THE

PERSEPHONE

QUARTERLY

Summer 2001 No.10

persephonebooks.co.uk 020 7242 9292

Our Summer 2001 Books

Eighty years ago, at the end of May 1921, Katherine Mansfield came to Switzerland, to live in the Chalet des Sapins in Montana. She was thirty-two and seriously ill with tuberculosis, (possibly caught, according to her biographer Claire Tomalin, from D.H.Lawrence). The next few months were to be the most fruitful period of her life; she did not have much time left to her.

The Montana Stories contains all the stories and fragments written between July 1921 and the end of January 1922 when she went to Paris for medical treatment. For completeness there are also the two stories and an unfinished fragment that she wrote after she left Montana and before her death in January 1923; but the large proportion of her output during her final working months was written in the chalet shown on the cover of this *Persephone Quarterly*.

Katherine Mansfield in 1921, when she was writing The Montana Stories. *© Peter Day*

Physically Katherine was in Montana, lying either in bed or on a chair on the balcony (the large one on the top floor); in her imagination she was in many different places - in London, in the South of France and, in particular, in the New Zealand of her girlhood. It was as if the view over the mountains was a catalyst that gave the impetus to her writing.

Katherine had of course written many short stories before, and had published two volumes of these, *In a German Pension* in 1911 and *Bliss* earlier in the year; but as a collection ***The Montana Stories*** has a unique quality which, inevitably, owes something to her ill-health. 'The surface of these stories is calm and even bright,' wrote Claire Tomalin, 'but their theme is mortality, and even the joy in them is like Keats' joy, "whose hand is ever at his lips/Bidding adieu"; and it is this precariousness which gives them their stinging clarity.' Apart from Keats, the closest parallel is in music - the last pieces for piano written by Schubert.

Everything in the collection has previously been published either in the order chosen by Katherine herself (or, after her death, by her husband John Middleton Murry); or in a selection chosen by a Mansfield scholar or editor; or has focused on certain aspects of Katherine's life, for example on

Cover: Chalet des Sapins at Montana in 1913; demolished 1993 and replaced by the Hotel Helvetia-Intergolf. Katherine Mansfield's 'lavabo' (basin) has been installed in the entrance hall. © T & H Deprez, Crans-Montana

the stories with a New Zealand setting. But there is a special interest in reading someone's work chronologically (almost day by day during the especially creative months of July and August 1921); and the short stories have never previously been published in tandem with extracts from Katherine's letters and journal.

Nor have the pictures in this volume been re-published before. There are ten of them, all illustrating the stories from *The Sphere* that Katherine wrote in the late summer of 1921 in order to pay her doctor's bills. *The Sphere,* a popular weekly magazine that ran from 1900-64, was a cross between *The Illustrated London News* and *Good Housekeeping*; like the latter it always ran a short story, usually with illustrations. Katherine was dismayed by these 'fearful horrors. All my dear people looking like - well - Harrod's 29/6 crêpe de chine blouses and young tailors' gents, and my old men - stuffy old woolly sheep. It's a sad trial.' Yet the idiom of the drawings must have accompanied Katherine imaginatively to some extent and is an important part of ***The Montana Stories***; only by seeing them, and only by reading the fragments, diary entries and letters, as well as the stories, can we understand how a writer of genius forced herself on during this creative and productive time.

Susan Glaspell by William d'Engle (courtesy of the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College).

Our other summer book was also written in the 1920s and was the very first book to be published with the famous yellow cover of the Gollancz list: Victor Gollancz, who was to be a great supporter of women writers, asked - indeed begged - Susan Glaspell for permission to launch his new firm's list with her new novel. He wrote to her in 1927: 'I hope to have some very good things and some very distinctive names in my first list, but you will know that I am saying nothing but the bare truth when I tell you that I would sooner have *Brook Evans* than any other of the publications which I have in mind.' He then went on to say 'in very great confidence that, while the publication of your books has been my greatest single enthusiasm during the past few years, this enthusiasm has had to meet very considerable opposition on the part of colleagues [at the publishing firm of Ernest Benn] who have not had the same sympathy as I with the gospel you teach.'

Brook Evans (1928) explores similar themes to those found in Susan Glaspell's *Fidelity* (the fourth book we reprinted) and is also a novel about love. Although the theme of a girl rebelling against her mother's influence is a fictional favourite, this is an unusually gripping book, perhaps because it is written in four 'acts': Susan Glaspell was a Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright who wrote 'Trifles' and in her day was as

well-known as Eugene O'Neill. ***Brook Evans*** covers three generations, describes several love affairs and has three central narrators, and yet is carefully controlled. It shows nineteen-year-old Naomi's lover being killed and her parents forcing her to marry Caleb and go out with him to the Mid-West; when she gives birth to Brook she tries to ensure that her daughter should have the freedom to be herself, to love whom she wants, that had been denied to her. But Brook, in her turn, rebels against her mother by leaving for Europe with a missionary (morally the opposite of Ruth's running off with a married man in *Fidelity*). Eventually she realises that 'she had been much loved. Her mother, her father, her husband, her son. . . But what did her mother *mean*? Just what did her mother mean – those things she said about love?'

