Cambridge form of it, had reached a stage in which something like system and comprehensiveness might be attempted if there was any health in the doctrine. The time had passed when forays like Moore’s *Refutation* were enough, and Russell’s *Principles of Mathematics* for all its splendid range was rather specialised. I thought in short that a realistic theory of knowledge should be able to say what it had to say not merely about perception and general notions, but also about remembering, and imagining, and assessing worth. I tried to do just that in a series of essays which achieved a certain unity because each had the same task. The task was obvious but there was plenty of room for it. Of necessity much that I said was rather sketchy. No individual essay could overtake the immensely complex analysis that perception, memory or the intellect require and are constantly receiving from philosophers (especially in Britain and in America). But sketches have their uses, and perspective is something. In short, the book had a purpose. I wrote it, I admitted, in rather too allusive a style. I was sometimes artificially lively. I regret certain phrases. I tried to be both solid and provocative, succeeding better in the latter. I thought my first book had been a little too drab. So I made the second one rather garish, knowing that I was doing so but believing, over-confidently, that I could avoid the perils that I foresaw very well. I gingered up the various articles that I had written or destroyed, thinking that there was art in what I did; but I may have produced what was rather too hot for a philosophical effort.

I have said that there was room for the book, but I should also have to admit that it was rather belated. It was overshadowed, of course, by Alexander’s



great *Space, Time, and Deity* where realism, turned metaphysical, made one of its grandest gestures. Russell had already turned from realism to “analytical method in philosophy”. Moore was following him cautiously and critically. So was Broad in a way of his own. In short I was a little too late if timeliness means moving with the flood. I don’t regret the circumstance for I am myself inclined to regret or at least to be suspicious about these so-called advances. I would like to look at them and to learn from them, not to bow before them. I have never been sorry that I wrote the book “dated” though it be, and I have not seen my way to abandon very much of it.

For the rest of my stay in Belfast I wrote no more books, but wrote several articles.

I may say something about these years immediately after the war. The teaching in Belfast was in better shape than in some other places. The immediate effect of the war (or of the peace) upon most British universities was sensibly to lower their standards. War degrees had to be given rather easily and on a shortened curriculum to the men who returned (and for the most part, were subsidised by the government). These war degrees, it is true, had been very hard earned in a moral and in a manly sense, but they did not imply very much proficiency in the academic training for which they nominally vouched. Where such proficiency was really necessary for after life, I fear that these shortened curricula did a serious disservice to their recipients. Indeed I can think of many whose careers have been sadly damaged in that way. Again, the schooling of the country had suffered badly during the war owing to the drain of teachers to the colours. It took several years before this leeway was made up, that is, before the universities could do their job efficiently. Another disquieting circumstance was that many universities went science-mad for the time-being. This, at any rate was disquieting for those who taught the humanities. I allow that if we had foreseen that we should have to fight for our lives again, with only a very brief respite, it might have been better for universities to go completely technological, and leave the humanities to some distant Utopia. If, however, there was any chance of civilising the barracks-cum-arsenal idea of national life the humanities, and they alone, could effectively maintain that perspective.

These educational troubles, as I have said, were less perturbing in Northern Ireland than elsewhere. There had been less dilution of labour in the teaching profession, and we were not science-mad. The continuity of Irish university life during the war made a revolution much less likely. We had a good many ex-service students and some of them got their degree rather

cheaply. Old stagers who had gone to the war were granted what may be called compassionate degrees. In the main, however, we were rather stiff with the ex-service men if they went in for any sort of honours. I think we were right. The mere fact that we were known to be stiff made harshness unnecessary. The men knew where they were, and took the right measures.

In general my honours classes were very well attended and I could see that I was fulfilling a social function. One unintended result, I fear was that I turned some young men away from the Church. It was a rule of the University that nothing should be said that would offend anyone's religious convictions. I loyally tried to respect that hard rule. Still philosophers do talk about "God" even if that philosophical entity is not the First Person of the Trinity. It is difficult to teach philosophy without covertly suggesting that much Christian theology is more of a figment than of a metaphysics, indeed that there is at least some nonsense about it. I am glad that I did not turn many aside; but some I did turn.

Although the war was over, civil commotion in Ireland was not. We heard about the Black and Tans although we did not see them in Belfast. The struggles of Ulster to reconcile itself to the divisibility of an indivisible province were painful and acute. Even "Sir Edward" who made an occasional jaunty appearance had lost most of his glamour. The marching of the Volunteers was past but the days of the curfew and of the murderous I.R.A. were upon us. They did not stop University work, or the commerce of the town, but they diminished life's amenities pretty drastically.

The curfew, which extended from ten at night to six in the morning was an onerous business in a city of 400,000 inhabitants, spread out rather lavishly in a sprawling, low-edificed way. If you were supping with anyone except a near neighbour you might have to streak for home before the supper was well begun. Dances had to go on all night—a toilsome amusement. It was no joke to be caught. A night in the cells is never pleasant and the fastidious did not relish the proximity of the unwashed. Moreover, worse might happen. My mother-in-law's maidservant had a fiancé. Visiting her one evening he outstayed the curfew, and was put in the patrol waggon. As he neared his home he jumped and made a run for it. The soldiers fired and a ricocheting bullet ravaged his leg. He died in about a week.

The British troops enforced the curfew but gave very little other help to the Royal Ulster Constabulary. That body had a very thin time. Four or five gunmen would attack a constable on point duty, and having disposed of him, would retreat shooting. In the areas in which Catholic streets adjoined

Protestant ones, conditions, one would have thought, were intolerable. The houses in some of these streets never saw the light of day for two years. They were sandbagged and gaslit inside. They were tunnelled beneath so that if the police searched any one house, their quarry was in another. Murder for many became a sort of game. Men would go potting with revolvers just for a sort of perverted fun. At one time there were over fifty admitted murders in a week, and actually, in all probability about three times that number. At the peak of the disturbances the I.R.A. or their sympathisers took to arson, and seventeen large buildings were blazing in a single day.

In our section of the city there was no fighting and there were no stray bullets. One might be bombed in a tram; but it was unlikely. I never saw shooting but once. Then, on the top of a tram there were shots on a main thoroughfare. The whole population flocked into the streets in a moment, eager to see what was afoot. In the early days, when there was machine gunning in the streets the curious populace was equally avid. They trotted after the armoured cars. So my wife tells me. She was present on once such occasion.

One incident amused me. On a certain Sunday afternoon our house was empty. When my wife and I returned to it the bell was rung, and our doorstep was filled by an obvious plain-clothes policeman. He had seen a suspicious-looking man, he said, shabbily dressed and with very defective boots, walking rapidly down the Lisburn Road. This person had turned abruptly, and, as it seemed to the policeman, furtively into our avenue, and had called at our house. Since the house was respectable the policeman's suspicions were allayed, only to revive again when, half an hour later, he saw the same man ringing the bell on our doorstep. The policeman suspected that the man was on the run. He even thought that it might be Mike Collins himself. When I asked him whether he did anything about it he replied that he didn't have a revolver.

So the suspect escaped within a couple of hundred yards of a police barracks. Later I was able to reassure the force. A colleague had called twice and had found the house shut on both occasions. I didn't ask him what boots he was wearing.

## VII

### California

In the '20's America was swarming with British lecturers. It was the Great Depression, not the exhaustion of America's patience, that put an end to them later. And after that there was a revival.

I had the luck to be asked to go to the University of California as a visiting professor for the year 1923–1924.

Many Americans say that there is no point in travelling on the American continent. You go vast distances with nowhere to reach. So you excuse the American motorist whose solitary boast is his mileage. I allow that there are not the rewards of European travel, still less, I suppose, the rewards of Asiatic. Yet I found the journey of intense interest, quite apart from its academic resting places. It was well worth one's while, I thought, to do odd things like writing books about philosophy, if a trip like this were to come out of them. The magnificence of the St Lawrence as a waterway, the glories of Quebec (I later spent a week there and I could have delighted in it for months), the charm of French Canada between Montreal and the frontier, the scrub, the lakes and the noble timber of the Adirondacks, the dirty vast rolling prairies, the dirty vast rolling Mississippi, the galloping Indians in their reservations beside the Santa Fé railway, the deserts and the cacti of Arizona, the storm effects on the unirrivable screes near Phoenix—all these things fascinated me. If much of the journey required a stout battle with boredom, if many of the prairie towns seemed like pinkish unlaundered undergarments on an untidy body, if the heat and humidity of August (for in that month we had to travel) needed hope and high spirits to make it tolerable, the whole experience was well worth such incidental discomforts. I had no objection to American sleeping cars and although my passion for tobacco made the smoking-room-cum-lavatory rather a dubious post when the temperature went up to 130 or so, and when the ice one wrapped in a towel gave no moisture but only a certain coolness of evaporation to one's forehead, I still enjoyed the trip.

Also, although it is garish, I can still salute the Grand Canyon of Arizona as one of the wonders of the world. It does achieve a magnificent quality of

surprise. The alps and other grand mountains have to be approached slowly. Their effect grows. It need not overwhelm on the instant. This latter is just what the Grand Canyon of Arizona is bound to do. You climb some thousands of gradual feet in the long journey from Williams. The woods give place to scrub, and to oaks so straight and sparse and un-oak-like that one would take them for feeble bamboos. You disembark and enter a discreet looking hotel. Still there is nothing to see but a slope. You go on to the terrace, and lo! the Canyon is before and beneath and to the side of you, a mile deep or more, about 250 miles long (with local storms putting up a display fifty or a hundred miles off) carved everywhere into great rock masses like kneeling Buddhas in red and purple and bluey-grey, a geological pattern of strata illuminated by nature's crayons, eaten away by the Colorado river that looks like a thin and abashed trickle at the foot. It is an unpaintable canyon and few could paint it in words. But it is unforgettable.

