AUTobiography

(INCLUDING JOURNALS AND LETTERS)

Of the writers here selected, no fewer than fifteen have written distinguished books on their childhood and early youth. This significant concentration on the years of formation may be due to the lessons of modern psychology, but is more than likely to be the outcome of a yearning for the happy past. Perhaps the saddest comment the artist can make on life during most of the twentieth century as we have known it so far, is that with all its reforms and devices to make life worth living, these years have seen such degradation of the human spirit that recollections of a childhood and youth spent between 1875 and 1912 must necessarily gleam with the quiet beauty of an autumn morning.

Hence the charm of Julian Green’s memories, the popularity of Vivian Hughes’s successful re-creation of a Victorian life in London, the appeal of the poet’s sensitive evocation of a happy past in Frank Kendon’s little book, the exquisite happy-sadness of Mary MacCarthy’s masterpiece.

But the full life is here too, in all its amplitude and dignity, ranging from the cultured ease of Mrs Belloc Lowndes to the grim, but successful, struggle of Sean O’Casey and the Palladian literary edifice of Left Hand, Right Hand.

AGATE, JAMES (1878–1947)

A Shorter Ego. 3 vols. Harrap (1946, 1949). 8s. 6d.; 8s. 6d.; 9s. 6d.

These engaging rag-bags of anecdote, comment, wit, and prejudice, social and theatrical gossip, originally appeared in nine volumes starting in 1935 and finishing in 1948. Each of the selective volumes covers three of the larger.

BAX, CLIFFORD


Happy, peaceful days of cricket, talk, books and pleasant companions.

BERNERS, LORD (1883–1950)

First Childhood. Constable (1934).

A Distant Prospect. Constable (1945), 1949. 8s. 6d.

Two small volumes evoking with humour and in prose of distinction memories of the early years and school days of the musician who gave us the witty score of the ballet The Triumph of Neptune.

BROOKE, JOCELYN

The Military Orchid. Lane (1948), 1951. 8s. 6d.

Even during the war the author’s passionate search for this rare orchid continued. A modern autobiography told with unusual grace of style and method. Continued in the semi-autobiographical A Mine of Serpents, Lane (1949), 10s. 6d. and The Goose Cathedral, Lane (1950), 9s. 6d.
CARDUS, NEVILLE

Autobiography. Collins (1947). 12s. 6d.

A best-seller of its year which will find new readers for many a decade. It has been said that Cardus is the only journalist who can criticize music in terms of cricket and cricket in terms of music. But apart from these two elements in his life story, Cardus has much to interest the reader who may (it is just possible) dislike both.

CARR, EMILY (1871–1945)


The story of the childhood and youth of a gifted artist who was born in Victoria, Canada, of English parents. In Klee Wyck, O.U.P. (1941), 12s. 6d., she writes of Indians and their lore, and the four plates in colour show her skill and style in painting.

CHAPMAN, CECIL MAURICE (1852–1938)

The Poor Man's Court of Justice. Hodder (1925).

Twenty-five years as a metropolitan magistrate.

CHURCHILL, WINSTON SPENCER

My Early Life: a roving commission. (1930.)

First published by Thornton Butterworth.

COWARD, NOEL

Present Indicative. Heinemann (1937), 1950. 12s. 6d.

From precocious youth to youthful maturity. Composer, singer, actor, librettist, producer, writer of the wittiest comedies since Wilde, Coward has a success story to tell and does it very well.

FARJEON, ELEANOR

A Nursery in the 'Nineties. Gollancz (1935).

The novelist grew up in a bohemian household and in the atmosphere of books and the theatre. As the granddaughter of Joseph Jefferson, the great American actor, she had the theatre in her blood.

FAUSSET, HUGH RANSON

A Modern Prelude. Cape (1933).

A poet's youth is often emotionally more highly strained and sharply felt than other men's. Here the distinguished literary critic and poet who has written notably of the growth of poetic mind in great writers of the past, tells the story of his own strict upbringing and gradual emergence as an artist. A sequel is offered in Towards Fidelity, Gollancz (1952), 15s.

GOGARTY, OLIVER ST JOHN

As I was Going Down Sackville Street. Rich & Cowan (1937).