The last third of the book is set in France in the 1920s, where the widowed, urbane Brook falls in love with a man who has many of the same primeval and sexual qualities as Mellors in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. It is no coincidence that Susan Glaspell and D.H.Lawrence were writing their novels in the same year (although Lawrence's book had to be privately printed because of its explicitness). It was the primeval aspect of ***Brook Evans*** to which the *TLS* reviewer was referring when he (or she) wrote about its author having 'a deep but primitive sensibility, a capacity for groping about in the emotions of her characters till she arrives at the truth and a prevalent tone of pity for the pain that human beings inevitably inflict upon one another.' And the makers of the 1931 film of the book called it 'The Right to Love'.

This picture shows a chalet at Montana; its owners would not take tuberculosis patients.

Gender Differences in Fiction

by Ferdinand Mount, Editor of the Times Literary Supplement.

When he was running Duckworth, the late Colin Haycraft, that brilliant, cantankerous publisher, used to say: 'I only publish novels by women now. Men can't do novels any more, they are only good for writing thrillers.' At the time this remark annoyed me, being more or less a man and incurably given to writing novels. But now, six years after his death, I begin to understand what he means. When I first noticed the symptoms, I wondered whether it was simply a passing phase or a mild allergy declaring itself rather late in the day, like an intolerance of dairy products. But the thing has become so strong that I can't go on pretending it isn't there.

The truth is that the modern novels I read with real, deep pleasure are almost all written by women. In the old days, from Fielding through to VS Naipaul (or, if you prefer, from Madame de Lafayette to Virginia Woolf), the sex of the author was a matter of indifference to me. If they were any good, male and female novelists used to give the same satisfaction. Today, by contrast, I find it is usually possible to get through the latest book by the world's famous living male novelists – let's say Saul Bellow, Mario Vargas Llosa, Norman Mailer, Philip Roth, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Thomas Pynchon, José Saramago, Salman Rushdie - and admire the fertility of invention, the dazzling display of tricks, the riffs and cadenzas, the language, the energy. When books by these writers and their like are being discussed, I join in heartily:

"Oh, absolutely brilliant, I loved that bit where he's in this strange hotel in Boston and his ex-wife appears in the rubbish chute.' But the pleasures I derive from most such novels have a tinny, mechanical quality. The sound effects make you jump, but that's all they do. The characters hop about like clockwork toys, running into things, bouncing off them, or disappearing over the edge - I don't care which, and the author doesn't seem to much either. The book may be, as the blurb says, 'challenging'; but rather in the way that your in-car electronics are challenging: if you read the manual very carefully, you may get the hang of it in the end, but you still can't quite see the point.

By comparison, novels by women tend to make less noise, but the books go deeper and last longer in my mind. They often choose a smaller, more domestic compass, but this only intensifies their art. At one time recently, I found I was reading nothing but fiction by Canadian or near-Canadian women: Alice Munro, Carol Shields, Margaret Atwood, E Annie Proulx, Jane Smiley. And what characterises the Canadian voice, as compared with American or British accents, is its very lack of offensive edge, its soft inviting timbre. Once you accept the invitation, your path may be cunningly strewn with broken glass, but the whole experience tends to be subtler, more conversational, more interior.

Like all writers, women novelists have their faults. Carol Shields can lapse into whimsy, Anita Brookner repeats herself, Beryl Bainbridge can be a bit sketchy, Hilary Mantel can be a little flat. But even when they are below their best, I find my engagement is closer, my sympathy more alive.

When I went on holiday last month, what did I take? The latest Brookner and Atwood, Jane Hamilton, Zadie Smith.

There are exceptions to the rule, in both directions. The sort of ingenious women writers whom men often admire - Jeanette Winterson, Angela Carter - I cannot get on with at all. And there are a very few male novelists who can awaken a comparable sympathy in me - John Updike or Richard Ford in America, for example, Ian McEwan or Piers Paul Read in England or, among Irish writers, John McGahern and William Trevor. But I choose to regard these as honorary hermaphrodites, in the tradition of Thomas Hardy, Henry James and Evelyn Waugh. At a more modest level, that is the category I hope to squeeze into myself.

HIS LETTER WAS READ WITH VERY DIFFERENT FEELINGS FROM THOSE WITH WHICH IT HAD BEEN WRITTEN.

from Neighbours by Mrs Molesworth (1889) p.156.

What is the explanation? It is not because I have a weakness for soppy, sentimental stories. On the contrary, my favourite women writers tend to the bleak in their outlook. Nor is it because I have a preference for the woman's point of view, if such a thing could be said to exist. Nor do I have a particular curiosity about 'what women want'.