University life at Berkeley is very pleasant and visiting professors are very comfortably quartered, married ones, for the most part, in Cloyne Court—a boarding house so called because Bishop Berkeley was Bishop of Cloyne—unattached males in the Faculty Club. The University Campus, although the buildings suffer from a mixture of styles, and some of them from pretentiousness, has a certain glamour. Strawberry Canyon behind the Campus, and all the foothills are a pleasant climbing ground, even if one hates waterless nature where every trickle is hoarded for irrigation. San Francisco has a peerless site. Even petrol storage cannot destroy the majesty of the great bay. The Golden Gate, and the redwoods on the north are prodigal of stately beauty. Whatever grows is gigantic—heather six foot high, laurel clumps forty foot high, and the like. I could never admire the eucalyptus trees with their untidy peeling bark, like the skins of imprudent sunbathers, and the live oaks seemed to me to be aping the cactus. Nevertheless, I could roam the hills with great delight, taking my chance with poison ivy and even with the tics in the lavender clumps. Motoring, too, was very pleasant though the roads in 1924 were rather like British roads ten years later, no place for people who thought that roads should be walked on. Monterey, Carmel, the Sacramento Valley, the wilder country to the north, some natural marvel like a petrified forest—these were the bait or the excuse. But little excuse was needed. It was pleasant also to know that, except in the valleys, there was no excessive heat. A punctual fog rolling in at eight in the morning, receding at noon and returning about four saw to that.

Early in our stay we had something next door to adventure for there was

a really considerable fire. A forest fire propelled by a very dry wind thrust a spear-head over the foothills and licked its red way into the town. The San Francisco and other fire brigades pursued a policy of drift. It was an extra-territorial fire. So the eucalyptus blazed, and soon the fire leapt in great sheets of flame from terrace to terrace. Burning shingles from the roofs were carried half a mile or so. In a very short time the invading flames had reached the edge of the Campus and had swept round to the business centre of the town. The solid buildings offered some resistance, but few buildings were solid. By a miracle, as it seemed (and I have heard that it was in answer to prayer) the wind suddenly changed and blew the invasion straight back. Had it not done so, nothing could have saved the town.

I was lecturing at the time—it was afternoon. There was a sultry, sulky yellow as I looked out of the window. I told the class that I knew nothing about the Californian climate, but that if they, the knowing ones, thought that there was anything amiss I would stop. They told me to go on and repeated their statements at intervals, until some one thought that there must be some sort of fire. The matter was then beyond doubt. So back to Cloyne Court, swift packing of what seemed most important, the transfer of bags to Wheeler Hall (supposed to be fireproof). That for me and my wife. On the roof of Cloyne Court a student and a Jap were doing heroic work. Perched on the roof they flung down the burning shingle as it fell. They saved the place. In the Campus there was a swarm of fugitives, some dazed, some making frantic enquiries, some carrying quite useless, indeed not quite decent, articles. As it happened there were no casualties of any importance. The students fought the flames gallantly. Fire brigades began to function. The Officers' Training Corps assumed military control. By nightfall what remained of the conflagration was well in hand. We could even walk about, with parched throats, through part of the devastated area. Nothing remained of the frame houses save their chimneys and burning gas pipes—especially the gas pipes in the higher parts of the town.

I didn't like the Californian climate so much as I expected to like it. Even the fog did not excuse so much blue sky. The rains, in the year I was there, forgot to come till January. In consequence the famous golden hills of blue-and-gold California were really bleached. When they did come the rains worked a magical change. All was green and wild-flowered; but one's usual and half-conscious time standards were gravely perturbed. Except—a biggish except—for the magic of the rains there was no visible tempo of the seasons. Each species of plant seemed to have its own time for getting busy with bud

and blossom. In short the seasonal landmarks were too subtle for a mere visitor to appreciate. So life dragged, especially in a fifteen weeks' term. It was rather surprising too that colds and influenza should be just as prevalent in California as elsewhere.

A Spanish friend once told me that he thought there was a more delicate beauty in the greys of British skies than in the winey brilliance of the Mediterranean. This opinion, coming from such a source, seemed odd to me. But there is something hard about the sun. On the other hand, California looked and was very gay. I am not talking about spurious gaiety. The effect of prohibition was to stimulate the opinion that it was *chic* to be *grisé*, especially among the girls. I am talking about the gaiety that one saw, particularly in the looks of the girls and in the bright dresses that matched their very artful complexions. They aged very rapidly, but they had their hour in looks as well as in physique. The men were stout fellows to look upon although their habit of wearing shapeless corduroy trousers and sombreros—for all the world like unspurred and domesticated cowboys—would have been aesthetically false anywhere. In the main I thought that the Californians were very sensible about sex, petting parties notwithstanding. If one paid a call upon a colleague in the evening, the daughter of the house—and she need not be more than sixteen—was pretty certain to have a swain in attendance. Instead of sitting with their elders all evening, or pretending to have an engagement at the pictures, the pair would get up and go to another room after a decent interval of small talk. Everyone seemed to agree that at their time of life their main business was the experiment of getting to know one another. They could be trusted; and there was no hush hush.

California rejoiced in its historical youth—with just enough about Drake and Spanish missions to prevent the felicity of complete non-history. Civilisation, the Californian thought, had moved westwards until it was stopped at long last by the Pacific. The Orient might be neglected. Civilisation had been cradled there but had not grown up. There was or there professed to be a few “native sons” and “native daughters”, that is, a few who were descended from the forty-niners. There was also a largish elderly population from the middle west escaping from the rigours of a prairie winter. They congratulated themselves from November to March. Essentially, however, pride of youth was the ruling passion of the state. That was true even within the University staff. The great majority of the University teachers, it is true, came from the Eastern states. Most of them felt themselves to be exiles even if they seldom said so. But even the exiles had imbibed and may have been intoxicated with the paulo-

post-pioneer spirit. That was sometimes shown in silly ways. For instance they were always growing mushroom traditions, and revering five-year-old ones as if they had the firmness of tradition proper. They may also have affected the silly airs of those who hold that all that is old is effete. In the main, however, their self-conscious and joyful juvenility was not at all silly.

I thought there was a very high standard of efficiency among the teachers, higher than the law of averages would suggest in an institution that, in one way or another, had about 2000 teachers, including the part-timers. Cynics, it is true, pointed to a bridge in the Campus in which the “a” of *Hanc* pontem had not been completely obliterated by the masons. Nevertheless the perpetrator of this crime was a very good Latinist. I thought that the teaching of the arts was in very capable hands, and could assume that the teaching of the sciences was not in worse hands.

Democracies always worship something, ideal or idol as the case may be. In America generally, I believe and certainly in California, the ideal (or the idol) was education. Its cult was a religion and although priests are not always revered where religion is revered, it was something to be a professional exponent of a thing that was worshipped.

In view of this attitude towards education, I thought that California might have done better than it did. Part of the trouble, no doubt was as good as inevitable at the time. If your ideal is a University education for all, you can hardly expect the same standards as if you try to educate a select few. To be sure, not all young Californians did actually attend some University. There were about 11,000 whole-time students in Berkeley, 2,500 at Stanford, about 10,000 in the two universities at Los Angeles, some thousands in scattered degree-granting institutions mostly of churchly origin, and a few specialists at Pasadena, in the Observatories and in the medical school at San Francisco. Still, if Universities are put within the reach of all, especially state-universities like Berkeley where there were no tuition fees and a very good chance of earning enough (as a waiter, say) for one’s keep, the inevitable result was that many came up to the university with very insufficient schooling. Entrance was by a schoolmaster’s certificate and the standard of the schools was very low. The University turned some five hundred away every year, after they had shown what they were (or weren’t). But the residue was largely pretty weak. Indeed the underlying assumption appeared to be that nothing much could be done with a student until after he had taken his degree. Then the Ph.D. system began to operate. It has been much reviled and quite unjustly. The doctorate simply meant that the successful candidate was judged worthy of undertaking



university teaching. Here the level (although unequal) was high and the tests well devised although the ordeal of undergoing a public oral examination for at least three hours had amusing aspects. On the other hand, no school can be healthy if its main object is self-perpetuation. Therefore the excellence of the graduate schools scarcely compensated the defects at the beginning. Again, the graduates specialised very narrowly, perhaps on an insecure foundation.

Such defects might have righted themselves. The schools might be improved. There was plenty of money since petrol was converted into education by a tax of so many cents on the gallon. Again it might have been perceived that the ideal of university education for the many implies, as a corollary, the provision of another kind of education for the able few.

I thought that money was squandered from another cause. In Great Britain we may err in a different way from the Californians. We are accustomed to hold that a certain basic routine, very little varied, is essential in this or in the other subject. In each subject the teacher traverses this beaten track year after year, and is lucky if he finds any by-ways at all to dally in. His teaching may even tend to be a mortmain. Its dead hand may mortify the minds of most of the pupils. But at any rate the specialists have been drilled before they specialise.

In California, I thought, the error was all the other way, and was egregious. The teachers, to prevent themselves from getting into a rut, were road-making all the time. In philosophy there had, of course, to be instruction in Logic, Ethics, and in some other standard subject, but, even there, there was a disposition, wherever possible, to prevent the same man from giving the same course year after year. When a man began to improve his technique in Logic, say, he had to turn to Aesthetics. Indeed he was encouraged to manufacture subjects when there weren't any. The University Calendar was tricked out with neologisms in the titles of courses; and so the teaching staff had to grow. Versatility among teachers may thus have been encouraged but the students (as it seemed to me) had to pay too high a price. They were asked to undertake adventures without any equipment that could be called such.

The students were democratic. They invigilated themselves at examinations. That was called the "honour" system. Since the teachers were excluded I have no first hand knowledge of how the system worked, but I have something more than a mere suspicion that if any part of a paper were judged unfair such information as anyone possessed was placed at the free disposal of the others. I suspect, too, but I only suspect that a good many lame dogs were helped over a good many stiles.

Another thing that seemed odd to me was the extent to which the examinees systematically distrusted the examiners. The size of the classes—there might be 1000 and there were very often 500—implied a large staff of correctors. These were, for the most part, “readers” i. e. young graduates, often proceeding to a higher degree, who did the necessary spade-work for a small wage. The students believed that there was no intelligible relation between the marks awarded and the standard attained. At first when parents wrote to me about it, I only smiled; and similarly when the students themselves made complaint. But I had my eyes opened when a girl, who came to tell me that she was invariably an A and never a B—showed complete amazement when she learned that I myself had awarded the mark. Such a possibility had never entered into her head. I confess that I had no great respect for my “readers”, though they varied in quality. Unless there was just one right answer they were very querulous, and if a question involved any preparation on their part they would solemnly warn me that this sort of thing wouldn’t do and that I must ask what they were used to.

