

THE COLLEGE OMNIBUS

Edited by

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PREFACE

THE COLLEGE OMNIBUS has been designed to meet two needs: first, and primarily, that of the teacher of freshman English; and secondly, that of the general reader who wishes to have in one volume selections of the best literature of the immediate past and of the present.

Usually, in an anthology as comprehensive as this, it has been necessary to reduce the length of selections. Such mutilation is not only annoying to the reader but generally is quite unfair to the author, whose work should be given as he or she wrote it. Consequently, selections are given in full in *The College Omnibus*. Tennyson's "In Memoriam" and "Maud" have not been printed in their entirety, but the lyrics from each are presented in their full form.

Within the confines of these two covers will be found selections from many of the outstanding British and American authors of the last century and a quarter; to be precise, there are forty-five authors, three of whom are represented twice: Charles Lamb, by two essays, Thomas Hardy as a novelist and a poet, and John Galsworthy as an essayist and short story writer. Name alone, of course, has not been sufficient to merit inclusion; rather, the readability and the literary merit of a selection have given it its place in the book.

It is expected that *The College Omnibus* will solve the perennial question of the teacher of freshman English: Where can I find in one volume material sufficiently representative, sufficiently diversified and interesting for a semester (or year) course? Here is represented every type of literature which is studied in a freshman course: a full length biography, a literary landmark in itself, by the outstanding twentieth century biographer; a diversity of essays which range from the "familiar" essays of Lamb to the provocative writings of contemporary authors intent on analyzing present-day problems; a complete novel by a leading English novelist; eleven short stories by well-known writers, many of whom have been given awards for their stories; two plays, one, by John Millington Synge, to represent the most important movement in British drama for some years past, the other, by America's leading dramatist, Eugene O'Neill. And finally, there is a copious selection from the poets: the best of Keats, Tennyson, and Browning, and a generous representation from ten contemporary British and American poets.

In each preface the important facts of the author's life have been given, and in many instances a brief exposition of the selection itself. It has not been deemed necessary to comment on certain poems, essays, and short stories which the student may reasonably be expected to understand at first reading.

In the concluding section will be found topics for class discussion which will encourage a careful reading of the text and stimulate a deeper appreciation. Theme topics also have been given, some of a strictly literary type calling for

PREFACE

an intimate knowledge of the text; others, which may seem to some teachers more suitable for freshman assignments, of a more general nature.

It has been no easy feat to include all this material within one volume without enlarging the book to an extent and weight that would out-balance the burden which Bunyan's Pilgrim so arduously carried. Nevertheless the task has been accomplished, in spite of the inclusiveness of the contents, and the editor believes that he may say, without any qualms, GO, LITTLE BOOK.

J. D. MC C.

CONTENTS

BIOGRAPHY

<i>Lytton Strachey</i> : QUEEN VICTORIA (complete text)	3
---	---

ESSAYS

NINETEENTH CENTURY ESSAYS

<i>Charles Lamb</i> : A DISSERTATION UPON ROAST PIG	155
<i>Charles Lamb</i> : THE PRAISE OF CHIMNEY-SWEEPERS	160
<i>William Hazlitt</i> : ON THE FEELING OF IMMORTALITY IN YOUTH	165
<i>Ralph Waldo Emerson</i> : SELF-RELIANCE	169
<i>Robert Louis Stevenson</i> : AN APOLOGY FOR IDLERS	186

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

<i>J. B. Greenough and G. L. Kittredge</i> : LEARNED WORDS AND POPULAR WORDS	193
<i>Charles S. Brooks</i> : LAZY INK-POTS	198
<i>Virginia Woolf</i> : HOW SHOULD ONE READ A BOOK?	202
<i>John Galsworthy</i> : A NOVELIST'S ALLEGORY	209
<i>Christopher Morley</i> : WHAT MEN LIVE BY	216

