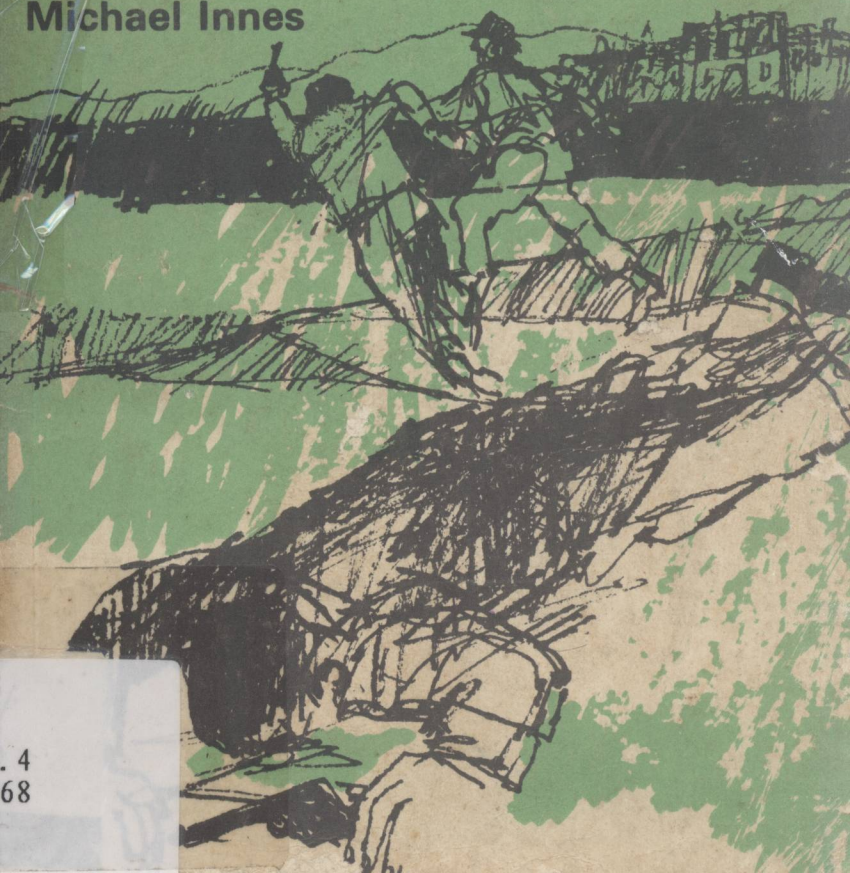


THE BRIDGE SERIES

The Journeying Boy

Michael Innes



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THE JOURNEYING BOY

by

MICHAEL INNES

SIMPLIFIED AND ABRIDGED

BY F. J. H. MORRIS

Illustrated by Roger Payne



暨南大学外语系资料室



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*The
Bridge
Series*

THE JOURNEYING BOY

THE BRIDGE SERIES

GENERAL EDITOR: J. A. BRIGHT, B.A.

NICHOLAS NICKLEBY AND MR SQUEERS

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THREE ONE-ACT PLAYS

POWER AND PROGRESS

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CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY

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INTRODUCTION

MICHAEL INNES's real name is J. I. M. Stewart. He was born in 1906 and educated at Edinburgh University and Oxford University, where he took a first class degree in English Literature and Language. Since then he has been Lecturer in English at the universities of Leeds, Adelaide (Australia) and Belfast, and he is now working at the college of Christ Church, Oxford.

Under his real name he has written a number of novels and books on English literature including *Character and Motive in Shakespeare* (1949). But he is known to a greater number of people as Michael Innes and it is under this name that he writes his exciting detective and adventure stories, of which *The Journeying Boy* is one of the best known. Among the other novels of this sort that he has written are *Death at President's Lodging*, *Christmas at Candleshoe*, *Private View* and *Secret Vanguard*.

The Journeying Boy is a story full, not so much of mystery, as of adventure and excitement. Humphrey Paxton is the 14-year-old son of a leading scientist and a tutor is engaged to take the boy to Ireland for a holiday with relatives whom he has never seen before. When this tutor is murdered, however, a certain Mr Thewless takes his place and it is then that Humphrey gradually becomes aware that there is a group of men determined to kidnap him. What neither he nor Mr Thewless realize until the end is that there is not one, but two groups with the same idea.



The furniture was ancient, carved and massive (page 2)

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CHAPTER 1

ON the morning of Monday, the 14th of August 1947, Mr Richard Thewless walked in the pleasant sunshine through the West End of London. His object was ordinary enough, being simply that of obtaining temporary employment as a private tutor. Nevertheless he had the sense of an occasion and of an interest going far beyond that which commonly accompanied his finding a new pupil. For *this* pupil—if indeed he got the job—was somebody. Or rather—since small boys are necessarily nobodies—he was the son of one very decidedly somebody. Sir Bernard Paxton's reputation was world wide. He was beyond question the greatest of living physicists. Mr Thewless, hoping that his services might be retained by this eminent scientist, looked forward to a pleasant environment softened by real prosperity.