I cannot say that I enjoyed lecturing to enormous classes. My biggest one, on elementary logic, was 600 strong and sat in Wheeler Hall which would seat 1100. The acoustics were imperfect. The hour, 2 p.m., made for somnolence. Having once had a good platform voice I had smoked most of it away, and what I said, if it wasn’t pure English also wasn’t good American (I don’t know how they expected me to pronounce the most ordinary logical terms). So that class was not a great success, and I was lucky not to break my neck at it. There was an immense platform, often used as a stage, the edge of it at least six feet above the floor with nothing enclosing it. I perambulate while lecturing and, once at least could hardly keep my balance at the extreme edge of the platform. I was glad to have a smaller logic class in the second term and so to proceed to a smaller and less dangerous lecture-room where I could address my 450 students (or so) in comparative comfort.

It seems to me that there are limits to the size of a class that can be effectively taught. You can’t teach if you can’t converse, and you can’t converse if you have to make a public speech. I think 120 or thereabouts is the maximum for a conversational method of teaching. If there is to be effective discussion between teacher and taught I think the maximum is about 25. That was the size of my seminar at Berkeley, and I found it stimulating and of good quality.

I have mentioned the stage at Wheeler Hall. I may add that the students had much talent for acting, and that many of them wrote plays that were produced and acted either in Wheeler Hall or *al fresco* in the Greek Theatre.

Their education fostered this sort of initiative, and I commended it in my heart accordingly. It has always seemed to me that students of literature shouldn't merely talk about literature but should also try their hands at making it. They did make such attempts in California, not merely as the spirit moved them but also as their instructors demanded of them.

All the great go sometime to San Francisco, and quite humble people have a better chance of meeting persons of renown than they would have in London or in Paris. I don't think we met anyone really famous though we heard about several in a gossipy, intimate sort of way. But I heard Chaliapin sing and saw Duse act. Duse was staging a come back for financial reasons and was quite exhausted. She ployed the exacting part of the mother in Ibsen's *Ghosts* when I saw her, and the pathos of the occasion was all the greater for me because she was so very like my mother, especially in the play of her hands and features. My mother was then very ill, and when I had last seen her looked as Duse looked, eyes unnaturally bright, the face bones showing where once there had been firm and comely flesh. I found that evening at the theatre infinitely depressing. Duse died in the States about a month later, but I was to see my mother again.

The University of California made elaborate contacts with the outside world by a system of importation of temporary teachers from Europe and from the eastern seaboard of America. The representatives of English culture in my time were Sir Paul Vinogradoff, a Russian, T. R. Glover who had been born in Glasgow and was scarcely a representative of Cambridge although he was public orator there, myself who was Scotch and Sir John Adams, formerly Professor of Education in London who was very Scotch indeed. Vinogradoff had poor health and failing eyesight. Glover made the mistake of supposing that the sort of wise-crack that went down in Cambridge was understood in California. But Adams was a remarkable creature. He was a little man, a bearded Punch to look at, though without the hump. He was indefatigable. He would go to Texas to lecture, and returning to California put in a lecture there on his way home from the train. He and his wife tapped continually on their two typewriters in the same room. (They had the opposite landing to ours in Cloyne Court). Some little time after we left, Sir John Adams sailed for New Zealand, of course to lecture. He fell down a gangway and fractured his skull, blood pouring from one of his ears which was destroyed. But he didn't allow a little thing like that to upset him. He said he had still one good ear left.

Adams gave me a dinner when I was leaving California, and one incident at the dinner amused me very much. He made a speech, of course, and

commended me for doing things quietly instead of talking about what I meant to do. (That was true. I have always been very secretive about a book, say, until it is actually in the press). Then he told the company that he was going to let me in to a secret. He had been the publisher's reader for my first book and therefore regarded me as a sort of godson. What he did not say, and may have forgotten was that the book had been declined. It was another firm that published it.

We had a week in the Yosemite Valley before we left California, enjoying it vastly as well as the Mariposa Groves, and the encounter not too distant of a bear in the woods, and, less happily, a rattlesnake. We returned by the Feather River Canyon, Salt Lake and Denver. The ducks on Salt Lake were almost entirely above the water resting on it as if it were land. This route took us over the "top of the world" at about 11,000 feet. The altitude had a sad effect upon a fellow traveller whose sleeping berth, as it happened, was next to my wife's. He was seized with religious mania and like Borrow's hero went on repeating that he had sinned against the Holy Ghost. Later during the night he possessed himself of a knife, I don't know for what purpose, and the negro attendant in the Pullman had to disarm and imprison him. So the negro said; and my wife heard something of the business while I was sound asleep.

We spent a fortnight in New York. I had a pleasant short visit to Harvard and another to Princeton. I also saw some of the Columbia people including Dewey. Dewey's personal charm was unforgettable although, at the time, he didn't seem to have a single moment to spare. He and I, unknown to one another, arrived at the Harvard Club in New York, where we were to be introduced and lunched, about a quarter of an hour before the due time. Dewey looked like a rather shabby journalist. He produced a huge mass of newspapers from the pockets of an untidy overcoat, took out a blue pencil and proceeded to use it diligently.

We had the pleasure of travelling back with Bertrand Russell on the *Celtic*. I hadn't seen him since Cambridge days. For a good part of the time he was writing for the popular journals, and deploring the style he was forced (he said) to adopt for that purpose. But his talk was not less brilliant than it had been, and he gave many hours of every day to that.

I had only one other visit to America, going to Texas in the summer to lecture about two years later. Texas in the summer was as hot as I expected it to be. I found I could stand heat, but not with pleasure. I got very thin in a very few weeks (I had to break off the enterprise for private reasons before its due completion). However I broke a bone in my foot within a week of my

## VIII

### Aberdeen

When we returned to Ulster in June of 1924 the gunmen seemed to have left the place for good and the prospects of a placid life to be distinctly more favourable. I sat down to write a book on ethics, having prepared the way by giving a course on that subject in California.

The time passed pleasantly, but a sort of general post among the professorships of philosophy in Scotland was rather disturbing. Lindsay left Glasgow to become the new Master of Balliol. James Seth retired from Edinburgh. Hetherington took Lindsay's place, A.E. Taylor went from St Andrews to Edinburgh, and Morrison succeeded him at St Andrews. There seemed to be no place for me in all Scotland and I was sorry for it. Once a professor, I had always hoped to be a Scots professor. Besides I thought that I had been long enough in Belfast and that Belfast thought so too.

As it happened there was yet another vacancy in Scotland since Baillie of the Moral Philosophy Chair in Aberdeen became Vice-Chancellor of Leeds.

I very nearly missed the appointment. I knew that the chair was a Regius chair but didn't know what every Scotsman at the time was presumed to know, viz. that any one who fancied himself for such a post was supposed without invitation to send an application accompanied by testimonials to the Secretary for Scotland. (That is changed now. Instructions are given in the press). So I looked and went on looking for an advertisement but found none. I supposed that the thing was being done clandestinely as had happened in all the other Scottish philosophy appointments that summer. In the end I learned the true state of affairs from two sources, the first from a man who wanted a testimonial from me unless I were applying myself, the second Pringle Pattison who wrote to enquire why on earth I wasn't applying. I thought the opportunity had passed but I wrote to the Secretary saying that I was probably too late but that, on the chance that I wasn't, I would ask certain people to send him testimonials direct.

I never saw the testimonials, and I prefer that way of making application. Rather unwillingly, but with some curiosity and without active resistance, I was shown excerpts from some of them later. They were franker than most such documents. One of them said that I was rather attractive after my first shyness

had worn off.

At any rate I was appointed, and so am able to call this narrative “The Autobiography of a Scots Professor”. In my youth, at any rate to one of my upbringing, the title seemed well worth coveting. In those days a Scots Professor was *ex officio* something of a person. He isn’t now. There are too many, for one thing. Still, although my head has no illusions on the point, my heart almost flutters from an older strain in me.

The venture was almost entirely fortunate. I had been afraid that my wife would regret the change, in sort, that she was being self-sacrificing when she encouraged me to make the move. But she became even more of an Aberdonian than I was. That is saying a good deal. I like smallish cities preferably rather remote where the town grows out of and does not overshadow the country. I hope I shall be able to spend the rest of my life in Aberdeen and am glad that I never tried to leave it and never allowed myself to be enticed out of it.

What I wanted, most of all, was greater leisure for writing. There I succeeded almost too well because my honours classes in Aberdeen became and remained much too small. This decline had begun in Scotland before 1914 and was very marked after 1918. In all the other Scottish universities, however, there was a constant if diminished flow of honours students in philosophy, or, at any rate, in an honours course that included philosophy as a major constituent. I discouraged all such combinations and in pure philosophy (as we call it, rather sententiously and not very nicely) I had very few honours men and occasionally none. The pass courses, being compulsory were large, but, by themselves, were scarcely a whole-time job.

The general reasons for this decline were clear enough. In the old days a philosophy school bred divines and lawyers. It could not flourish if its business was only to breed professional philosophers. In Aberdeen there were very few would-be barristers and, if there were any, new schools like economics or history attracted them more. In Scotland the divines were the majority of the school; and metaphysical or for that matter theological sermons had gone completely out of fashion. The divines took to English literature instead, and so, I suppose, became more graceful and interesting. I believe they also became less effective. Theology is nothing if it is not metaphysical and an untheological minister may be a parson and a saint but must always be a vague creature intellectually.

Indeed I can dismiss the teaching part of my life in Aberdeen in very few words. Moral philosophy is a rather restricted subject unless one interprets it over-generously in order to expatiate at large. I had no mind to do that,

although, when I had honours classes, I used rather arbitrarily (though by arrangement) to teach subjects that, strictly interpreted, belonged rather to the domain of my colleague in Metaphysics. The students worked hard, and I daresay that they shared my prejudices about morals. At any rate I found them rather too easy to convince, and very unwilling to be moved to scepticism even of the most provisional kind. Still as each year rolled on I had the very genuine pleasure of noticing what seemed to be a surprising advance, like the coming of spring although not quite so rapid. It was largely illusion, I daresay. My pupils—there might be eighty or there might only be forty—learned to imitate the way philosophers talk and to select the sort of point that philosophers select. They need not, really, have been much more perspicacious about moral questions than they had been before they had me to talk to them for a hundred lectures per annum. But I certainly effected a change and so could truthfully say that I had really been doing something. I tried to think, perhaps correctly, that in a general and often in an oblique way they were being educated.