A rich, gustily written 'phantasy in fact' by the Irish friend of Joyce, who is said to have had him in mind when writing of Buck Mulligan in Ulysses. Less autobiographical and more fictional, but still with a core of fact is the same writer's novel Tumbling In the Hay, Constable (1939).
AUTOBIOGRAPHY

GRACES, ROBERT

Goodbye to all That. Cape (1929).

Continued scrappily in But it Still Goes On, Cape (1930), which, by the way, contains one of the best modern short stories The Shout. The autobiography was a best-seller in its day. The young man who was to become one of the best of modern poets and historical novelists had just recovered emotionally from the war of 1914–1918 and in writing the story of his life to date produced a personal account which ranks with Blunden's and Sassoon's. See also under Essays (p. 37) for particulars of a volume which reprints The Shout and other pieces.

GREEN, JULIAN

Memories of Happy Days. Dent (1944), 1950. 6s.

This was the novelist's first book to be written in his native English, for though an American by birth, France is his adopted country and French his first language as a writer. Delightful memories of a childhood rich with happiness and charm drawn from pleasant parents and friends and from the indefinable atmosphere of Paris and its countryside. Then he watched France recover superficially from 1914 to 1918; later had the agony of seeing her occupied by the New Order of 1940. This part is told in Personal Record, 1928–1939, published in 1940 by Hamish Hamilton.

HAMILTON, LORD FREDERIC


An omnibus of a popular trilogy published separately: Days Before Yesterday; Vanished Pomp of Yesterday; and Here, There and Everywhere. A record of a leisureed life and of pleasant personalities at the turn of the century, and in the years of King Edward up to the time of the end of the old world in August 1914.

HARRISON, JANE ELLEN (1850–1928)


HUGHES, VIVIAN


The three volumes grouped in this omnibus were published separately as A London Child of the Seventies; A London Girl of the Eighties; and A London Home in the Nineties. They re-create the Victorian domestic and social scene with such fidelity and charm that they have already taken their place as modern classics.

ISHERWOOD, CHRISTOPHER

Lions and Shadows. Methuen (1938), 1953. 9s. 6d.

‘An education in the twenties’, recreating for us that halcyon decade in prose worthy of George Moore. The young writer went from public school to Cambridge; thence to literary London, where he met many who are now famous authors themselves.
A U T O B I O G R A P H Y

JEFFERSON, JOSEPH (1829–1905)
Jefferson was the greatest American comedian of his time, and even the London audiences of 1865 took to him with delight when he played Rip Van Winkle for them. His great-grandfather had been in Garrick's Drury Lane Company. His granddaughter, Eleanor Farjeon, contributes a preface to the new edition. A book for all who like stage gossip, old plays, the old-time theatre, and half-forgotten actors.

JEPPSON, EDGAR (1863–1938)
Delightfully gay, racy memoirs of a writer whose stories of Lady Noggs were once popular. Memories of an Edwardian and Neo-Georgian, Richards (1937), although an entertaining sequel is not up to the standard of the first book.

JOAD, CYRIL E. M. (1891–1953)
The Book of Joad. Faber (1937), 1950. 5s.
First published 1933 under the title of Under the Fifth Rib. Then described by the author as ‘a belligerent autobiography’.

KARSAVINA, TAMARA
Theatre Street. Constable (1930). Revised and enlarged, 1948. 10s. 6d.
The great ballerina’s life story is not only one of the best of its kind, but it also provides an indispensable historical record of the training and work of the Russian ballet in its days of supremacy.

KENDON, FRANK
The Small Years. C.U.P. (1930), 1950. 12s. 6d.
The childhood of a poet born in 1893. It is enough to say that Walter de la Mare thinks it ‘extraordinarily vivid and abundant’, and in his introduction says ‘the immortal child in man lives on. He lives on in a chequered paradise.... Alas, how few of us can recapture it—and how very few indeed with Mr Kendon’s lovely truth and clarity.’ The new edition contains an additional chapter on Christmas Day.

LAWSON, JACK
The story of a great career, told with modesty and simple charm. The author started life as a boy working in a coal mine. He rose to become a noted politician and to enter the House of Lords as Lord Lawson of Beamish.