COLLEGE LIFE

<i>Percy Marks</i> : ADVICE TO FRESHMEN	219
<i>John Corbin</i> : LIFE AT OXFORD	226
<i>Everett Dean Martin</i> : THE APPRECIATION OF HUMAN WORTH	230

CONTEMPORARY CIVILIZATION

<i>George Soule</i> : AN OLD NEW ERA	243
<i>Stuart Chase</i> : THE LUXURY OF INTEGRITY	255

<i>John Maynard Keynes</i> : ECONOMIC POSSIBILITIES FOR OUR GRANDCHILDREN	266
<i>G. Lowes Dickinson</i> : THE MILITARIST AND THE PACIFIST IDEALS	273
<i>William Orton</i> : "THE LEVEL OF THIRTEEN-YEAR-OLDS"	282
<i>Gilbert Seldes</i> : AMERICAN HUMOR	292
<i>Paul de Kruif</i> : BANTING, WHO FOUND INSULIN	301

NOVEL

<i>Thomas Hardy</i> : THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE (complete text)	321
---	-----

SHORT STORIES

<i>Joseph Conrad</i> : THE LAGOON	537
<i>John Galsworthy</i> : QUALITY	547
<i>Katherine Mansfield</i> : A CUP OF TEA	551
<i>Ring Lardner</i> : HAIRCUT	557
<i>Wilbur Daniel Steele</i> : SOOTH	565
<i>Theodore Dreiser</i> : THE LOST PHOEBE	579
<i>Willa Cather</i> : THE SCULPTOR'S FUNERAL	590
<i>Sherwood Anderson</i> : I'M A FOOL	600
<i>Irvin Cobb</i> : THE BELLED BUZZARD	608
<i>Marc Connelly</i> : CORONER'S INQUEST	619
<i>Dana Burnet</i> : OMIT FLOWERS	623

DRAMA

<i>J. M. Synge</i> : RIDERS TO THE SEA	629
<i>Eugene O'Neill</i> : THE EMPEROR JONES	638

THIRTEEN POETS

Three Nineteenth Century Poets

JOHN KEATS

TO ONE WHO HAS BEEN LONG IN CITY PENT	661	ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER	662
--	-----	--	-----

CONTENTS

vii

THE EVE OF ST. AGNES	662	ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE	670
LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI	668	TO AUTUMN	671
ODE ON A GRECIAN URN	669	BRIGHT STAR	672
ODE ON MELANCHOLY	669		

ALFRED TENNYSON

THE LADY OF SHALOTT	673	TEARS, IDLE TEARS	701
THE PALACE OF ART	675	SWEET AND LOW	702
ENONE	679	NOW SLEEPS THE CRIMSON PETAL	702
THE LOTOS-EATERS	683	IN MEMORIAM A. H. H. (<i>Selections</i>)	702
ST. AGNES' EVE	687	MAUD (<i>Selections</i>)	704
ULYSSES	687	THE REVENGE	706
BREAK, BREAK, BREAK	688	TITHONUS	709
LOCKSLEY HALL	688	MERLIN AND THE GLEAM	711
SIR GALAHAD	694	BY AN EVOLUTIONIST	712
MORTE D'ARTHUR	695	CROSSING THE BAR	713
BUGLE SONG	701		

ROBERT BROWNING

CAVALIER TUNES	714	MEMORABILIA	723
MY LAST DUCHESS	715	A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL	724
PORPHYRIA'S LOVER	717	FRA LIPPO LIPPI	726
SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER	717	ANDREA DEL SARTO	734
HOME-THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD	719	MY STAR	738
HOME-THOUGHTS FROM THE SEA	719	LOVE AMONG THE RUINS	738
HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX	719	UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY	739
THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB	721	CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS; OR NAT- URAL THEOLOGY IN THE ISLAND	741
MEETING AT NIGHT	723	RABBI BEN EZRA	747
PARTING AT MORNING	723	PROSPICE	750
		EPILOGUE TO ASOLANDO	751