Mounting as he presently did the broad flight of steps to Sir Bernard's front door, he was visited by sharp feelings of doubt. Often enough before he had been in this sort of house, but never with satisfaction for very long. Great wealth was something which he found unsuited to the spirit of the time. And why—the question suggested itself even as he raised his hand to the door bell—yes, why in the world should a really great man surround himself with such obvious signs of wealth? Nor Mr Thewless understood—was there a Lady Paxton. Sir Bernard was a widower, so that female vanity could not be responsible for these splendours. For a man whose labours were at the point where the higher physics passes beyond human understanding it was distinctly odd.

And Mr Thewless shook his head. Sir Bernard's butler, taking this as indicating an unwillingness on the part of the visitor to remove his overcoat, made a noise at once respectful and commanding. Mr Thewless took off the overcoat and handed the man his hat.

Then he was shown into a library, where he waited for some time.

The furniture was ancient, carved and massive, covered in dark velvets in which silver flashed. It must all be Spanish he decided even the heavy cases sheltering the books. And of course both pictures in the room were almost certainly the original work of Velazquez¹. The first painting represented a peculiarly ugly court dwarf; the second was of a smiling little prince, dark-haired and dark-eyed. It was a vision of the happiness of childhood—and the whole room—it suddenly occurred to Mr Thewless—was planned to contrast with and act as a background to it. And this made Mr Thewless feel uneasy.

He distrusted an eminent physicist who lived like a nobleman of rank. Mr Thewless realized what was happening. He was simply more and more distrusting *himself*.

If Mr Thewless was not altogether confident, this was certainly not because he had disappointed any very general expectations. Little had been expected of his future, either by himself or others, which had not been fulfilled. First as a schoolmaster and later as a private tutor he had given satisfaction to his employers, and these in return fed, clothed, and housed him, as well as providing small but fairly regular sums of money. This was the whole history of Mr Thewless as he sat in Sir Bernard Paxton's library waiting to be interviewed.

However all this might be, Mr Thewless upon the present occasion found himself growing cross—cross with himself and cross with the environment and presumed character of Sir Bernard Paxton. This feeling might well have led to a resolve to proceed no further, to decline the proposed engagement if it were offered to him. But actually it had the contrary effect. Mr Thewless resolved to get the job. He had just come to this decision when he was shown in to Sir Bernard.

At once everything faded except the man himself. He stood at a window bathed in sunshine. He turned as Mr Thewless advanced and the light caught that huge brow. The capacity for deep speculation was evident at once and a moment later the

¹ A well-known Spanish painter of the seventeenth century.

habit of it was revealed in the settled lines of the forehead and mouth. Mr Thewless was impressed.

"One way and another," Sir Bernard was saying, "my son has been unlucky for a number of years. I am afraid that his teaching has been something worse than indifferent. Wartime conditions, no doubt."

Mr Thewless was surprised. These words were extremely familiar to him. They might almost be described as standard at this stage of an interview. Quite without thinking, Mr Thewless looked wise.

"A sensitive and slightly nervous boy. He has been judged difficult to control at times—and it is certainly true that he is not very easily managed by discipline of the ordinary sort."

"Quite so." Mr Thewless's tone revealed complete understanding of the situation and complete confidence in his own power to deal with it. Mr Thewless was in fact (as a voice inside him told him) performing his tricks. "Special arrangements may well be necessary in such a case, Sir Bernard. But they should be made with as little bother as possible. The danger of too much freedom must be frankly admitted. It is no kindness to spoil a child who will be obliged to face the world on his own one day. We must not be too quick in thinking in terms of guarding the young nerves from shock. On the other hand, when a sensitive child . . ."

Mr Thewless was gazing at Sir Bernard Paxton firmly and his voice did not falter. Nevertheless, he was keenly aware of the foolishness of presenting this shallow talk to a man whose views must necessarily be both extensive and profound. Nor was his anxiety made less by the observation that Sir Bernard was responding as ordinary parents did; that is to say he was slightly shocked, slightly hostile and more than a little impressed. And by the time Mr Thewless had reached the end of his remarks (this being that, all things considered, young Paxton might well be delivered over to him for just so much modified spoiling as a ripe experience should find necessary)—by the time Mr Thewless got so far, Sir Bernard Paxton showed every sign of agreement.

Meanwhile, Mr Thewless discoursed on School Certificate. "Still," he said, "well below the standard? I think there must be something very far wrong. Is he a capable boy?"

"Capable?" Sir Bernard sounded doubtful. "Humphrey's intelligence is fair. In fact is very high so far as the common kind of able people go. But he does seem to be backward in certain respects. On the other hand"—Sir Bernard spoke with an effort—"there are matters in which he is uncommonly advanced for his years. That is particularly so in—um—the sphere of the emotional life."