It is true that women tend to write more and better about women, just as men write more and better about men. But it is not the balance of the subject matter that attracts me. And it isn't even because I think women are somehow deeper, more in touch with the life force. Following in the footsteps of Jane Austen, many of my favourite women writers are decidedly dry and down-to-earth.

No, the reason, as far as I can understand it, is to do with what one thinks the novelist's art consists in – with what novels are or ought to be. The modern male novelist (henceforth MMN) prizes formal ingenuity, tricksiness, exuberance; flights of fancy and fireworks, that's what his genius specialises in. No doubt as he goes along he hopes to tell us something, whether obliquely or in your face, about the Modern Predicament or the Hell that is America. But MMN expects to be awarded more of his marks for technical merit than for artistic impression; or, rather, it is his technical merit that overwhelmingly creates the artistic impression.

The female novelist, by contrast, follows the approach that FR Leavis characterised as the Great

Tradition: that is to say, that the novel at its best creates a sort of moral poetry, in that the questions of human choice and of how life is to be lived are intrinsic to it. Of course, a truly satisfying novel will include all sorts of other things - vivid imagery, funny and touching and disgusting scenes, memorable characters - but without a moral liveliness running throughout the book it will be somehow empty. It's not like a painting or a piece of music; it's not even like a poem. The relation to life is different. Music's raw material is resonance and the intervals between notes; the novel's material is motivation and the intervals between people. Poetry can deal in single moments, the effect of light upon water or windowsills; but novels must deal in consecutive movements and the effect of people upon one another. It is a social and hence, in some measure, a narrative art, because what people do or don't do to one another has consequences which must be followed through. However cunningly disguised, there is a story in there somewhere. To get rid of the consequences and make your text free-flowing, arbitrary and timeless is to discard what is most interesting.

I don't, of course, mean that a novel should preach a moral line or be read as a tract against some social abuse. There are famous novels that do preach - *Uncle Tom's Cabin* against slavery, *The Forsyte Saga* against property and in favour of divorce - but it is partly because of their preachiness that they don't come close to the highest class: to the level of *Huckleberry Finn* or *Anna Karenina*. You could say that Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, the most wonderful first novel published in 20 years, is about immigrants in Willesden, but it is no more a contribution to the race-relations industry than *War and Peace* is to military history.

But what the novel does have to do is stay grounded in reality, to convey the weight of life and the difficulty - occasionally the exhilaration - of choosing and carrying on. That doesn't mean realism in a plodding sense; some of the saddest moments in modern fiction are sketched in with a couple of strokes. But what is indispensable is a certain quality of sympathy with the characters and their dilemmas. Even when raucously exposing his or her character's absurdities, the novelist must convey some fleeting sensation of what it would be like to be them. In the best fiction, you shed a tear for the monsters too, for Casaubon in *Middlemarch*, for Karenin, for Captain Grimes.

In all the modern writers I like, even the most caustic ones - especially the most caustic ones - this quality of moral sympathy comes as naturally as a shiver on a cold night. It isn't an effect that they have striven for, and it isn't in the slightest bit sentimental. They simply take it for granted that this is how you write novels, just as George Eliot and Tolstoy took it for granted.

By contrast, in the case of the MMN, it seems as if this moral sympathy is gradually being bred out of them, so that in the most extreme cases their work feels almost autistic. Far from becoming increasingly sensitive and touchy-feely, the New Man seems to be running short of a female chromosome or two. All the hard work that went into making men understand that their lives would be infinitely richer if they encouraged the female side of their natures has had the opposite effect. I know Graham Greene said that every novelist needs to have an icicle in his heart - but he didn't say they needed the whole bloody fridge.

Our Readers Write

'*Miss Pettigrew* was devoured in 24 hours by both my husband and myself. The short stories by Elizabeth Berridge and Mollie Panter-Downes are a joy, and Dorothy Whipple, whom I used to love in my youth, has not dated a bit.' RF, Ardnadam

'I absolutely adored ***Miss Pettigrew***. I have told everyone about it and keep wistfully wondering if I would be able to adapt it for television – it would need so little as so much of it is in dialogue form. [The film rights have since been sold to Kudos.] I also loved the Virginia Graham poems.' Maureen Lipman, London N10

'***Miss Pettigrew*** is a wonderful book – a proactive Cinderella whose wits fill the glass slipper – it is a gorgeous story, and particularly as so many women did have such drear and frightening lives. And I loved the line drawings.' TM, Nottingham

'A man who saw me reading ***Miss Pettigrew*** on the train commented that it must be a really good book to make me smile so much!' CW, London NW10

'I thought I must let you know how much pleasure I have had from ***Café Music***. . . it's so much fun I really smile. As good as a session of aromatherapy for making you feel better.' HB, Edinburgh

'The more I read your books the more I simply cannot believe so many wonderful novels have been 'lost' for all these years.' MC, Harrogate

'Just to let you know that I absolutely loved ***Someone at a Distance***. And I read ***The Home-Maker*** in a matter of hours, crying quite a lot as I did so, and found it brilliantly written. The only quibble I had was with the almost comic lack of psychology about the cause of children's ailments, which is actually quite tragic for them.' JB, Windsor