Ten Modern Poets

THOMAS HARDY

HAP	752	AT THE DRAPER'S	754
THE DARKLING THRUSH	752	AH, ARE YOU DIGGING ON MY	
THE MAN HE KILLED	752	GRAVE?	754
AT TEA	753	AFTERWARDS	754
IN CHURCH	753	IN TIME OF "THE BREAKING OF NA-	
BY HER AUNT'S GRAVE	753	TIONS"	755
IN THE STUDY	753	WAITING BOTH	755

A. E. HOUSMAN

LOWELIEST OF TREES	756	OH, WHEN I WAS IN LOVE WITH	
REVEILLE	756	YOU	757
OH, SEE HOW THICK THE GOLDCUP		TO AN ATHLETE DYING YOUNG	757
FLOWERS	756	BRING, IN THIS TIMELESS GRAVE TO	
WHEN I WAS ONE-AND-TWENTY	756	THROW	758
SAY, LAD, HAVE YOU THINGS TO DO?	757	THINK NO MORE, LAD	758
ON THE IDLE HILL OF SUMMER	757	WITH RUE MY HEART IS LADEN	758
		THE TRUE LOVER	758

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

LAKE ISLE OF INNISFREE	759	THE CAP AND BELLS	761
WHEN YOU ARE OLD	760	THE SONG OF THE OLD MOTHER	761
THE ROSE OF THE WORLD	760	THE WILD SWANS AT COOLE	762
THE INDIAN UPON GOD	760	A PRAYER FOR MY DAUGHTER	762
DOWN BY THE SALLEY GARDENS	761	FAIRY SONG	763

JOHN MASEFIELD

A CONSECRATION	764	WATCHING BY A SICK BED	766
SEA-FEVER	764	WHAT AM I, LIFE?	766
A WANDERER'S SONG.	765	THE PASSING STRANGE	766
LAUGH AND BE MERRY	765	ON GROWING OLD	767

SIEGFRIED SASOON

THE OLD HUNTSMAN	768	TO ANY DEAD OFFICER	774
COUNTER-ATTACK	773	DOES IT MATTER?	775

AMY LOWELL

PATTERNS	775	LILACS	777
----------	-----	--------	-----

ROBERT FROST

MENDING WALL	779	STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY	
DEATH OF THE HIRED MAN	780	EVENING	786
BIRCHES	785	FIRE AND ICE	786

CARL SANDBURG

CHICAGO	787	WIND SONG	792
COOL TOMES	787	DEATH SNIPS PROUD MEN	792
SMOKE AND STEEL	788	LOSERS	792

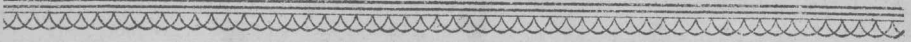
ELINOR WYLIE

THE EAGLE AND THE MOLE	793	NOW THAT YOUR EYES ARE SHUT	794
VELVET SHOES	794	PETER AND JOHN	795
WINTER SLEEP	794	THE PEBBLE	796

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

RENASCENCE	797	WHAT LIPS MY LIPS HAVE KISSED	799
I KNOW I AM BUT SUMMER	799	EUCLID ALONE HAS LOOKED ON	
		BEAUTY BARE	800
PITY ME NOT	799	ELEGY BEFORE DEATH	800

DISCUSSION TOPICS AND THEME SUGGESTIONS	801
---	-----



BIOGRAPHY

CONTENTS FOR "QUEEN VICTORIA"

I. ANTECEDENTS	4
II. CHILDHOOD	12
III. LORD MELBOURNE	28
IV. MARRIAGE	59
V. LORD PALMERSTON	75
VI. LAST YEARS OF PRINCE CONSORT	92
VII. WIDOWHOOD	108
VIII. MR. GLADSTONE AND LORD BEACONSFIELD	118
IX. OLD AGE	132
X. THE END	150

QUEEN VICTORIA ¹

by Lytton Strachey

Giles Lytton Strachey (1880-1932) was the founder of a new school of biography. Against the conventional biography, the so-called standard life, Strachey brought two main objections. In the first place, he believed that it was too long and that its length was caused by the biographer's inclusion of much that was redundant and insignificant. Let the biographer, therefore, reduce the bulkiness of his work by a careful selection of significant details and an omission of trivialities. In the second place, Strachey objected to hero-worshiping on the part of the biographer, whose business, he stated, was not to be complimentary but to present the facts. Simple as his objections may seem to be, they have revolutionized the writing of this age-old type of literature.