This sounded far more promising. Mr Thewless considered. "But at least he has held his place at school?"

Sir Bernard looked extremely gloomy. "They wouldn't be in a hurry to turn out my son, you know. I doubt whether lately the position has been other than that. Humphrey is somewhat difficult to control, as I said."

"But the holidays have already begun, and he is at home? I think I had better see the boy, Sir Bernard, before any arrangements can be made."

"That is very reasonable. And I believe Humphrey is actually in the house at the moment. Only—it is really rather an awkward thing—he is at present quite resolved not to show himself."

Mr Thewless received this information in meaningful silence.

"But he is quite keen on a certain holiday that has been proposed. Cousins on my late wife's side—folk, actually whom I seldom meet—have asked him to join them in Ireland for a month. It is there that I would wish you to accompany him and keep him in his reading as well as you can. If Humphrey is given to understand that he may only go on condition that he has a tutor—"

"I quite understand." And Mr Thewless was indeed perfectly familiar with bargaining and compromising parents. "Do the cousins live permanently in Ireland?"

"I know almost nothing about them. But I imagine they merely have a place there to which they go at this time of year for shooting and diversions of that sort."

"In fact the proposal would be that I should take Humphrey for purposes of study, to what will probably prove to be a large house party¹ in a hunting lodge. I hardly think that such conditions would be likely to favour application in an uncontrolled lad."

Sir Bernard looked worried and sad. "I quite see the force of what you say. And you do very well to insist on it. Only—"

At this moment there came a low buzzing sound from somewhere on the finely polished table behind which Sir Bernard sat. With a word of apology he picked up a telephone receiver. It was merely an instrument, Mr Thewless thought, by which he maintained communication with the other parts of this large establishment—and indeed what appeared to issue faintly from the earpiece was the voice of the objectionable butler.

"At once," said Sir Bernard. There was something like surprise and relief in his tone. He replaced the receiver, and in the same moment his hand came down in what might have been the action of pressing an electric bell. And then he spoke. "I shall give myself the pleasure," he said, "of writing to you by this evening's post. Should it be possible . . ."

And thus in a matter of seconds—although not before achieving a full realization of what had happened—Mr Thewless found himself being shown out. Some more acceptable candidate for the distinction of tutoring young Humphrey Paxton had turned up. What manner of man was his successful rival? Mr Thewless had his answer as he stood in the hall waiting to be handed his hat, for through the open door of the library he glimpsed a young man of athletic bearing who was passing his brief period of waiting by turning over the pages of *The Times*. Mr Thewless knew his type.

He walked down the broad steps of Paxton's fine house into London sunlight. The letter which Sir Bernard would write that evening already lay open in his mind. He had received it before. It was, he tried to persuade himself, better. The Paxton establishment had irritated him; Humphrey Paxton sounded a most unpromising boy; the proposed arrangement would have

¹ House party—Group of guests.

been altogether unsatisfactory from a working point of view. Nevertheless, Mr Thewless was disappointed. And this, since he was an honest man, he presently admitted to himself. Now the usual dullness was establishing itself once more as his natural environment. For some little time his life would feel narrower as a result of this meeting. And then he would forget all about it. But in this prophecy Mr Thewless was wrong. As a consequence of his visit to Sir Bernard Paxton, an altogether fuller life was presently to be his. And in this his fate was to contrast to a great degree with that of the young man he had glimpsed in the library.

CHAPTER 2

"Honoured to meet you, sir," said Captain Cox.

Sir Bernard Paxton saw at once that the muscular young barbarian before him was not a bad fellow. "There are directions," said Sir Bernard, "in which my son has been overstimulated for his years. I fear that the society which I tend to draw around myself might be charged with being excessively intellectual, and this has had an unfavourable effect on the boy."

Captain Cox nodded. "A bit too much of a book-worm, I suppose?"

"No; it is not that Humphrey has become overfond of study. It is rather that he has reacted against the intellectual—or at least the scientific—leaning of his home. This has driven him—um—in the opposite direction. I do not know even that his morals are good."

"Ah! yes; the thing to do will be to get him out with a rod and line."

"As a matter of fact, I am thinking of sending him to Ireland now. And there will be plenty of fishing with the relations to whom he is to go." Sir Bernard paused, aware that he was somewhat untruthfully concealing the fact that the Irish visit represented Humphrey's own determination. "I have no doubt that an outdoor life would be most desirable."

Captain Cox was looking at a diary. "Well," he said, "the sooner we are off the better. We must buy a gun too. Nothing more important for a lad than that. And I think I know how just the right thing can be picked up. What's his height, sir? Perhaps we'd better have him in."

Sir Bernard hesitated. It was more difficult, he found, with this young man than it had been with Mr Thewless to confess to the distressing fact that Humphrey was not choosing to show



"Humphrey may not at the moment be available."