'Am reading ***They Knew Mr Knight*** – the feeling of impending disaster permeates each page and I almost do not want to know what is going to happen next.' EM, Colchester

'The books are absolutely stunning; I almost had tears in my eyes, they are so beautiful. They immediately went the rounds of the bookshop staff, who oohed and aahed appreciatively. . . I can't express enough my gratitude to Persephone for bringing these books back into print and in such a beautiful way.' MS, Toronto

'I ordered twelve of your books at my local library and they bought them all for me. There were only two I could not get along with – ***Miss Pettigrew*** (too silly) and ***William – an Englishman*** (too heavy-going, as if Edith Wharton had wellingtons on). I particularly enjoyed ***Consequences*** (subtly written in that there were causes for the heroine's tragedy); ***The Home-Maker*** (I liked the rather strange 'happy' ending); and ***Saplings*** (this fairly zipped along and was both tragic and inspiring. It was very honest and, for the time, daring. What a wonderful film it would make).' MM, Wolverhampton

'I was so moved by ***Consequences*** and felt so very sorry for Alex that I wrote an alternative ending, which I enclose.' JH, Witney

'I have never felt compelled to write to a publisher to commend them on their excellent product. But this was before I received a copy of ***Reuben Sachs*** from the *New Statesman* for review; I was stunned by the overall quality of the book.' RT, London SE14.

From Some Recent Reviews

In March, Lisa Allardice reviewed ***Reuben Sachs*** in *The Independent on Sunday*: 'Sadder but no less sparkling than last year's ***Miss Pettigrew***, *Reuben Sachs* is another forgotten classic by an accomplished female novelist. Written in part as a riposte to *Daniel Deronda*, this unforgiving insight into the world of the middle-class Jewish community in C19 London was admired on its publication in 1888 by Oscar Wilde but was also widely mininterpreted as anti-Semitic. . . Amy Levy might be described as a Jewish Jane Austen. . . this spirited satire is infused with a gentle melancholy.'

Janice Blackburn in *The Times* mentioned 'gobbling up' our books and Angela Huth referred (in *Books and Co.*) to 'those handsome versions of books that have very good reason to be reprinted and are a bonus to those of us who, just occasionally, feel wearied by contemporary fiction.'

The *Church Times*'s cookery correspondent printed recipes from 'one of the most influential cookery books of the 20th century, Florence White's ***Good Things in England*** (1932). I was glad to acquire it recently in an elegant facsimile. . . No attempt has been made to present the recipes in uniform style, but this adds to its charm as a book to browse through. It contains some of the last remnants of the true old English cookery.'

In March, *Saga* magazine contained an article about 'the Persephone Collection' and its silver-grey covers 'which could be well on its way to becoming as instantly recognisable one day as the orange-back Penguin'; Edna Tromans' delightfully written piece brought us over 400 new readers. In the same month *Harpers and Queen* published a very informative article about the three publishers behind Pushkin, Portobello and Persephone.

The New York Review of Books ran a long and fascinating review by Neil Ascherson of ***Farewell Leicester Square***, a 'clever and deeply pessimistic' study infused with Betty Miller's 'piercing intelligence'.

In the week preceding Maureen Lipman's enchanting reading of ***Miss Pettigrew*** on Radio 4 (which caused it to leap up to number 47 in Amazon's listings and to remain in the first 5000) *Open Book*'s Charlie Lee-Potter asked her about her 'love affair' with the book: 'I started and I just read till I'd finished with complete glee. It's a rags to riches, it's a fairy story, it's plain transmogrifying into beautiful, it's Prof Higgins and Eliza without Prof Higgins, it's divine, it's a sort of cocktail or mousse or tingle, you start and you're on a roller-coaster, all in the space of 24 hours and you hardly have time to draw breath.'

A few days later, again on *Open Book*, Richmal Crompton's biographer, Mary Cadogan, and the writer of the preface, Juliet Aykroyd, had an animated and interesting discussion about ***Family Roundabout***. They agreed that the humour is gentler than in the William books but 'what is so good about the novel is that you are left thinking deeply about what is the best way to bring up children, and what is in the end a successful child or a successful mother.'

And in the *Sunday Times* Jacqueline Wilson's book 'On her Bedside Table' was ***The Children Who Lived in a Barn*** 'because I am writing a Preface for a new Persephone Books edition.'

(We can send photocopies of reviews for 50p – the easiest thing to do is to send three 19p stamps.)

Reading Groups

Jenny Hartley, who wrote the Persephone Preface to ***Few Eggs and No Oranges***, has written *Reading Groups* (OUP, £5.99). In order to assemble the material for the book she and her colleague Sarah Turvey sent questionnaires to 350 groups; here are some of their responses, prefaced by Jenny Hartley's comments:

Groups develop a sense of what they won't get on with: 'We have learnt to steer clear of magic realism.' 'We find non-fiction difficult to discuss... J.D.Bauby's *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* - not much to say after admiring the human spirit.'