Strachey's own writings, influential though they have been and will continue to be, are not numerous. *Landmarks in French Literature* appeared in 1912, but it was not until six years later that he acquired his reputation with *Eminent Victorians*. Even more widely read and praised was *Queen Victoria*, published in 1921, the model for the new type of biography. Since then have appeared his *Books and Characters* (1922), *Pope* (1925), *Elizabeth and Essex* (1928), and *Portraits in Miniature* (1931).

What are the main characteristics of Strachey's writings? First, their clarity. Strachey never leaves the reader with blurred impressions. The picture as a whole is clear, the personality about whom he is writing is distinct. The sentences are never made obscure by excessive qualifying phrases, by a welter of adjectives; here and there one can point to a rhetorical passage, but in general his style is simple and direct.

The second characteristic is irony, polished, devastating, but never bludgeoning, the irony of an erudite and refined writer who will not bow his head in hero-worship. Let us admit frankly that Strachey does not present all the facts, that he is not impartial, that he adroitly guides the reader to a conclusion. But with what economy of effort he passes judgment! Witness his terse comment on Dr. Arnold (in *Eminent Victorians*): "His *Roman History*, which he regarded as the 'chief monument of his historical fame' was based partly upon the researches of Niebuhr, and partly upon an aversion to Gibbon."

The biographies of Queen Victoria which preceded Strachey's account are for the most part models of abject worshiping and bad writing.² Perhaps their main quality is their mawkishness. We learn, for instance, that the walls of the room in which the future queen was born "are distempered a pretty, pale, duck-egg green": that the palace "abounded with musical clocks, two of which chimed every quarter of an hour"; that her bridal cake was three yards in circumference and weighed three hundred pounds; that "though one of them (her arms) differed from the other in having the smiling dimple, which Prince Albert, with a combination of lover-like pleasantry and lover-like tenderness, befitting a youthful husband, begged a sculptor to

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² Particularly, Katharine Hodges, *Fifty Years a Queen* (1887); M. G. Fawcett, *Life of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria* (1895); A. E. Knight, *Victoria, Her Life and Reign* (1897).

reproduce in marble, Her Majesty's shoulders were no less beautiful than her hands and arms for their beautiful symmetry and snowy whiteness"; that Her Majesty's expression of the words "love, cherish, and obey" and "the confiding look with which they were accompanied, were inimitably chaste and beautiful"; that the Prince Consort held the Queen's hand in his as they were returning by carriage to Buckingham Palace after the wedding, and held it "in such a way as to leave the wedding-ring visible to the assembled crowd." As the biographer quite truthfully records, "a rather pretty incident."

Not only Strachey's sense of humor but his sober appreciation of the value of selection restrained him from including such *trivia*. Or if he uses *trivia*—the young princess's enthusiasm for SWEET LITTLE ROSY, the mature Queen's gifts of primroses to Lord Beaconsfield, Gladstone's diligence in tree-felling—his purpose is to illuminate in a playful manner the characters in his biography. If one insists that a biographer should be fair-minded, one can easily point to a weakness in Strachey's technique: because he wishes to convey an impression, *his* impression of Queen Victoria and her associates, he selects the material, trivialities included, which will deepen that impression—and frequently excludes material that would weaken it, noticeably in the excerpts from the princess's diary and in his treatment of Gladstone.