I can also, I think, be rather brief about matters of administration. That also is part of one's job as a Scots professor, and in Aberdeen, where the administrative work went round, it occupied altogether rather a large part of one's time. I hoped to keep out of committees, but I attended them very regularly if I had to serve on them, and I talked more than most on nearly all that I did attend. I think I had my way in about sixty per cent of the decisions, that is to say I was in the majority for about that proportion of the cases. I was Dean of the Faculty in due course, and for a shortish time served upon the University Court which is the governing body of the University although in Aberdeen it has usually the sense to let the Senatus play its proper part in governing also.

Looking back upon all these committees, and Senatus debates, and discussions in the Court, and inter-university gatherings (such as the Scottish Universities' Entrance Board of which I have been a rather voluble member for many years) I have recollections of an inevitable but also of an interesting evil. The interest indeed was quite considerable. If I had the novelist's art and a dictaphone to remind me I could make quite an interesting story about acuteness, professional ethics playing for position, party spirit, offended virtue, subterranean trickery, misunderstandings, stupidity and what not. On the whole I think it is likely enough that academic bodies show democracy at its worst. It is rare for anyone to have a policy, still rarer to have a sense of proportion. Nearly anyone can make points (for nearly every one has some ability) but most of them slide round their points as if they were holding on

to a lamppost on a frosty street. It is unusual for a University administrator to retain very much of a conscience and few bodies can be the equals of University bodies in overriding established rules of procedure for the sake of what is said to be convenience.

One point that struck me very forcibly was the debility of these bodies in matters of discipline. If a single man is in charge of such matters, he may, I suppose, be very arbitrary and often quite unjust, but the thing at least is hidden and is regarded largely as a personal matter both by the delinquent and his judge. When committees do the work, or when there is an appeal to a larger body such as the Senatus, there are few of the advantages of private rule and nothing to compensate in the way of public tradition and precedent. Everybody tries to be just and to treat each case on its merits, but since they disregard all rules and precedents, they land themselves in the most deplorable inconsistencies. I had never understood how essential long experience is to the working of any sort of court until I saw how university bodies floundered about in their well-meaning way. The lawyers in the Senatus were as bad as the rest. For example they would say that since X had not been confronted with the witnesses against him, this being undesirable when the said witnesses were fellow students, nothing could be accepted except X's own confession. This meant in effect that X's story, such as it was, was interpreted in the light of what the witnesses had said, and, in fact, disbelieved in important respects. But perhaps there were worse people than the lawyers, viz. the amateur lawyers who made a practice of reading the law reports in *The Times*. I remember a debate (not about discipline) in which the question was whether words were to be taken in their ordinary sense, or in the extraordinary sense that might perhaps be presumed to have been in the mind of the party who spoke them. The muddle was unimaginal.

I shall say something about some of my colleagues at Aberdeen.

When I went there the Principal was Sir George Adam Smith, formerly one of Scotland's foremost preachers who, when Professor of Hebrew in Glasgow had reawakened a lively interest in the Hebrew prophets. He had also been one of the best raconteurs in the country and it was impossible to spend half an hour in his company without enjoying and admiring the geniality of his distinction. It is another question whether the Principalship was his proper métier. Ramsey MacDonald said it was his burial. Admirable on all ceremonial occasions, he was not an administrator and he thought of the Senatus as a rather bewildering Kirk Session. In general his determined efforts to shed the sacred and assume the secular, except in his dress and when he preached, were



quite unconvincing. He was also rather indiscreet; but in his house he was wholly charming and immensely kind. His human-heartedness combined with his early pastoral experience made him an ideal guide for any student who was not quite fortunate. On all ceremonial occasions his admirable voice and the opulence of his rhetoric made his performance memorable. His rare lapses from resplendent dignity came from a ministerial habit of paying fulsome compliments to local worthies. I have heard him spoil a funeral service by reading a telegram from an estimable man whom everyone knew to be worlds inferior to the deceased. He remained a great preacher although, towards the end of his active career the contrast between the beginning of the sermon (which was old) and the end of it (which was new) was a little saddening. He sometimes forced his voice in the pulpit; but it was a noble instrument.

Among the others Arthur Thomson was best known to the outside world, Hector Macdonald was the ablest, Jack was the rhetorician and Harrower came the nearest to becoming legendary during his lifetime.

Sir J. Arthur Thomson came of clerical stock and had himself had some training in divinity. In his early days, I am told, he was very shy, but the information may not be quite reliable. It was given me by a former pupil in a very genteel girls' seminary in Edinburgh. However that may be, he had lost all traces of nervousness at the time I knew him, especially in his public speeches which were always works of art. The last time I heard him speak was at a huge concourse in the Music Hall of Aberdeen when he proposed the vote of thanks to Lloyd George. There was a dreadful moment when the elaborate biological analogy he had skilfully built up nearly fell to pieces since he forgot the name of the little bird that was to clinch it. (Lady Thomson forbade all further public speeches). Except for faint traces of the pulpit the speech was a thing of beauty, immensely better than Lloyd George's on that occasion.

Thomson was a literary and moralising biologist. True, he loved birds and beasts and delighted to learn and to speak about their habits, but chiefly for their human interest and for the parables that might be drawn from their ways—whether, for instance, the earwig was a good mother or the hippopotamus monogamous. In later life the habit of writing had become a disease. He had little fresh to say but would sit for hours round his fire (his heart was very bad) covering small sheets with large writing and strewing the floor with his deft observations. Collected they became a weekly column in the *Glasgow Herald*, and, later, a purling stream of little books. His house was a sort of literary factory. One Easter vacation his daughter was writing children's stories (at which she excelled), a son, about to take up a post in

Canada was trying to win a prize with a detective story (he won the second prize), Thomson was producing his Easter book and I think that yet another member of the family was keeping the printers busy.

Macdonald's ability would have shown itself in any company. In saying this I am thinking not so much of his own special subject, which was mathematics and more particularly mathematical physics. There I suppose (although I do not know for certain) his career was, on the whole, a not inadequate indication of his status—high honours in Aberdeen, a good place among the wranglers at Cambridge, a Smith's prize, a Clare Fellowship and later an honorary fellowship, an early Fellowship of the Royal Society, a medal and other recognition from that body, sundry books of importance in their time. When I knew him it is possible that his ideas about mathematical physics had become rather ossified. He was pre- rather than anti-relativity. (In that matter we had G. P. Thomson, later a Nobel prize-winner, to give us the other side). But, as I say, I am not talking about his mathematics.

What I am thinking about is the range of his various capacities. A son of the soil, of the Rossshire soil, he seemed to gather into himself all the rich strength of the best peasant stock. He was shrewd, cautious and penetrating in his judgment of men and of things—of all sorts of men and, of things, chiefly of fields and of stones and mortar. I allow that he was farther away from omniscience than he thought. One does not become a universal historian by having studied the history of the Byzantine Empire in one's youth. But all his conclusions were based on evidence and on the native logic of a powerful, independent mind. He would tolerate folly because he expected it but he despised everything that seemed to him to be complex without being subtle and he prided himself upon a subtlety that could dismiss needless complexities.

In build he was squat, and enormously strong, with long powerful arms. He was proud of his mountaineering exploits in Switzerland, I do not know with what justice. In later life his many hill walks were laborious affairs, and I saw little evidence that he was what he thought he was, a sort of biological compass inerrant in its sense of direction. I am sure, judging from his golf, that he must always have been very bad at ball games, though he said he quite frequently made breaks of 70 or so at billiards. He was round-headed, rather slow in speech, the perfect peasant to look upon. In public he said little, waiting for an opportunity to say something telling, and almost always making it tell. He abhorred a set speech and I never heard him make a good one. In private, however, his conversation had the rare merit that survives the most sceptical retrospect. His jests which were frequent but never too frequent had

an invariable and most singular appositeness. So were the stories he told, and all the more because he was sparing in his use of them. His humour was as deep as his wit was sharp. I saw a great deal of him, for we met at least twice a week either in his house in mine. For the most part we discussed subjects on the borderline between his professional interests and my own.

He knew perfectly well that my ignorance of mathematics was deeper than a mere lack of familiarity with its technique, but he contrived to reach and sustain a level on which interchange was possible. Since my mother had come from Rossshire and had indeed been a near-contemporary of his in a school in Tain he chose to regard me as a sort of stepson, but our interest in and affection for one another survived even that pseudo-relationship.

When Macdonald returned to Aberdeen in the early years of the present century he devoted himself from the first to Scottish education, to University business, to the stones of King's College chapel and to the farms that the University owned. Within a few years he had become the effective administrator of the place, in finance as well as in other matters. His régime lasted for twenty years and aroused opposition towards its close. His views about finance may have been overcautious and peasant-like and his ideas regarding the country's needs in education may have been rather inelastic. Certainly he held the reins so long that other hands seemed clumsy when they so much as touched them. At the end he felt the opposition very keenly though he complained not at all. In that as in other things he was a great peasant-gentleman. When he knew that the disease he dreaded above all others must have its way with him he literally gave up the ghost within a very few days. An exploratory operation, a week of mental readjustment without much suffering, and then the last tired breath.

Professor Adolphus Alfred Jack was (and, in his retirement, still is) a master in the cultured picturesque. He required time to develop his art when he spoke, and space when he wrote. He took both. He lived in a world of belles lettres and it was difficult to separate the substance of what he said or wrote from the byplay, the embellishment and the sheer inconsequence of it; but it was impossible not to listen to him and very difficult to tire of his urbane, unexpected and engaging periods. He was all-compounded of Universities. His father had been Professor of Mathematics in Glasgow and also editor of the Glasgow Herald. An ancestor had been a professor at Aberdeen. His wife, a cousin, was the daughter of another Glasgow professor, Nichol of *English Composition* fame. Adolphus Ward of Peterhouse was another relative. When his portrait was painted Jack said he was glad to hang with his ancestors. His

private library was a treasure house of books that looked to be something and also were something. He was beloved and admired by a crowded generation of students, many of whom advanced and adorned English letters. Oddly enough, however, one of them brought a law-suit against him for unwarrantable harshness.