Personal enthusiasms can rock the boat: 'E.Annie Proulx's *Shipping News* went badly. The American lady who recommended it loved it and wanted to reread it with the group. She was disappointed by our lukewarm response.'

Groups approve of books which can extend their knowledge base: 'We learnt a lot of history from *Birdsong* and *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*.' 'Eugenie Fraser's *The House on the Dvina* was such an eye-opener into a very unknown part of the world.' '*Memoirs of a Geisha* and *The God of Small Things* introduced us to worlds we knew nothing about.'

Productive conundrums include: 'Bernard Schlink's *The Reader* - what would I do?' 'A.S.Byatt's *Possession* - very meaty.'

But too much agreement can sink a book: 'When everyone loves a book the discussion peters out early.' 'We all enjoyed *Pride and Prejudice* so it didn't provoke a lot of discussion.'

Even classics can wilt. Tristram Shandy is a notorious black spot: 'Try reading it and see what you think!' 'George Eliot's *Felix Holt* - inaccessible.' 'Balzac's *Eugenie Grandet* - none of us really cared about it.' 'Dante's *La Vita Nuova* - too neurotic for some - but a hit with another group.'

But even though classics might not go well in discussion, groups will still pick one every now and again and can surprise themselves agreeably: 'With Margaret Oliphant's *Miss Marjoribanks* we felt we had discovered an amusing unappreciated minor masterpiece. Everyone enthused.'

Some books are thought too lightweight: 'Books like *The Horse-Whisperer* which aren't substantial mean that we can't get our teeth into discussion.'

It is the differences which are for most people the joy of the group: 'What is interesting is that we rarely all agree about the book.' 'People's thoughts on a book are never predictable, even after fourteen years.' 'I was worried that the discussion about *Cranford* [by Mrs Gaskell] would not take off, but as soon as the first person had said something, which happened to be fairly contentious, everyone piled in and we were hammer and tongs for an hour and a half. Who would have thought *Cranford* would have aroused such passions? Or triggered off such a broad discussion ranging over political, social and moral themes?' 'Almost everyone had read *Madam Bovary* in the past and now brought a very different sensiblity to it. It became one of everyone's favourite evenings.'

[Experience has shown that the half-dozen Persephone books most stimulating for reading groups to discuss are ***William – an Englishman***, ***Someone at a Distance***, ***Fidelity***, ***The Home-Maker***, ***Saplings*** and ***Reuben Sachs***.*]*

Katherine Mansfield wrote

'Sixpence' in Montana; thinking it sentimental, she removed it from The Garden Party.

Children are unaccountable little creatures. Why should a small boy like Dicky, good as gold as a rule, sensitive, affectionate, obedient, and marvellously sensible for his age, have moods when, without the slightest warning, he suddenly went 'mad dog', as his sisters called it, and there was no doing anything with him?

'Dicky, come here! Come here, sir, at once! Do you hear your mother calling you? Dicky!'

But Dicky wouldn't come. Oh, he heard right enough. A clear, ringing little laugh was his only reply. And away he flew; hiding, running through the uncut hay on the lawn, dashing past the woodshed, making a rush for the kitchen garden, and there dodging, peering at his mother from behind the mossy apple trunks, and leaping up and down like a wild Indian.

It had begun at tea-time. While Dicky's mother and Mrs. Spears, who was spending the afternoon with her, were quietly sitting over their sewing in the drawing-room, this, according to the servant girl, was what had happened at the children's tea. They were eating their first bread and butter as nicely and quietly as you please, and the servant girl had just poured out the milk and water, when Dicky had suddenly seized the bread plate, put it upside down on his head, and clutched the bread knife.

'Look at me!' he shouted.

His startled sisters looked, and before the servant girl could get there, the bread plate wobbled, slid, flew to the floor, and broke into shivers. At this awful point the little girls lifted up their voices and shrieked their loudest.

'Mother, come and look what he's done!'

'Dicky's broke a great big plate!'

'Come and stop him, mother!'

You can imagine how mother came flying. But she was too late. Dicky had leapt out of his chair, run through the french windows on to the verandah, and, well - there she stood - popping her thimble on and off, helpless. What could she do? She couldn't chase after the child. She couldn't stalk Dicky among the apples and damsons. That would be too undignified. It was more than annoying, it was exasperating. Especially as Mrs. Spears, Mrs. Spears of all people, whose two boys were so exemplary, was waiting for her in the drawing-room.

'Very well, Dicky,' she cried, 'I shall have to think of some way of punishing you.'

'I don't care,' sounded the high little voice, and again there came that ringing laugh. The child was quite beside himself. . . .

'Oh, Mrs. Spears, I don't know how to apologise for leaving you by yourself like this.'