But Strachey's success is that he has given us a swift, clear-cut study of this famous queen as a young girl, as a wife, as a mother, as a widow. But more than that, we see Queen Victoria as an indefatigable worker, whose influence on the course of government was important. When we finish the biography we say that now we understand Queen Victoria and her times: it is only fair to add the caution that we understand Queen Victoria and her times as Strachey understood them. The irony never ceases from the opening pages on the royal family to the last two pages with their almost cruel retrospect. Poise, restraint, clarity, detachment, polish, irony—these are the outstanding qualities of Strachey's *Queen Victoria*.

I. ANTECEDENTS

ON NOVEMBER 6, 1817, died the Princess Charlotte, only child of the Prince Regent; and heir to the crown of England. Her short life had hardly been a happy one. By nature impulsive, capricious, and vehement, she had always longed for liberty; and she had never possessed it. She had been brought up among violent family quarrels, had been early separated from her disreputable and eccentric mother, and handed over to the care of her disreputable and selfish father. When she was seventeen, he decided to marry her off to the Prince of Orange; she, at first, acquiesced; but, suddenly falling in love with Prince Augustus of Prussia, she determined to break off the engagement. This was not her first love affair, for she had previously carried on a clandestine correspondence with a Captain Hess. Prince Augustus was already married, morganatically, but she did not know it, and he did not tell her. While she was spinning out the negotiations with the Prince of Orange, the allied sovereigns—it was June, 1814—arrived in London to celebrate their victory. Among them, in the suite of the Emperor of Russia, was the young and handsome Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg. He made several attempts to attract the notice of the Princess, but she, with her heart elsewhere, paid very little attention. Next month the Prince Regent, discovering that his daughter was having secret meetings with Prince Augustus, suddenly appeared upon the scene and

after dismissing her household, sentenced her to a strict seclusion in Windsor Park. "God Almighty grant me patience!" she exclaimed, falling on her knees in an agony of agitation: then she jumped up, ran down the back-stairs and out into the street, hailed a passing cab, and drove to her mother's house in Bayswater. She was discovered, pursued, and at length, yielding to the persuasions of her uncles, the Dukes of York and Sussex, of Brougham, and of the Bishop of Salisbury, she returned to Carlton House at two o'clock in the morning. She was immured at Windsor, but no more was heard of the Prince of Orange. Prince Augustus, too, disappeared. The way was at last open to Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg.

This Prince was clever enough to get round the Regent, to impress the Ministers, and to make friends with another of the Princess's uncles, the Duke of Kent. Through the Duke he was able to communicate privately with the Princess, who now declared that he was necessary to her happiness. When, after Waterloo, he was in Paris, the Duke's aide-de-camp carried letters backwards and forwards across the Channel. In January 1816 he was invited to England, and in May the marriage took place.

The character of Prince Leopold contrasted strangely with that of his wife. The younger son of a German princeling, he was at this time twenty-six years of age; he had served with distinction in the war against Napoleon; he had shown considerable diplomatic skill at the Congress of Vienna; and he was now to try his hand at the task of taming a tumultuous Princess. Cold and formal in manner, collected in speech, careful in action, he soon dominated the wild, impetuous, generous creature by his side. There was much in her, he found, of which he could not approve. She quizzed, she stamped, she roared with laughter; she had very little of that self-command which is especially required of princes; her manners were abominable. Of the latter he was a good judge, having moved, as he himself explained to his niece many years later, in the best society of Europe, being in fact "what is called in French *de la fleur des pois*." There was continual friction, but every scene ended in the same way. Standing before him like a rebellious boy in petticoats, her body pushed forward, her hands behind her back, with flaming cheeks and sparkling eyes, she would declare at last that she was ready to do whatever he wanted. "If you wish it, I will do it," she would say. "I want nothing for myself," he invariably answered; "when I press something on you, it is from a conviction that it is for your interest and for your good."