John Harrower became Professor of Greek in Aberdeen when he was young and remained Professor of Greek when he was old. He succeeded Geddes of the *Greek Grammar*, who became principal, and married Geddes's daughter (who therefore was only a few months out of the Greek Manse). I am told that Harrower could squeeze the last drops out of half a page of Herodotus in about three lectures, and in his own way he was a very fine teacher, provided always that the pupil conformed to pattern. Like the man in the Bible, Harrower always held that the old was better, at any rate if it was old enough and Greek as well as old. Given that standard of perfection he could be scathing about everything else; but he liked young people if he abhorred young ideas. He could be almost unbelievably cantankerous. Once I asked him to meet Dewey at dinner. He chose to say and repeat that all democrats, and all Americans and all socialists were riff-raff who should be shot, Very often, however, his violence would subside in the face of ridicule. Indeed he was rather a timid big stiff man, but he always breathed fire until he was stopped and the flames were entertaining as well as scorching, His conventionalism accepted modern games at which he was industrious and not inexperienced. Until he was nearly forty he employed a professional to bowl to him at the nets. He was very fond of golf and arranged and cultivated an annual golf match with Glasgow which was a great and growing success despite the stiffness of its elaborate ritual. (For a long time it was decided by holes and not by matches). All his students loved him and so did most of us. His wife who died soon after we came to Aberdeen was a wholly delightful neighbour for the brief space we had of her company. Like her husband she was rather timid and, unlike him, she was rather silent. She could talk, however, and talk well, especially about Old Aberdeen and the strange people who used to live there in her girlhood, One pair of old ladies I remember went about veiled, summer and winter, for fear of sunstroke. Mrs Harrower put some of her reminiscences down in writing, but spoiled the effect by writing in a starched and glossy style. It is a pity that so much of her lore has been lost.

One thing that I thought very odd about Harrower was the extreme prudishness of his tastes in literature. I had not expected that of a classic; but it was so. He seldom missed an occasion of railing at the University of

Aberdeen for having given Thomas Hardy an honorary degree. Was not Hardy, he asked, the author of *Jude the Obscure*?

I see I have been talking about colleagues much my senior. I am now one of the seniors myself, in standing if not very obviously in years. Of the juniors (G. P. Thomson having left long ago) much the most distinguished was Lancelot Hogben, a live wire with the current always on, and inclined to spark pretty often. I have seen less of him than I would have liked to see, but have heard many of his dangerous thoughts duly advertised as such. In conversation he was one of the country's brightest young things, and I do not doubt that he had one of the quickest brains, and one of the quickest tongues in Europe.

As I make these reflections Mr Hogben has been having a much more exciting time than the rest of us. In the spring of 1940 he went to his beloved Uppsala to lecture. He was in Oslo when the Germans invaded Norway, escaped to Sweden, made his way across Siberia to Kobe and is now in New York. The rest of us have just completed a session to which the Nazi War made surprisingly little difference, largely because the Government decided not to call up young men under twenty. I don't suppose that our numbers diminished by as much as ten per cent, and we had no Air Raid Warning till the examinations were over. At our graduation, with nearly a thousand people present, we had a stroke of luck. The ceremony took place a day before our first serious daylight raid when H.E. bombs were dropped within fifty yards of the building where the ceremony had taken place. I was promoting the Arts graduands and would have found my scarlet gown rather less appropriate than the Warden's tin hat I wore next day at the same hour and place. During the raid there was a large crouching unhurt wedding party in the chapel; but there were casualties quite near.

I should perhaps have said more about my time at Aberdeen. I may return to the subject if I survive the present war and am able, in relative tranquillity, to let my memory rove over the last fifteen years and compare them with the new order of things that is almost certain to succeed the present appalling struggle. For the moment, however, I prefer to say no more but instead to give some account of my prolonged attempts to write philosophy. As I have said the chief aspiration of my life was just to write, if possible creditably, if not, at least to try to express myself as well as I could. It seemed to me, going to a comparatively leisured post at the age of thirty-seven and with some experience of the writer's trade, that the time had come for me to write whatever was in me to write. Philosophers, on the whole, mature later than

most other authors, and I had some acquaintance with the depths of my own ignorance. I thought, however, that if I delayed I would do no better and might do worse or nothing at all. I did not expect to have a long life, although, until I was fifty, there was no particular reason for expecting a short one. Anyway I enjoyed writing, and proposed to give myself that enjoyment so long as opportunity served.

Looking back on these fifteen years I do not see how they could have been more fortunate for one of my temperament. A charming house, agreeable surroundings, a climate that suited me, enough of books, enough of travel, enough of business, enough of conferences and such like half-instructive play-work, some friends, no enemies or none that mattered, and, for many years, quite fair health. Above all a vivid interest in most that I did and enough practical philosophy to endure such boredom as came my way.

## IX

### Writing

As I have said, I intend to conclude this narrative with an account of my labours with the pen at the time when I thought I was best able to use it, but I should like to explain, or, for that matter, to explain all over again, the spirit in which I am doing so. I am writing this so-called autobiography for my own amusement, and not because I conceive myself to have much excuse for writing an autobiography at all. Such an excuse, I think, would have to belong to one or other of the three orders. An extrovert has an excuse for autobiography if he has been active in stirring events, and can speak, at first hand, about famous men. If he had art at his disposal (but he would need a good deal of it) he might give a vivid picture of lesser events and of lesser men provided that his record was of crisp human interest describing what was significant for the type although perhaps obscure until it was noticed in the individual. I am not an extrovert; my life has been as quiet as the times allowed; I have had little to say about famous men; and I do not have the art that makes lesser men shine out in all the rich humanity that somehow they possess. An introvert has an excuse for autobiography if he can subtly record himself and make a moving drama (let us hope, a truthful drama) of the progress or decline of his own spirit. I am an introvert, but I have no moving inner history to record, and, if I had, I should prefer to be reticent about what might pass for such a story. So I have deliberately attempted nothing of the kind.

The third excuse I might have had would be of the personally impersonal order. If my philosophy had had a beginning a middle and an end, unfolding itself in a continuous clear development I would have been entitled to tell that story even if I knew that the worth of the achievement was highly questionable. Such a story would be personal in one sense, impersonal in another. It would be *my* history but also the history of the birth and growth of a certain set of ideas. To a lesser extent, had I produced work of note I might supply psychologists with material for what Schiller might have called the psychologic of intellectual discovery. These excuses also cannot be mine. I wrote when I thought I had anything to say, but never with the expectation of making more than an interim, ephemeral contribution, writing and re-writing (for I never wrote easily) until the thing seemed to have taken such shape as I

could give it, and then publishing it, not because I came near to being satisfied, but simply because the thing *might* be worth someone's perusal. I wrote on a variety (although upon a rather restricted) variety of topics, several of them estranged from one another although not (I hope) mutually incoherent. I produced nothing that could be called *a* philosophy. As for achievement, there was properly speaking none. In any important sense I have to record a failure. I have already survived most that I wrote and expect to survive the rest even if I do not live very long. I was never at any time regarded as a leader in my own country and at my own moment, to say nothing of other countries and of other moments. Mine was just a voice from the gallery occasionally heard when there was a casual lull. I have no regrets about this. Philosophy is a difficult subject. I was better fitted for it than for anything else but I hadn't the brains to do really good work of any magnitude in any subject under the sun. I had my chance and I enjoyed the attempt to seize it. I fumbled but am not ill content. On the other hand, I want to admit, very frankly, that a story of this kind, although interesting to me, need to have the slightest interest for anybody else.

So much in general; and I have already told what little I chose to tell about the two sizeable books I wrote before I went to Aberdeen, the first about personality, and the second about realistic epistemology. I may shorten the remaining narrative if I make some brief remarks about the extent to which I later pursued these special themes. There is not much of importance to record. On the theme of personality I wrote a second book, this time a little one, for a series. It was written and also published while I was in California. The title was *The Idea of the Soul*. In part, and in a very broad sense, it was a résumé of my earlier conclusions but was less precise and, for that reason, not so good. The entire series was remaindered fairly soon, and my contribution to the series deserved to be. So, I think did most of the others. I also wrote a short book about body and mind for the Clarendon Press series of *World Manuals*. That I did, not because I liked the subject—for I preferred to approach it in other ways—but because I thought it would be cowardly to funk the thing. I couldn't pretend that it was off my beat. I don't commend the book. It defended a species of dualism, or at least of pluralism in which attention was confined to a plurality of two for the purpose in hand, but on premises that at the time seemed delicate and now seem to me to be so shaky as to give no promise of stability at all. Briefly the question is whether, if X has quite peculiar functions, it must therefore be a quite peculiar substance. In one sense the answer is plainly in the affirmative. That is the sense (which needs careful



definition) in which a thing is what it does. It does not follow, however, that if we who are embodied exercise mental functions (which are quite peculiar) we are therefore compounded of an unminding body and an unembodied mind. We may just be minding bodies or (comparatively) shapely minds. In my little book *Our Minds and Their Bodies* I didn't, I think, put the case quite fairly.

Epistemological realism remained a life interest, and I often returned to it in articles mostly written in rather chastened vein but attempting to be firm in the end. That is still my attitude although it is opposed to most that has been written in this country during the last twenty years. I made only one elaborate attempt to return to it, and then in an oblique way. A friend of mine in America asked me to write a book on realism for a series he was editing. After ten years, he said, I ought to be able to review the subject all over again and he was willing to give me all the space I wanted. I told him that I was tired of realism as such but that I would like to discuss epistemology in general; and I was greatly attracted by the space allowance for in most of my books I have been haunted by the fear that the public couldn't stand a very full treatment and so that one had to condense much beyond one's desires. In short I fell for the offer and produced my longest book *Knowledge, Belief and Opinion*. It was not successful. Those who were interested in the subject wanted minuter treatment of the several themes (and they were legion) that I had to discuss. For the others there were too many minutiae and nothing very substantial to take hold upon. There is a place, and I believe there is need for such a book, but mine (very properly I have no doubt) was in little demand and will be in less. If I had given my life to it I might have made it better, but I doubt whether many would have thought so. The verdict almost certainly would have been "Quite a creditable effort one must suppose; but life is short; and so-and-so is much more stimulating about imagination"—or about probability.