'It's quite all right, Mrs. Bendall,' said Mrs. Spears, in her soft, sugary voice, and raising her eyebrows in the way she had. She seemed to smile to herself as she stroked the gathers. 'These little things will happen from time to time. I only hope it was nothing serious.'

'It was Dicky,' said Mrs. Bendall, looking rather helplessly for her only fine needle. And she explained the whole affair to Mrs. Spears. 'And the worst of it is, I don't know how to cure him.

Nothing when he's in that mood seems to have the slightest effect on him.'

Mrs. Spears opened her pale eyes. 'Not even a whipping?' said she.

But Mrs. Bendall, threading her needle, pursed up her lips. 'We never have whipped the children,' she said. 'The girls never seem to have needed it. And Dicky is such a baby, and the only boy. Somehow . . .'

'Oh, my dear,' said Mrs. Spears, and she laid her sewing down. 'I don't wonder Dicky has these little outbreaks. You don't mind my saying so? But I'm sure you make a great mistake in trying to bring up children without whipping them. Nothing really takes its place. And I speak from experience, my dear. I used to try gentler measures' - Mrs. Spears drew in her breath with a little hissing sound - 'soaping the boys' tongues, for instance, with yellow soap, or making them stand on the table for the whole of Saturday afternoon. But no, believe me,' said Mrs. Spears, 'there is nothing, there is nothing like handing them over to their father.'

Mrs. Bendall in her heart of hearts was dreadfully shocked to hear of that yellow soap. But Mrs. Spears seemed to take it so much for granted, that she did too.

'Their father,' she said. 'Then you don't whip them yourself?'

'Never.' Mrs. Spears seemed quite shocked at the idea.

'I don't think it's the mother's place to whip the children.

It's the duty of the father. And, besides, he impresses them so much more.'

'Yes, I can imagine that,' said Mrs. Bendall faintly.

'Now my two boys,' Mrs. Spears smiled kindly, encouragingly, at Mrs. Bendall, 'would behave just like Dicky if they were not afraid to. As it is. . . .'

'Oh, your boys are perfect little models,' cried Mrs. Bendall.

They were. Quieter, better-behaved little boys, in the presence of grown-ups, could not be found. In fact, Mrs. Spears' callers often made the remark that you never would have known that there was a child in the house. There wasn't - very often.

In the front hall, under a large picture of fat, cheery old monks fishing by the riverside, there was a thick, dark horsewhip that had belonged to Mr. Spears' father. And for some reason the boys preferred to play out of sight of this, behind the dog-kennel or in the tool-house, or round about the dustbin.

'It's such a mistake,' sighed Mrs. Spears, breathing softly, as she folded her work, 'to be weak with children when they are little. It's such a sad mistake, and one so easy to make.

It's so unfair to the child. That is what one has to remember. Now Dicky's little escapade this afternoon seemed to me as though he'd done it on purpose. It was the child's way of showing you that he needed a whipping.'

'Do you really think so?' Mrs. Bendall was a weak little thing, and this impressed her very much.

'I do; I feel sure of it. And a sharp reminder now and then,' cried Mrs. Spears in quite a professional manner, 'administered by the father, will save you so much trouble in the future. Believe me, my dear.' She put her dry, cold hand over Mrs. Bendall's.

'I shall speak to Edward the moment he comes in,' said Dicky's mother firmly.

The children had gone to bed before the garden gate banged, and Dicky's father staggered up the steep concrete steps carrying his bicycle. It had been a bad day at the office. He was hot, dusty, tired out.

But by this time Mrs. Bendall had become quite

excited over the new plan, and she opened the door to him herself.

'Oh, Edward, I'm so thankful you have come home,' she cried.

'Why, what's happened?' Edward lowered the bicycle and took off his hat. A red angry pucker showed where the brim had pressed. 'What's up?'

'Come – come into the drawing-room,' said Mrs. Bendall, speaking very fast. 'I simply can't tell you how naughty Dicky has been. You have no idea – you can't have at the office all day – how a child of that age can behave. He's been simply dreadful. I have no control over him – none. I've tried everything, Edward, but it's all no use. The only thing to do,' she finished breathlessly, 'is to whip him – is for you to whip him, Edward.'

In the corner of the drawing-room there was a what-not, and on the top shelf stood a brown china bear with a painted tongue. It seemed in the shadow to be grinning at Dicky's father, to be saying, 'Hooray, this is what you've come home to!'

'But why on earth should I start whipping him?' said Edward, staring at the bear. 'We've never done it before.'

'Because,' said his wife, 'don't you see, it's the only thing to do. I can't control the child. . . .' Her words flew from her lips. They beat round him, beat round his tired head. 'We can't possibly afford a nurse. The servant girl has more than enough to do. And his naughtiness is beyond words. You don't understand, Edward; you can't, you're at the office all day.'

The bear poked out his tongue. The scolding voice went on. Edward sank into a chair.

'What am I to beat him with?' he said weakly.

'Your slipper, of course,' said his wife. And she knelt down to untie his dusty shoes.