Among the members of the household at Claremont, near Esher, where the royal pair were established, was a young German physician, Christian Friedrich Stockmar. He was the son of a minor magistrate in Coburg, and, after taking part as a medical officer in the war, he had settled down as a doctor in his native town. Here he had met Prince Leopold, who had been struck by his ability, and, on his marriage, brought him to England as his personal physician. A curious fate awaited this young man; many were the gifts which the future held in store for him—many and various—influence, power, mystery, unhappiness, a broken heart. At Claremont his position was a very humble one; but the Princess took a fancy to him, called him "Stocky," and romped with him along the corridors. Dyspeptic by constitution, melancholic by temperament,

he could yet be lively on occasion, and was known as a wit in Coburg. He was virtuous, too, and observed the royal *ménage* with approbation. "My master," he wrote in his diary, "is the best of all husbands in all the five quarters of the globe; and his wife bears him an amount of love, the greatness of which can only be compared with the English national debt." Before long he gave proof of another quality—a quality which was to color the whole of his life—cautious sagacity. When, in the spring of 1817, it was known that the Princess was expecting a child, the post of one of her physicians-in-ordinary was offered to him, and he had the good sense to refuse it. He perceived that his colleagues would be jealous of him, that his advice would probably not be taken, but that, if anything were to go wrong, it would be certainly the foreign doctor who would be blamed. Very soon, indeed, he came to the opinion that the low diet and constant bleedings, to which the unfortunate Princess was subjected, were an error; he drew the Prince aside, and begged him to communicate this opinion to the English doctors; but it was useless. The fashionable lowering treatment was continued for months. On November 5, at nine o'clock in the evening, after a labor of over fifty hours, the Princess was delivered of a dead boy. At midnight her exhausted strength gave way. Then, at last, Stockmar consented to see her; he went in, and found her obviously dying, while the doctors were plying her with wine. She seized his hand and pressed it. "They have made me tipsy," she said. After a little he left her, and was already in the next room when he heard her call out in her loud voice: "Stocky! Stocky!" As he ran back the death-rattle was in her throat. She tossed herself violently from side to side; then suddenly drew up her legs, and it was over.

The Prince, after hours of watching, had left the room for a few moments' rest; and Stockmar had now to tell him that his wife was dead. At first he could not be made to realize what had happened. On their way to her room he sank down on a chair while Stockmar knelt beside him: it was all a dream; it was impossible. At last, by the bed, he, too, knelt down and kissed the cold hands. Then rising and exclaiming, "Now I am quite desolate. Promise me never to leave me," he threw himself into Stockmar's arms.

II

The tragedy at Claremont was of a most upsetting kind. The royal kaleidoscope had suddenly shifted and nobody could tell how the new pattern would arrange itself. The succession to the throne, which had seemed so satisfactorily settled, now became a matter of urgent doubt.

George III was still living, an aged lunatic, at Windsor, completely impervious to the impressions of the outer world. Of his seven sons, the youngest was of more than middle age, and none had legitimate offspring. The outlook, therefore, was ambiguous. It seemed highly improbable that the Prince Regent, who had lately been obliged to abandon his stays, and presented a preposterous figure of debauched obesity, could ever again, even on the supposition that he divorced his wife and re-married, become the father of a family. Besides the Duke of Kent, who must be noticed separately, the other brothers, in order of seniority, were the Dukes of York, Clarence, Cumberland, Sussex, and Cam-