When I was in California I had elected to give a course on ethics because I intended to write on that subject. It had always interested me and although I had not taught it since I left St Andrews I thought that it suited my turn of mind. Returned from California I spent that summer in writing most of a projected book on ethics, and I published the book a year later, being by that time a professional moralist. The book was called *A Study in Moral Theory*.

I fear the *Study* suffered from over-confidence. It seemed to me to be clear that only the goodness of actions justified them morally—either the goodness in them or the goodness that flowed from them—and that Moore was utterly right in maintaining that "good" was a unique property, intellectually discernible, that certain human actions and experiences actually did have.

Where Moore was mistaken I thought was in holding that “Good” in this general sense (i.e. intrinsic good) was necessarily or peculiarly ethical. Moral goodness seemed to me to be a species of goodness in general, aesthetic goodness e.g. would be another species. In short, Moore’s *Principia Ethica*, as I thought, would have been more correctly called *Principia Axiologica*. If this were so it was necessary (a) to distinguish ethical from other “good” and (b) to examine the quite special obligation that attaches to moral duty. On the first point I thought that a question became moral when one either tried or neglected to try, to do one’s best, and I argued—this was the new fruit—that this attempt to do one’s best was a self-imposed categorical imperative. These contentions, sketched rather rapidly, were the exordium of the book and also the backbone of its argument. Most of the rest was intended to be a psychological and sociological development of the theme though always in an abstract way. The general argument seemed to me to be too obvious to be original—indeed Rashdall had said much the same. I tried to develop it in my own way.

As I say I was over-confident. Moore’s account of the concept “good” may well be correct, and in substance I still believe it to be true; but it has to be argued, at least in the sense that many opposing plausibilities have to be developed to the top of their bent before they are discarded. Similarly much more discussion was needed about the central question whether the morally right is a derivative of doing one’s best. Finally the Kantian doctrine of a self-imposed imperative is plainly wrong, if taken literally, whether or not the doctrine is defended in Kant’s way or in the un-Kantian way that I had chosen. One cannot, strictly speaking, command oneself or obey oneself, and if the authority of the moral conscience is analogous to the command of a rightful superior to a subject who should be loyal, the actual relation should be examined instead of this metaphorical representation of it.

When I wrote the book I was sensible, although insufficiently sensible, of the cursoriness of my treatment of the first point, and was already planning another book expressly on that subject. The other points, as I shall record, came home to me with greater force owing to the trend of ethical discussion in these islands.

I set myself then to examine the notion of goodness, worth or value in the most general sense, and after three years labour produced *The Idea of Value*. After showing (as I thought) that economic value (i.e. utility-value and still more obviously exchange-value) presupposed “value” of another kind (since economic value means “good for”, i.e. “good-for-something-else and since

“good for” is plainly an incomplete expression, like “father-of”, requiring its proper complement before it is significant) I proceeded to examine the sense if any in which there might be “value” in mere self-maintenance; the sense, if any, in which “value” could be derived from desire or from pleasure; the sense, if any, in which value could, as Moore thought, be a discernible property of something. It seemed to me that if a fern used water, or a magnet attracted steel filings, this “natural selection” gave an intelligible sense of “valuing” which extended far beyond consciousness, indeed far beyond life, but that this conception of “value”, as well as all conceptions based upon pleasure or desire, were relative to the valued. The only sense of value that was not relative to the valuer must be the other sense in which “value” was a predicate intellectually discernible. I believed that this third sense of “value” was the most important and that it was defensible, not merely by the failure of the others to give any meaning to “value” except a relative meaning, but also on the merits of the case. I also attempted to discuss, rather fully, how far “values” were comparable and such-like questions, taking a lot of trouble over these but perhaps not quite enough. (They are very tricky, sometimes in a semi-mathematical sort of way, a fact that should have conveyed to me at least a “yellow” warning).

The book I now think was of very unequal quality. Some of its analysis, in Macdonald’s phrase, was complex without being subtle, I could be forced to unsay a good deal that I did say, although (as I protest) mainly on minor points. From the standpoint of exposition, I made a bad mistake. I had certain classical views about “value or worth” principally in mind—Spinoza’s, the British moralists’, Von Ehrenfels’s and Meinong’s, Kant’s; and I tried to make my points by a running commentary upon these notable contributions to the subject. It would have been better either to state these types of value-theory *seriatim* and then attempt to bring them together (despite the protests of these dead or dying authors) or else to develop the discussion directly without referring to any famous names at all. If a reader were unfamiliar with these authors (and few would be familiar with them all) they would only entangle and distract him. If he were familiar with them he might easily neglect nearly everything except the history. I had hoped to be able to use historical material in a non-historical way, that is to say, to roam through the ages in order to extract arguments that could be presented in an undated fashion each as the best that could be done in its kind. I fear that I didn’t succeed; and that was a pity.

The book was fairly well received. Only one reviewer said what I expected half of them to say, namely that my book contained no idea of value.

My *Idea of Value* appeared in 1929. Soon afterwards I tried my hand at writing some dialogues. These reached the public in 1931 under the title *Morals and Western Religion*.

I found this species of composition very agreeable but I could not please many readers and so with great regret had to abandon that kind of writing. One thing of some interest that I discovered was that, although there was quite a stream of philosophical dialogues in English about that time, very few people (to judge from the reviews) knew anything about the various types of dialogue-writing. Everyone seemed to think that Plato's early dialogues were the only standards in this *genre*. It would be sad if it were so; for Plato is inimitable and his Socrates has a position of superiority that should not be copied unless the author has the right to believe that his own or his master's ideas are miles ahead of the rest of the field. I had chosen the Ciceronian model—debates in shortish set speeches rather than a conversation—and this method, as Cicero said, is very appropriate to subjects which are generally believed to be doubtful and in which several distinct points of view are likely to be upheld with strong conviction by different very competent persons. My subject, I thought, was of that kind and the Ciceronian method appeared to me to be feasible, avoiding as it did both the wooden A and B method (as with Hobbes) and the supreme artistry that would be required (along with a sort of mortal God) of the Platonic model. If I had been a Cicero I would have forced the critics to agree with me; but I was no Cicero. I was only an inglorious imitator who would have done better to have been mute.

About this time I felt that I had exhausted all I could say with any pretence at usefulness on the special subjects I had pursued viz. the philosophy of personality, epistemology and, for the time being, ethics and allied subjects. The alternatives, as I thought, were silence or history. I had no mind for the latter since, although the history of ideas is important it has always seemed to me, at any rate since my Cambridge days, that an ounce in the way of original philosophy is better worth attempting than sackfuls of history, and that too many philosophers who have some independent ideas convert themselves into antiquarians instead, with woeful results for the young who often grow up with the idea that their lives should be spent in that sort of employment, and that the lucky man in the profession is he who can discover some defunct philosopher who is not wholly obscure and yet has not been written up too much. Moreover, since I was an inaccurate linguist, although capable of reading books on philosophy in a fair number of languages, I could not produce good work upon anyone who had not written in English without a much more

prolonged and intensive study of some other language or languages than I was prepared (or, for that matter was young enough) to make.

There was one exception, however. I had been an expositor of Hume's work pretty continuously for twenty years, and during nearly all that period had cherished the design of some day writing about him. When a kindly importunate publisher therefore pressed me to write a book—any book—for him, I agreed to write about Hume. And I did so.

Such a book might take various forms. In many ways, in spite though in part because of his inveterate eighteenth-centuryism, Hume is curiously modern, and many of his ideas, especially his biggest ones, keep cropping up persistently in sheaves of contemporary writing. Hume's present immortality was therefore one possible theme, and a good one. That, however, was not what I wanted to do. Indeed I deliberately refrained from saying anything at all about his influence. What I thought had to be done was a piece of preliminary spade work where I was not the first to dig—for Kemp Smith in this country and some others abroad had done a good deal of digging in the way that (on the whole) I approved—but where, as I thought, more elaborate digging was required. In this country, despite the work of Kemp Smith and others, there was still too marked a tendency to succumb to a plausible and partially justified but pernicious myth to the effect that Locke began and Berkeley continued a sort of rake's progress in philosophy which Hume completed and brought to a waster's end. In terms of this myth Hume's actual argument, and all the niceties and honesty of his elegant genius were either disregarded or treated casually as the exhibitionism of a fop. I wanted to describe the genuine Hume bent on exploring the experimental method in all the human sciences, clinging tenaciously to his phenomenalistic method despite certain inconsistencies that he saw and others that he did not see, regarding the book that was most famous to later eyes, namely the first book of his *Treatise*, as a preamble to the construction that he only partially accomplished, defining his position as a student of human nature with special reference, on the one hand, to people like Shaftesbury (with whom he broadly agreed) and on the other hand to the Cartesianism which he rejected and to the scholasticism which he despised. I wanted to produce a generalised commentary paying some attention to the sources but more to the sinuosities of the system. On the whole I do not think that I failed. My book was the first of several about Hume that appeared in these years. I am told it has been studied with profit although not very widely. In short I am glad I wrote it.

In delving into the books that Hume had read pretty carefully I conceived

a great affection and a tempered but firm admiration for Hobbes, and when Stocks approached me with a request for a contribution to his *Leaders of Philosophy* series I said I would be very glad to give him one on Hobbes. I enjoyed the writing of that book very much, and, I am told, gave some enjoyment to others. There were rather special difficulties. The plan of the series required a general account of Hobbes's entire philosophy as well as a biographical and historical introduction and a fairly full account of the author's influence. Croom Robertson in this country had written a most admirable book with the same general plan and Tönnies in Germany and Levi in Italy had written very good ones. Still there was recent special work of importance, such as Brandt's (of Copenhagen) on Hobbian physics, the Hobbes-Gesellschaft at Kiel had accumulated several biographical scraps, contemporary pamphlets and the whole fascinating subject of the transition from medievalism to modernism had to be examined—in short there was scope for useful and intensely interesting study. Even more importantly the actual course and the internal consistency or inconsistency of Hobbes's circumnavigation of the intellectual globe was not a matter that could be decided once and for all and then repose on the shelf, whatever the excellence of some previous expositions had been.