LINKLATER, ERIC
The Man on My Back. Macmillan (1941). 12s. 6d.
Almost as lively a story as the writer’s gay novels of picaresque adventure.
LOWNDES, ALICE BELLOC (1868–1947)
Reprinted in Pan Books, 1952, 2s.
A record of love and of childhood which leaves little doubt that this popular writer meant her title to be read without the ambiguity of the original tag. Hers was a happy life, beginning in a charming French home with pleasant parents and a brother, who, as Hilaire Belloc, was later to share her literary Arcadia. The story is continued in Where Love and Friendship Dwelt, Macmillan (1943), 12s. 6d., notable for its record of literary Paris in the great days of Verlaine, Zola, Anatole France, the de Goncourts and Alphonse Daudet. The Merry Wives of Westminster, Macmillan (1946) and A Passing World, Macmillan (1948), 15s., were completed just in time.

LUBBOCK, PERCY
Earlham. Cape (1922).
Impressions and recollections of Earlham, Suffolk, which was the home of Lubbock’s grandfather, and where he himself spent a happy youth.

LYNCH, PATRICIA
A Storyteller’s Childhood. Dent (1947), 10s. 6d.
An Irish childhood and early youth, told by one of the best writers of children’s books. Her Turf-cutter’s Donkey (Dent), 8s. 6d., is a modern classic.

MACCARTHY, MARY
A Nineteenth Century Childhood. Seeker (1924).
Reprinted, Hamish Hamilton, 1948. 6s.
She writes of an almost vanished world of scholarly leisure, quiet conversation and cultured ease. The society of Eton and the academic circle of her family nurtured a fine, civilized intelligence.

MACGREGOR, ALASDAIR ALPIN
A description of life in a village in the Highlands before 1914. The author spent her youth in Edinburgh, but soon thrust the city away from her life, and went as a crofter with a flock of goats in the hills of the north.

MACHEN, ARTHUR (1863–1947)
Far Off Things (1922) and Things Near and Far (1923) are here offered in one volume, with an introduction by Morchard Bishop, as a modern classic. The veteran journalist and novelist of the fantastic and macabre, tells his life story in graceful prose and it may well survive as a memorable record of Victorian and Edwardian literary life.
AUTOBIOGRAPHY

MACKINNON, SIR FRANK DOUGLAS (1871–1946)


In 1937 the author became a Lord Justice of Appeal; previously he had been Judge of the King’s Bench Division of the High Court. As President of the Johnson Society of Lichfield and editor of the best edition of Fanny Burney’s Evelina, he was a perfect example of the happy marriage literature so often makes with law.

MARSH, SIR EDWARD (1872–1953)


A lifetime of friendships with literary and artistic people of genius and talent, a pleasant wit and urbane temperament, all go to make this volume one of the best literary autobiographies of our time.

MASEFIELD, JOHN

In the Mill. Heinemann (1941). 10s. 6d.
New Chum. Heinemann (1944). 10s. 6d.

The Poet Laureate is a born story-teller in both prose and verse. Here in two volumes is the tale of his own adventurous and hard-working youth. The first tells of his life up to the time of long days in an American factory; but the sequel is ‘the yarn of a sailor’ (albeit a young one on a famous training ship), ‘an old yarn, learned at sea’.

MASSINGHAM, H. J. (1888–1952)


This good countryman and fine writer, a kindly guide to the best that English rural life can offer a machine-dominated age, gives his reader a ‘topographical life story’.

MAUGHAM, W. SOMERSET

The Summing Up. Heinemann (1938). 7s. 6d.

Two studies in autobiography, with personal comment on the life of our times. The second concerns what happened to the author in the first fifteen months of the war of 1939–1945.

MUNTHE, AXEL (1857–1949)

The Story of San Michele. Murray (1929), 1948. 9s. 6d. and cheaper editions from time to time. Illustrated gift edition, 42s.

An international best-seller which gained its immense popularity by recommendation, not by advertisement of the commercial type. It set the fashion for doctors’ books and seems to appeal to each new generation of readers.

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MURRY, J. MIDDLETON

Between Two Worlds. Cape (1935).