bridge; their situations and prospects require a brief description. The Duke of York, whose escapades in times past with Mrs. Clarke and the army had brought him into trouble, now divided his life between London and a large, extravagantly ordered and extremely uncomfortable country house where he occupied himself with racing, whist, and improper stories. He was remarkable among the princes for one reason: he was the only one of them—so we are informed by a highly competent observer—who had the feelings of a gentleman. He had been long married to the Princess Royal of Prussia, a lady who rarely went to bed and was perpetually surrounded by vast numbers of dogs, parrots, and monkeys. They had no children. The Duke of Clarence had lived for many years in complete obscurity with Mrs. Jordan, the actress, in Bushey Park. By her he had had a large family of sons and daughters, and had appeared, in effect, to be married to her, when he suddenly separated from her and offered to marry Miss Wykeham, a crazy woman of large fortune, who, however, would have nothing to say to him. Shortly afterwards Mrs. Jordan died in distressed circumstances in Paris. The Duke of Cumberland was probably the most unpopular man in England. Hideously ugly, with a distorted eye, he was bad-tempered and vindictive in private, a violent reactionary in politics, and was subsequently suspected of murdering his valet and of having carried on an amorous intrigue of an extremely scandalous kind. He had lately married a German Princess, but there were as yet no children by the marriage. The Duke of Sussex had mildly literary tastes and collected books. He had married Lady Augusta Murray, by whom he had two children, but the marriage, under the Royal Marriages Act, was declared void. On Lady Augusta's death, he married Lady Cecilia Buggin; she changed her name to Underwood; but this marriage also was void. Of the Duke of Cambridge, the youngest of the brothers, not very much was known. He lived in Hanover, wore a blonde wig, chattered and fidgeted a great deal, and was unmarried.

Besides his seven sons, George III had five surviving daughters. Of these, two—the Queen of Württemberg and the Duchess of Gloucester—were married and childless. The three unmarried princesses—Augusta, Elizabeth, and Sophia—were all over forty.

III

The fourth son of George III was Edward, Duke of Kent. He was now fifty years of age—a tall, stout, vigorous man, highly colored, with bushy eyebrows, a bald top to his head, and what hair he had carefully dyed a glossy black. His dress was extremely neat, and in his whole appearance there was a rigidity which did not belie his character. He had spent his early life in the army—at Gibraltar, in Canada, in the West Indies—and, under the influence of military training, had become at first a disciplinarian and at last a martinet. In 1802, having been sent to Gibraltar to restore order in a mutinous garrison, he was recalled for undue severity, and his active career had come to an end. Since then he had spent his life regulating his domestic arrangements with great exactitude, busying himself with the affairs of his numerous dependents, designing clocks, and struggling to restore order to his finances, for, in spite of his being, as some one said who knew him well "*r'égé comme du papier à*

musique," and in spite of an income of £24,000 a year, he was hopelessly in debt. He had quarreled with most of his brothers, particularly with the Prince Regent, and it was only natural that he should have joined the political Opposition and become a pillar of the Whigs.

What his political opinions may actually have been is open to doubt; it has often been asserted that he was a Liberal, or even a Radical; and, if we are to believe Robert Owen, he was a necessitarian Socialist. His relations with Owen—the shrewd, gullible, high-minded, wrong-headed, illustrious and preposterous father of Socialism and Coöperation—were curious and characteristic. He talked of visiting the Mills at New Lanark; he did, in fact, preside at one of Owen's public meetings; he corresponded with him on confidential terms, and he even (so Owen assures us) returned, after his death, from "the sphere of spirits" to give encouragement to the Owenites on earth. "In an especial manner," says Owen, "I have to name the very anxious feelings of the spirit of his Royal Highness the late Duke of Kent (who early informed me there were no titles in the spiritual spheres into which he had entered), to benefit, not a class, a sect, a party, or any particular country, but the whole of the human race through futurity." "His whole spirit-proceeding with me has been most beautiful," Owen adds, "making his own appointments; and never in one instance has this spirit not been punctual to the minute he had named." But Owen was of a sanguine temperament. He also numbered among his proselytes President Jefferson, Prince Metternich, and Napoleon; so that some uncertainty must still linger over the Duke of Kent's views. But there is no uncertainty about another circumstance: his Royal Highness borrowed from Robert Owen, on various occasions, various sums of money which were never repaid and amounted in all to several hundred pounds.