'Oh, Edward,' she wailed, 'you've still got your cycling clips on in the drawing-room. No, really –'

'Here, that's enough.' Edward nearly pushed her away. 'Give me that slipper.' He went up the stairs. He felt like a man in a dark net. And now he wanted to beat Dicky. Yes, damn it, he wanted to beat something. My God, what a life! The dust was still in his hot eyes, his arms felt heavy.

He pushed open the door of Dicky's slip of a room. Dicky was standing in the middle of the floor in his night-shirt. At the sight of him Edward's heart gave a warm throb of rage.

'Well, Dicky, you know what I've come for,' said Edward.

Dicky made no reply.

'I've come to give you a whipping.'

No answer.

'Lift up your night-shirt.'

At that Dicky looked up. He flushed a deep pink. 'Must I?' he whispered.

'Come on, now. Be quick about it,' said Edward, and, grasping the slipper, he gave Dicky three hard slaps.

'There, that'll teach you to behave properly to your mother.'

Dicky stood there, hanging his head.

'Look sharp and get into bed,' said his father.

Still he did not move. But a shaking voice said, 'I've not done my teeth yet, Daddy.'

But at the sight of that little face Edward turned, and, not knowing what he was doing, he bolted from the room, down the stairs, and out into the garden. Good God! What had he done? He strode along and hid in the shadow of the pear tree by the hedge. Whipped Dicky – whipped his little man with a slipper – and what the devil for? He didn't even know. Suddenly he barged into his room – and there was the little chap in his night-shirt. Dicky's father groaned and held on to the hedge.

And he didn't cry. Never a tear. If only he'd cried or got angry. But that 'Daddy'! And again he heard the quivering whisper. Forgiving like that without a word. But he'd never forgive himself - never. Coward! Fool! Brute! And suddenly he remembered the time when Dicky had fallen off his knee and sprained his wrist while they were playing together. He hadn't cried then, either. And that was the little hero he had just whipped.

Something's got to be done about this, thought Edward. He strode back to the house, up the stairs, into Dicky's room. The little boy was lying in bed. In the half light his dark head, with the square fringe, showed plain against the pale pillow. He was lying quite still, and even now he wasn't crying. Edward shut the door and leaned against it. What he wanted to do was to kneel down by Dicky's bed and cry himself and beg to be forgiven. But, of course, one can't do that sort of thing. He felt awkward, and his heart was wrung.

'Not asleep yet, Dicky?' he said lightly.

'No, Daddy.'

Edward came over and sat on his boy's bed, and Dicky looked at him through his long lashes.

'Nothing the matter, little chap, is there?' said Edward, half whispering.

'No-o, Daddy,' came from Dicky.

Edward put out his hand, and carefully he took Dicky's hot little paw.

'You - you mustn't think any more of what happened just now, little man,' he said huskily. 'See? That's all over now. That's forgotten. That's never going to happen again. See?'

'Yes, Daddy.'

'So the thing to do now is to buck up, little chap,' said Edward, 'and to smile.' And he tried himself an extraordinary trembling apology for a smile. 'To forget all about it - to - eh? Little man. . . Old boy. . .'

Dicky lay as before. This was terrible. Dicky's father sprang up and went over to the window. It was nearly dark in the garden. The servant girl had run out, and she was snatching, twitching some white cloths off the bushes and piling them over her arm. But in the boundless sky the evening star shone, and a big gum tree, black against the pale glow, moved its long leaves softly. All this he saw, while he felt in his trouser pocket for his money. Bringing it out, he chose a new sixpence and went back to Dicky.

'Here you are, little chap. Buy yourself something,' said Edward softly, laying the sixpence on Dicky's pillow.

But could even that - could even a whole sixpence - blot out what had been?

Copyrighted in the U.S.A. *Drawn by W. Smithson Broadhead*

"Edward came over and sat down on his boy's bed, and Dicky looked at him through his long lashes"

from The Sphere 6 August 1921 pii (supp.)

Our Summer Fabrics

The material used on the endpaper for ***The Montana Stories*** by Katherine Mansfield is 'Stems and looping tendrils with harebells', a roller-printed cotton designed by Constance Irving for William Foxton, a firm founded in 1903 that was then producing some of the most interesting artist-designed furnishing fabric. We chose this because it was designed in 1921 when the stories were written; because the delicate blue harebells could equally well be the gentians growing in the mountains surrounding Montana; and because of its sombre black background. We also felt that Katherine Mansfield would have liked it.

Susan Glaspell's ***Brook Evans*** has as its endpaper a block-printed linen which was designed in New York in 1928 by the French architect Pierre Chareau. Appropriately, the novel is set in both America and France; the design combines the traditional with the abstract in the same way that the book combines a traditional theme with a modernist approach; and the golden yellow colour is a visual echo of the hay fields that are such an important image in the book, and of the yellow dress, 'gold underneath, touched with gold thread, and one golden rose', that symbolises Brook's new understanding of her true nature.