One of the most interesting books of the first half century. The story of the writer's youth and his Oxford years is of value as a record of the times and of a creative writer's development; that of the later years, when he was a literary figure of great distinction and a member of a circle of other writers, all of whom had either genius or abundant talent, provides an indispensable source book for the literary historian.

O'CASEY, SEAN

Inishfallen Fare Thee Well. Macmillan (1949).

'Swift glances back at the things that made me.' A superb sequence, inspiring in its vitality and variety.

O'CROHAN, TOMÁS (1856–1937)

The Islandman. Translated from the Irish by Robin Flower. O.U.P. (1929), 1951. 12s.6d.

This unique story of the life of a shrewd, hard-working God-fearing Irishman who was born, worked all his life, and died on the Great Blasket Island, found many readers in the first edition of the translation (1934, Chatto) and in the Penguin Books edition of 1943. The 1951 edition is illustrated and in a format worthy of a lovable book which may well take its place in the permanent gallery of the World's Classics.

OMMANNEY, F. D.

The House in the Park. Longmans (1944).

Traveller and naturalist, author of South Latitude, Longmans (1938), 5s. and North Cape, Longmans (1939), he here returns in memory to the lovely historic place that was his youth's home. With its round pond, its gracious beauty, and haunting memories of a happy family, for him it is now gone for ever, for it has 'returned to the Crown'. 'The Park' is Richmond Park.

ORWELL, GEORGE (1903–1950)

Down and Out in Paris and London.

Seeker & Warburg (1933), 1949. 10s. 6d.

An unusual record of the early years of a man of talent and character down on his luck, but ready to take a turn at anything to earn a living and gain experience of life. In parts a grim and realistic story.

O'SULLIVAN, MAURICE (1904–1950)


In the introduction, E. M. Forster points out that this is not only a good book but also a unique one. It is a translation from the original Irish and those who enjoyed O’Crohan’s The Islandman will like this too.
AUTOBIOGRAPHY

READ, SIR HERBERT

Annals of Innocence and Experience. Faber (1940, 1946), 1949. 10s. 6d.

The distinguished critic, poet and art teacher evokes memories of a Yorkshire childhood and ponders on his emotional and intellectual development. Part 1 (The Innocent Eye) was first published in 1933; In Retreat (1925), a fragment of experience taken from the 1914–1918 war in Europe, was added to the 1946 revision, in which the first and third parts remained unaltered.

ROBERTSON, W. GRAHAM (1866–1948)

Time Was. (1931.) Hamish Hamilton (1945).

Wit, painter, playwright. A connoisseur of art and people. He seemed to know everyone of literary and artistic consequence at the turn of the century and during the Edwardian era. A light, gossipy diverting picture of an era of happiness and enjoyment.

ROWSE, A. L.

A Cornish Childhood. Cape (1942), 1950. 12s. 6d.

From the academic pinnacle of a Fellowship of All Souls, the historian and vigorous controversialist looks back on an early life nurtured with some hardness in the half industrial, half agricultural, maritime atmosphere of the wild west country.

SANTAYANA, GEORGE (1863–1952)


Philosopher, poet, historian and novelist. With his Spanish-American background, his learning and loftiness of thought, he was a true internationalist. In The Middle Span, Constable (1948), 8s. 6d., he deals with his life in England and America from 1886 to 1905. The earlier work describes his youth in Spain and the New England of his mother. There is a notable gallery of witty portraits in both.

SASSOON, SIEGFRIED

The Old Century and Seven More Years. Faber (1938). 8s. 6d.

Continued in The Weald of Youth, Faber (1942), 10s. 6d., the poet here retravels the years from 1907 to the year of the great break-up, 1914. In Siegfried’s Journey, 1916–1920, Faber (1945), 10s. 6d., the writer emerges from the ordeal of war.

SHAW, GEORGE BERNARD (1856–1950)

Sixteen Self Sketches. Constable (1949). 7s. 6d.

Fragments of autobiography lie scattered throughout his writings, in prefaces and in sociological essays. Here are gathered in one volume as near to a self-told life story as we shall now be offered.