After the death of the Princess Charlotte it was clearly important, for more than one reason, that the Duke of Kent should marry. From the point of view of the nation, the lack of heirs in the reigning family seemed to make the step almost obligatory; it was also likely to be highly expedient from the point of view of the Duke. To marry as a public duty, for the sake of the royal succession, would surely deserve some recognition from a grateful country. When the Duke of York had married he had received a settlement of £25,000 a year. Why should not the Duke of Kent look forward to an equal sum? But the situation was not quite simple. There was the Duke of Clarence to be considered; he was the elder brother, and, if *he* married, would clearly have the prior claim. On the other hand, if the Duke of Kent married, it was important to remember that he would be making a serious sacrifice: a lady was involved.

The Duke, reflecting upon all these matters with careful attention, happened, about a month after his niece's death, to visit Brussels, and learnt that Mr. Creevey was staying in the town. Mr. Creevey was a close friend of the leading Whigs and an inveterate gossip; and it occurred to the Duke that there could be no better channel through which to communicate his views upon the situation to political circles at home. Apparently it did not occur to him that Mr. Creevey was malicious and might keep a diary. He therefore sent for him on some trivial pretext, and a remarkable conversation ensued.

After referring to the death of the Princess, to the improbability of the Re-

gent's seeking a divorce, to the childlessness of the Duke of York, and to the possibility of the Duke of Clarence marrying, the Duke adverted to his own position. "Should the Duke of Clarence not marry," he said, "the next prince in succession is myself, and although I trust I shall be at all times ready to obey any call my country may make upon me, God only knows the sacrifice it will be to make, whenever I shall think it my duty to become a married man. It is now seven-and-twenty years that Madame St. Laurent and I have lived together: we are of the same age, and have been in all climates, and in all difficulties together, and you may well imagine, Mr. Creevey, the pang it will occasion me to part with her. I put it to your own feelings—in the event of any separation between you and Mrs. Creevey. . . . As for Madame St. Laurent herself, I protest I don't know what is to become of her if a marriage is to be forced upon me; her feelings are already so agitated upon the subject." The Duke went on to describe how, one morning, a day or two after the Princess Charlotte's death, a paragraph had appeared in the *Morning Chronicle*, alluding to the possibility of his marriage. He had received the newspaper at breakfast together with his letters, and "I did as is my constant practice, I threw the newspaper across the table to Madame St. Laurent, and began to open and read my letters. I had not done so but a very short time, when my attention was called to an extraordinary noise and a strong convulsive movement in Madame St. Laurent's throat. For a short time I entertained serious apprehensions for her safety; and when, upon her recovery, I enquired into the occasion of this attack, she pointed to the article in the *Morning Chronicle*."

The Duke then returned to the subject of the Duke of Clarence. "My brother the Duke of Clarence is the elder brother, and has certainly the right to marry if he chooses, and I would not interfere with him on any account. If he wishes to be king—to be married and have children, poor man—God help him! let him do so. For myself—I am a man of no ambition, and wish only to remain as I am. . . . Easter, you know, falls very early this year—the 22nd of March. If the Duke of Clarence does not take any step before that time, I must find some pretext to reconcile Madame St. Laurent to my going to England for a short time. When once there, it will be easy for me to consult with my friends as to the proper steps to be taken. Should the Duke of Clarence do nothing before that time as to marrying it will become my duty, no doubt, to take some measures upon the subject myself." Two names, the Duke said, had been mentioned in this connection—those of the Princess of Baden and the Princess of Saxe-Coburg. The latter, he thought, would perhaps be the better of the two, from the circumstance of Prince Leopold being so popular with the nation; but before any other steps were taken, he hoped and expected to see justice done to Madame St. Laurent. "She is," he explained, "of very good family, and has never been an actress, and I am the first and only person who ever lived with her. Her disinterestedness, too, has been equal to her fidelity. When she first came to me it was upon £100 a year. That sum was afterwards raised to £400, and finally to £1000; but when my debts made it necessary for me to sacrifice a great part of my income, Madame St. Laurent insisted upon again returning to her income of £400 a year. If Madame St. Laurent is to return to live amongst her friends, it must be in such a state of independence as to command