By an evil chance, although I verified some thousands of references in proof, I falsely assumed that I had verified all the dates whereas in fact I hadn't. There are two obvious blunders of this type early in the book and I have since noted a few other corrigenda. I tried to give chapter and verse for everything I said, a laborious business but, I think, essential.

The book on Hobbes, my second historical adventure, was also my last in that kind; for a little book in *Recent Philosophy* that I wrote for the Home University Library and published in 1936 dealt with near events, the specious historical present from 1910 onwards and so has to be distinguished from the antiquarian sort of history. In this contemporary field I approached my task with many misgivings, but thought I knew what was needed. I also thought I could do what was needed as well as many—at any rate that I ought to try. As it seemed to me, philosophy had been very much alive but also greatly distracted in the present century, not in England only but also on the Continent and in America. There was no dominant movement but, instead, several independent armies, most of them pretty loosely organised, occasionally making contact (either friendly or inimical) but for the most part content and indeed anxious to remain aloof from one another. Setting aside ethics and such like philosophy (although that also had to be treated) there were, at the very least, idealism, realism, phenomenology, logistical positivism, and various types of

meta-biology. The problem was to describe this distraction fairly (and without imposing a concord that few would accept) without also distracting the reader beyond endurance. A second although minor problem was the mention of prominent although not outstanding names in such a way that the book would convey information and give guidance for further study. That had to be done without simply producing page after page of a catalogue only half *raisonné*. The book was not greatly liked but most people seemed to admit that it was more impartial than most and more informative than many.

I mentioned some pages back that my first book on ethics had been over-confident in its main argument, and that the fact had become increasingly apparent owing to the turn that contemporary discussion of abstract ethics was taking in these islands.

I am not referring to *all* ethical discussion in Great Britain or elsewhere. Much of this discussion was essentially sceptical, a plea for mere relativism or for emotionalism in the subject. In these ways, a place might be found for ethics and some sort of bowdlerised account of conscience and of moral judgments might be given, with the bowdlerisation inverted. Such questions are, of course, inescapable by any serious moralist, whether or not they are posed with a serious intent; but they resemble the 'sceptical doubts'. I am speaking now about the people who, after due reflection, are disposed to regard duty and goodness and such like conceptions as true ideas not to be liquidated in any bland or patronising way, not to be reckoned among superstitions that should be translated into something else although perhaps into something distinctive.

I may illustrate the main point by mentioning a trivial anecdote that reveals my former state of mind. Long ago I read a book by a negro author in which he said that the practice of infanticide in certain African tribes was restricted, almost entirely, to mis-shapen or imbecile babies. This I took to be a defence of the practice, but apparently it was only an explanation, for the author went on to say "Of course the killing of infants is *wrong*".

His comment at the time seemed to me to be amusingly quaint. I thought he was exchanging a reasoned defence for a mere taboo, presumably a Christian taboo, and I suppose that there are few contemporary moralists who would go so far as to say that the question of euthanasia for monstrous or imbecile births could be settled in this way by an absolute prohibition impervious to any other moral consideration. Many, however, would hold that "right" and "wrong" are conceptions quite distinct from "good" and "bad" whether or not it is goodness that justifies or badness that condemns them. In my first

book (like many others, I suppose) I had seen the point, if only in a dusky mirror, and had shown the same by affirming expressly and emphatically that the statements “This is the best I can do” and “Therefore I ought to do it” are not equivalent, as the “therefore” in the second statement showed. I defended the “therefore” as a true inference on the ground that “good” was relevant to and determinative of “right” in many obvious cases, and that I was aware of no other proper determinant of “right”.

The distinction between “right” and “good” had been persistently pressed in Oxford, and Prichard in *Mind* of January 1912 had asserted that nearly all moral philosophers had ruined their theories by ignoring it. It was not till 1930, however, when Ross’s book *The Right and the Good* appeared that the subject became a topic of eager and general debate in the small arena of professional British moralism.

I wanted to define my attitude towards it, partly on my own account, partly because I had treated it far too lightly in my first book. I could not believe, with Ross, that anything could be right that was not good or right although it was worse than some alternative course, that there was in fact any determinant of rightness except goodness, or that there was any intelligible hierarchy of “rightness” such that, in case of conflict, one “right” action could be “righter” than another. But all such questions, I thought, deserved and required prolonged argument. Moreover it seemed plain to me that if “right” was derivative from “good” (as I believed) it was not derivative from *intrinsic* goods, at any rate if by an intrinsic good one means a good that is intrinsic to some experiencer. Thus if a man hungers after justice (as many do) he is hungering after a set of interpersonal relationships whose nature is not exhausted by the private satisfactions, or other “intrinsic goods” of the men who rejoice in being justly treated. In short it seemed to me that these relational goods determined and defined the sort of “rightness” that Ross and Prichard were defending.

That, in the main was the line I took in my *Enquiry into Moral Notions* published in 1935, although I began the book with a discussion of the nature of virtue (often developed into a separate type of moral theory) and attempted several pieces of ethical classification and analysis that interested me and that seemed important.

Alas for all my projects! The book was applauded by the *Daily Mail* and trounced in *Mind*. That is a cheap and snobbish comment made for brevity’s sake. I am not in fact very uppish about the *Daily Mail*, and I am aware that there is a lot of poor stuff in *Mind*. My book however was intended for the



experts. Since its principal theme was being widely debated among these experts it was not worth writing unless according to their standards it was thoroughly workmanlike. The complaint was just that it was not.

The *Mind* reviewer, Mr Carritt, was a very competent although a rather crotchety and dogmatic moralist. His brief and contemptuous comment was that I had no idea of using the English language with precision. I was attempting analysis and was no analyst. No “quality” of the book could redeem its persistent slovenly inaccuracy.

I tried very hard at the time, and I have tried very hard since, to treat this matter with proper detachment. I knew well enough that I was constitutionally more sensitive to censure than to encouragement. (I put this down, with a rough logic not wholly defensible, to a persistent desire to improve and so to learn from actual or reputed mistakes). An adverse review, even from a competent and honest quarter was a small thing in itself, and the fact that some later technical reviewers followed suit need have no great significance. (One of them, for instance, quoted certain phrases which I did not think I could improve and remarked “such inaccuracies abound”). I could not, myself, accept either Mr Carritt’s censures or those of this reviewer, but I had to believe that there was something in them, perhaps much, that had escaped and continued to escape my busy eye. In short the matter was serious. It would have been annoying, in any case, to be treated like a pretentious meddler and to hear the sentence “Out with his loose and babbling tongue”. It was more than annoying to be treated so, presumably with some justification, with regard to a subject which I had taught persistently, and indeed almost exclusively, for a dozen years, and at a time when I was a mature and practised writer.

There was no solace in the thought that people were sick of all this pother about “right” and “good”, and were disinclined to read more of it unless they were told, through the usual channels, that they could not conscientiously avoid doing so. The book was not worth writing unless it deserved to have that very effect. I had to admit that in all probability it deserved to be passed over; and it certainly was passed over. I could be reasonably certain that it would remain unread. In sort, as a moralist my name was mud, and mud that had already evaporated.

On the whole the disaster seemed to me to be so complete that I would be wise to stop writing for publication—I could not stop writing—for a prolonged period, if not for ever. So I scribbled about metaphysics, a subject about which I had hitherto been almost silent and yet the main interest of every philosopher. I liked that employment and might have continued with it, very

happily, for many a year.

There came a change, however, and rather rapidly, for in the spring of 1937 it seemed that I was about to begin the most strenuous time of my whole life. First came an invitation to be a visiting lecturer at Columbia. I had declined a similar invitation two years before, the reason being that I had just had three months leave of absence from Aberdeen owing to a mishap in Amsterdam where I had been knocked down by a motor car and had had my skull fractured. I thought I could not decline the renewed invitation unless I bade good-bye to all such expeditions for the future; and I loved to sample new climates, especially if they were spiced with a certain academic novelty. So I accepted and began to prepare lectures on metaphysics. Two months later came another request. The University of Glasgow asked me to give them Gifford lectures in 1939–1941. That invitation, to my mind, was a higher honour than I had ever expected to receive. Naturally I accepted it with alacrity.

Almost at once I had an unpleasant surprise. I did not feel well and soon had no difficulty in diagnosing my complaint as diabetes mellitus. This diagnosis was speedily confirmed and it also appeared that my blood pressure was fantastically high and that some other things might be wrong. I had in fact to readjust my views about myself very considerably; for I had always thought my health secure, at any rate for the purposes I had most at heart. I resigned the Columbia appointment and resolved to write my Gifford lectures very slowly, after giving Glasgow the opportunity of annulling the appointment if it so desired. Glasgow gave me its blessing, very kindly, and I went on the way I had planned. Having selected as one of my troubles the disease that modern medicine can deal with best, I found that I had plenty of energy and a very tolerable existence. I did not even need to be sentimental about myself.

At the present moment I have given the first series of these lectures and prepared the second. The first series has been published—three days before the Germans invaded Belgium. It will be some time before the time comes, if it ever comes, when many will be disposed to read it. The second series is stored for safety in a strongroom that I hope the Germans may spare. It is a matter of speculation when, if ever, it will be given.

I think, however, that I have found a suitable moment for suspending this narrative at any rate for the duration of the war.

## X

### World War II

I am writing this in October 1945 on the eve of the first University session after VJ Day. Having done nothing to help our war effort and having seen very little worth recording, my recollections of World War II are not in themselves worth setting down. No doubt a record of a little life during great events has a certain value if it be faithful; but already there have been plenty of records of British civilian life in the second world war, from pens much more vivid than mine. And there will be many more.