Our Autumn Books

'There's something extraordinary about this book,' writes Jacqueline Wilson in her Preface. 'It still glowed vividly in my imagination though I hadn't read it since I was ten.' ***The Children Who Lived in a Barn*** (1938) by Eleanor Graham is our first children's book; but it is not meant as a 'nostalgia' read. We are republishing it because of its theme: five children aged 7 to 13, left to fend for themselves when their parents have to go abroad, go and live in a barn. The interest of the book lies in the excellent way they manage. Unlike many modern children, restricted to a diet of computer games, television and homework, they never have a bored moment. Susan, the eldest, cleans, does the washing, and uses the hay-box to cook (which is what readers of this novel always remember best). Yet, Jacqueline Wilson writes, she has 'a freedom and a sense of achievement' denied most teenage girls.

Our second autumn book is ***Little Boy Lost***, the 1949 novel by Marghanita Laski, who wrote *The Victorian Chaise-longue* (Persephone Book No. 6). Set in France in 1946, it describes an Englishman coming to search for the son he saw only once, on the day of his birth in 1941; the little boy vanished after his mother was murdered by the Gestapo. Of all the books we have published, this is the most unputdownable in terms of plot and only a reader with a heart of stone would think of not finishing it. As well as being a terrific read, it is a subtle and perceptive novel both about a man's search for himself and about post-war France. As Elizabeth Bowen observed in her review of 'this tender and magnificent story. . . to miss reading *Little Boy Lost* would be to by-pass a very searching, and revealing, human experience.'

Finally. . .

It is three years this June since we signed the lease for the basement at 28 Great Sutton Street and set about transforming it from a small factory (where one of our readers discovered, by giving ***Miss Pettigrew*** to her dressmaker for Christmas, that 'the pleater who pleated my wedding dress skirt used to be the previous occupier') into an office from which to launch a small publishing company in the spring of 1999. In that time Clerkenwell has changed enormously and now that our lease is up we cannot compete with the dot.com companies and designers. So, Spring having come once more, Persephone is emerging from the underworld and moving to Bloomsbury, to a former betting shop in Lamb's Conduit Street.

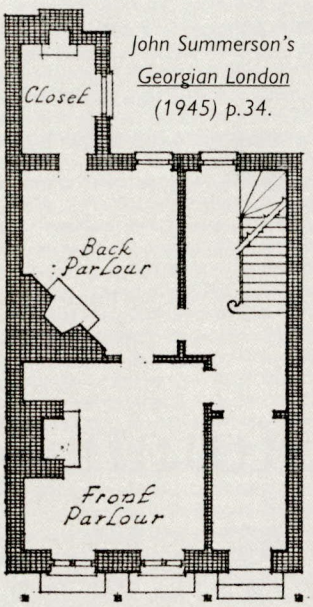

FIG. 5. Plan of a typical London house of the period after the Great Fire

Our Grade 2 listed building was built in the early 1690s and for some years was on the northern edge of London. The street was developed by Nicholas Barbon, an economist, quoted by Marx on the second page of *Das Capital,* who invented fire insurance after the Great Fire of London; formerly called Red Lyon Street, the present name derives from the conduit provided by a C16 William Lamb, from which water ran through open wooden pipes down to the city. 'Plenty of panelling and staircases of this date remain behind some of the later refronting (eg. No.59)' comments the modern Pevsner, praising 'a lively local shopping street, a rarity now in inner London, with enjoyable C19 shopfronts.'

The basement remains virtually unchanged (even the beautiful twisted balusters so typical of Barbon's buildings are still in place) and, for reasons of cost, will remain so; but the ground floor is now the office of Persephone Books, with the wooden tables and bentwood chairs in place, the mangle in the west-facing york-paved yard (we resisted its going in a container to New Jersey), the shop front soon to be painted Persephone grey. And what is now 7000 readers of the PQ, and of course the general public, may, if they wish, buy books in person between 11.00 and 5.00 on weekdays at

59 Lamb's Conduit Street
WC1N 3NB

(nearest tube stations Russell Square and Holborn).

Mail order will, however, remain the staple of our business.

The next Persephone Lunch (£25 per ticket, to include a buffet lunch and wine) will be on Tuesday 3rd July, when the distinguished biographer Lyndall Gordon will talk about Katherine Mansfield. On Wednesday 12th September there will be a Lunch celebrating ***Miss Pettigrew***, with a dramatised reading by the actress Patricia Brake and a talk by Henrietta Twycross-Martin who rediscovered the book for us. Please write or telephone to book for these events. Future speakers will include Jacqueline Wilson, Gretchen Gerzina, Maureen Lipman, Julia Neuberger, Susan Hill and Claire Tomalin.

Printed by The Lavenham Press, Lavenham, Suffolk.
If we have failed to acknowledge something that appears in The Persephone Quarterly, please let us know.

TEL: 020 7242 9292 / FAX: 020 7242 9272
sales@persephonebooks.co.uk / www.persephonebooks.co.uk