SITWELL, SIR OSBERT

AUTobiography


In five volumes of mannered prose we have what is perhaps the greatest autobiography of the first half of the twentieth century. In part the record of a vanished world of wealth, leisured culture and patrician eccentricity; in part a picture of a brilliant circle of writers, artists and important people. The final volume is a series of studies of writers: Firbank, Sir Edmund Gosse, Arnold Bennett and others.

SITWELL, SACHEVERELL

All Summer In a Day. Duckworth (1926). New edition, Lehmann, 1949. 3s.6d.

Compared with his brother’s canvas, this is an autobiography in miniature; a posy from a large garden, but as fragrant as its title.

SPRING, HOWARD

Heaven Lies About Us. Constable (1939).

‘A fragment of infancy.’ Continued in In the Meantime, Constable (1942), and And Another Thing, Constable (1946).

SQUIRE, SIR JOHN COLLINGS


Literature and life, cricket and good friends.

STARK, FREYA


The great traveller is recognized as one of the most remarkable women of the century and her autobiography must necessarily take its place as one of the most outstanding works. In the first volume she deals with childhood and youth, first ventures abroad, climbing adventures with W. P. Ker, and the personalities of her family circle. The period is 1893–1927. In the second the story is continued to 1935.

STEIN, GERTRUDE (1874–1946)

The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas. Lane (1933). 4s. 6d.

Like so many other American writers who have made Paris their physical as well as their spiritual home the eccentric Miss Stein became more French than most Frenchwomen. As practitioner of the difficult art of infantilism in prose and verse she influenced the ‘ad’ writers of the ‘twenties, who were almost alone in taking her work seriously. In this unusual story of life in France, of Picasso and other friends, of art and literature, she sometimes relapsed into the normal.

THIRKELL, ANGELA

Three Houses. O.U.P. (1931). 7s. 6d.

Fulham, Kensington, Rottingdean. All were houses lived in by men and women and children of grace and charm. To them came men of letters.
and artists. Those were days which may never return, for these memories
of a happy childhood are of a period which seems to have gone for ever.

THOMPSON, FLORA (1877–1947)
A trilogy with an introduction by H. J. Massingham. The separate
volumes were Lark Rise (1939), Over to Candleford (1941), and Candleford
Green (1943). The complete work is illustrated with wood engravings by
Julie Nield. A singularly lovable personality with a rare literary gift,
the author gives a picture of English village life in the latter half of
the nineteenth century. She grew up in an Oxfordshire hamlet. Her book
will probably live as a masterpiece of its kind.

TRENEER, ANNE
School House in the Wind. Cape (1944). 4s. 6d.
Cornish Years. Cape (1950). 12s. 6d.
Childhood and later life in remote, windy Cornwall.

UTTLEY, ALISON
Ambush of Young Days. Faber (1937). 1951. 12s. 6d.
The author grew up in the country, on a farm where father, grandfather,
and many generations before them, had grown up also. The new edition
is made even more delightful by the illustrations of C. F. Tunnicliffe.

WEBLING, A. F.
A quiet story of spiritual struggle and development. The cheaper edition
is in the Cambridge Miscellany.

WELCH, DENTON (1917–1948)
Maiden Voyage. Routledge (1943). 10s. 6d.
A rebellious youth who had little use for a Youth Movement with a
membership of more than one. There was a touch of genius in him which
he nurtured under terrible difficulties till it flowered in that most moving
autobiographical novel A Voice Through a Cloud. We now have the
posthumous The Denton Welch Journals, Hamish Hamilton (1952), 15s.,
edited by Jocelyn Brooke.

Other twentieth-century books will be found in An English Library under
the following names: Henry Adams; Barbellion; Gertrude Bell; Arnold
Bennett; John Buchan; G. K. Chesterton; R. G. Collingwood; G. G.
Coulton; W. H. Davies; Havelock Ellis; Eric Gill; Edmund Gosse;
Maurice Hewlett; W. H. Hudson; Rudyard Kipling; D. H. Lawrence;
Katherine Mansfield; George Moore; Llewelyn Powys; Quiller-Couch;
Forrest Reid; Logan Pearsall Smith; George Sturt; J. W. N. Sullivan;
Beatrice Webb; and W. B. Yeats.