For civilians World War II was a much more exciting affair, at any rate in this country after the Sitzkrieg, than World War I. Not at the outset perhaps. When the Germans invaded Norway my colleague in the Chair of Humanity gesticulated with excitement and talked about *Hybris*. A day or two later he and the rest of us pulled long faces over the outwitting of the British fleet whatever their boldness in Narvik Fjord. The overweening effrontery of the Germans in challenging us at our own amphibian game seemed now to be a prudent calculation on their part. Still, these events in April 1940 were less overwhelming than the staggering clash which was halted at the Marne in 1914. When the invasion through the Low Countries and the Ardennes began we said "Well. They've taken on a big job". But we said that only for a day or two. The flight of the Dutch Queen shook us up pretty thoroughly. Things were at least as exciting as in the time of Le Cateau; and even gloomier. Dunkirk made us proud of our genius for improvisation, but not too confident about the invasion most of us expected. We may not have known how bad things were but we knew they were very bad indeed.

The winter of 1940–41, calling for fortitude and endurance without much hope, did resemble World War I, especially in respect of the not too distant threat from the submarines, much more formidably based than ever before. Tobruk, no doubt, seemed much more cheerful than the Dardanelles. But when we had to bolt from Benghazi that solace also was equivocal. At home we had Jerry's attentions from the air. Here in Aberdeen we had a relatively lively start. Single aircraft were attentive and the sirens busy. In July 1940 a harassed German plane, soon to crash in a skating rink in Aberdeen, unloaded half a dozen small bombs in King's College playing fields and then some

more in the town and in Hall Russell's shipyards. That, as it happened, was the nearest any bomb ever got to my house. A window was broken; there were several fizzing bomb fragments in the garden and our housemaid promptly fainted, recovering very neatly when the plane was over the harbour. There was no siren, and for the rest of us in this part of the town, the thing was too quick to affright except for one or two who were mortally wounded. In the town the deathroll was over thirty—as a cousin said to me with modest pride the biggest casualty list anywhere in the United Kingdom during that month. We had soon to abate these pretensions. We were not as London, Liverpool, Hull, Glasgow or Belfast. There were alerts galore, and anxious nights and some small-scale bombing. There was plenty of trouble at sea; but in the main we were badgered without being hurt. I was a warden, though not a good one, and my wife drove her car as an auxiliary ambulance. So we had to turn out pretty often. Sometimes I managed to sleep on the floor of the post. But I never had to do anything useful, and from the Cromwell Tower had an interesting if chilly view of flares, tracer bullets and nasty black bombers.

When America, thanks to the Japs, came in at last, defeat seemed unlikely and any acute apprehension of invasion had already passed. Victory was another story and it looked as if we might have to fight forever in order to stand by Australia in partial return for her staunch support of us. The loss of the *Prince of Wales* and the *Renown*, as it chanced, was the only disaster in the war that made me personally physically sick, though the escape of the *Scharnborst* and *Gneisenau* through the Channel was almost if not quite as disheartening. The landing in force in North Africa, I think, seemed to most of us the first indication that we might really be victorious—for even Alamain by itself (though “cracking good news” as the BBC commentator said) seemed to be just the relief of Cairo after a very near squeak and the prelude to more in and out work in the neighbourhood of Benghazi. As time went on the prospects of victory seemed to recede. There would have to be D-day and who could be confident about that, even if Dieppe were nothing of a guide. Germany, I suppose, was crushed at the Falaise Gap; but since the Germans were going to fight to a finish it looked as if America, Russia and ourselves were in for a very long struggle. Neither VE day nor VJ day were very exuberant here. Both were damp. The first was not the end and the second missed fire through inconveniently late announcements.

A point of some interest I suppose is just where the shoe pinched most. In the literal sense, shoes were a bit of a problem, especially the shoes of young children. For others, despite apparently formidable restrictions upon the

activities of cobblers, “make do and mend” seemed to be pretty successful; and here at least the smaller, older cobblers did not overcharge. The forced economy of clothing coupons, more generally, stirred up a good deal of ingenuity. I suppose we are all incredibly shabby to look at now: but nobody seems to mind very much; and many women are still relatively complacent before a mirror, though with less cause than in former years. (The purchase price of non-utility dresses is certainly outrageous, and the shopwindows of Dublin a miracle to any with short memories. Still it is astonishing to find the amount of life that old clothes have). Housing, pots and pans, carpets and chairs certainly deteriorated terribly. Aberdeen, a “neutral area” except for the harbour had fewer refugees (of all kinds) than most other cities and the renting of rooms and of furnished houses and the like was less of a racket than in some other places; but there was a dangerous and deplorable degree of under-accommodation.

The better-to-do took lack of domestic service so much for granted as scarcely to complain though the bigger houses were unworkable without such service. If anyone took ill the misery was great. Queues and crowded buses did not help elderly gentlemen and harassed housewives to avoid winter ailments. Nor did it matter if the said housewives, being working women, were earning good or goodish money on the side to an extent they had never thought of before. Food in Aberdeen was fairly plentiful without too black a market. It was not even very monotonous if one took pains, There was a good deal of shivering, though, compared with most of Europe and much of Britain, little to describe as genuine hardship.

On the whole most civilians were relatively opulent, hard-working, dully fed and rather frightened. I say “rather” frightened here, because in Aberdeen, as I have said, the bombing bore quite a small proportion to the alerts. We had just one intensive raid with 170 bombs of all kinds in the city and rather more than one death per bomb when the military casualties were added to the civilian. That was in April 1943 on a beautifully clear night with a full moon. It seemed as bright as day about three a.m., four hours after the two-hour raid, when I was searching the town for traces of my wife (who in fact was busy with her ambulance after she had been machine gunned though not hit). I didn’t much like that “baby Blitz” though I was less frightened than I had been before when patrolling at night with an apparently monstrous German bomber low overhead or even in the day time attempting to persuade students that glass windows were not good cover and that a snowball fight was not a very good idea when enemy aircraft were attacking a damaged Beaufighter

over the bay. Aberdeen talked about its “major” raid for the whole summer afterwards. I heard little discussion later.

On the night of that raid my air raid post and sector were confined to their own limits and did nothing at all except to confuse between chunks of tombstone (for a neighbouring cemetery had been hit) and unexploded bombs. These orders may have been wise. A renewed attack was always possible, though our night-fighters would not have been caught napping for a second time. But I didn’t know and didn’t discover on patrol that Bedford Road, only a quarter of a mile away from my house, had been badly hit with thirty dead or dying and I still regret that, in sheer ignorance, I was away from that patch of utter wretchedness, doing nothing to help my own students even, two of whom, lodging there, were killed.

In a general way the Civil Defence Services, I think, were reasonably efficient and amazingly diligent in their attendance for dull instruction and duller meetings. Their commanding officers seemed to think that tests and even examinations, of the memorised type familiar to the police were what education meant. So they educated them. Later as head fire-guard of the Group I had to sit an examination for an instructor’s certificate and give a “lecturette” for better measure, an Edinburgh fireman and a commercial traveller being the examiners, and the instructor a retired postal official who was a crammer if ever there was one. I was very near the top in my written (if not quite there—I never heard precisely) and was allowed just to scrape through on my lecturette—all of which was probably just though not encouraging. (Some admirably efficient head fire guards were ploughed, to the great disadvantage of the service).

In short the Scottish service, to keep itself busy, fell back upon the least defensible part of our educational system much, I supposed, as the fabled seamen in their drifting boat took up a collection for lack of other recollections of a religious service. Personally, however, I did learn something about democracy in this service. Among the fire-guards I was, in effect, a petty officer with pettier officers below him. These I met weekly, and, being a democrat, was determined to have government by discussion. I got the discussion or at any rate endless reiteration on the part of a few grouzers. What government there was came out in the voting and was quite unaffected by the discussion. Yet the meetings were well attended despite their frequency.

Scottish education did not shine with much refulgence during the war. I may deal with it here from University entrance upwards.

The summer of 1939, when we all knew war was coming but pretended

to ourselves that it might after all be averted, perhaps with another and still more humiliating “miracle” of Munich, was a period during which all sorts of bodies planned all sorts of schemes of *possible* action should war break out. The Scottish Education Department, ostensibly upon the false premiss that a bomb dropped anywhere would upset all the examinations all over the country (but perhaps for ulterior motives) planned the abolition of their Leaving Certificate examinations and their replacement, during war time, by school records adjudged by local panels. A feature of the scheme was the Department’s refusal to grant passes in individual subjects though they would grant a total pass.

The Scottish Universities Entrance Board who were pledged to accept the Leaving Certificate as the “normal” means of entrance to Scottish universities on the part of Scottish schoolboys, meekly agreed, in the uneasy peace of that summer, to cooperate in the scheme. Then came war, and the Board empowered a committee to settle details with the Department. The result was that this committee pledged itself, for the duration of the war, to conform with the scheme.

The result, of course, was disaster. Not only had Scotland, the least bombed part of Great Britain, the humiliation of refusing to carry on when the rest of the country did, it had also to recruit its universities in the most cumbrous method imaginable. Since such entry required specific passes in specific subjects what was arranged was that every candidate for matriculation wrote to the Department which in turn supplied to the Secretary of the Board the candidate’s local marks, and that the Board, on this evidence, granted passes in requisite subjects though the Department took no responsibility. (Since passes in individual subjects were often wanted for purposes with which the Universities had nothing to do, this, the only method open to Scottish schoolboys to obtain such individual passes was very freely used). The correspondence involved was mountainous. It is a matter for argument whether the Board or the Department was the stupider in this affair. I think myself that the Department was pursuing a policy designed, in the end, to force the Scottish Universities to accept *every* Leaving Certificate irrespective of its content. The policy failed but it was quite astute. In my opinion it was the Board (of which I was a member) which was stupid.

No doubt the quality of the instruction in the schools was a good deal more important than the method of testing the quality. Here I think Scotland did pretty well. With depleted and diluted staffs, and with requisitioning of school buildings for which the teachers were not to blame, a fair though a

lower standard of instruction was retained. In the universities, medical and physical science were active with plenty of reserved men (or cadets) to teach; but teaching in Arts was pretty dreary. I like teaching young women, but prefer to have at least some young men in the class, and these with some appearance of health. In some ways the war had its educational advantages. Fire watching led to some academic discussion. The Ministry of Labour demanded a certain proficiency. So the students, despite the burden of their various war duties had very strong motives for diligence in their studies. On the whole, however, nothing could be more gladdening to a teacher than the partial return of the *status quo ante bellum* in October 1945. One had forgotten how interesting one's job used to be even for persons like myself who are not enamoured of teaching.