

'The Shore' 1910 by Joseph Southall © the artist's estate/ Gallery Oldham

THE PERSEPHONE QUARTERLY

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OUR AUTUMN 2006 BOOKS

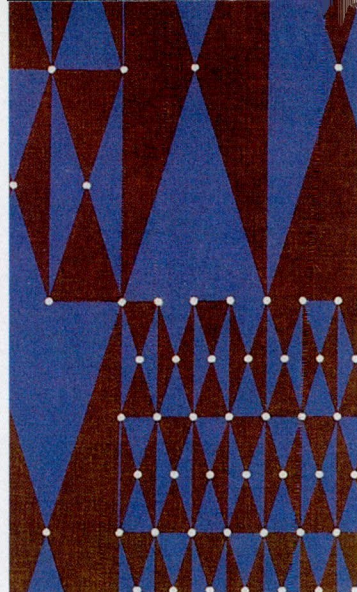
The *Fortnight in September*
by RC Sherriff,
Persephone Book No. 67,

was published 75 years ago, in September 1931. It was glowingly reviewed: 'A lovely novel,' declared the *Daily Telegraph*, 'a little masterpiece' wrote the *Sunday Express*. In America the *Saturday Review of Literature* thought that 'nothing since Dickens has come closer to giving between covers the intrinsic spirit of England.' The *Spectator* reviewer said: 'There is more simple human goodness and understanding in this book than in anything I have read for years... Once more, the author of *Journey's End* has enriched our lives.'

Journey's *End* (1929) is one of the great stage plays. Set during the First World War, it had no women in it, no heroes and no love interest – it was about the hopes and fears of a group of ordinary men waiting in a dug-out for an attack to begin. It was based on Sherriff's own letters home, and its success was in part due to his ability to recreate the trench experience exactly as he had lived it.



'Dahlias', a 1939 design by Madeleine Laurence



A 1963 fabric by Friedlindte de Calbertalldo Dörfl

The *Fortnight in September*, written two years after *Journey's End*, shares its emphasis on real people leading real lives. But the atmosphere could not be more different, embodying as it does the kind of mundane normality the men in the dug-out longed for – domestic life at 22 Corunna Road in Dulwich, the train journey via Clapham Junction to the south coast, the two weeks living in lodgings and going to the beach every day (also evoked by EM Delafield in the short story in this *PQ*). The family's only regret is leaving their garden where, we can imagine, because it is September the dahlias are at their fiery best (hence the endpaper): as they flash past in the train they get a glimpse of their back garden, where 'a shaft of sunlight fell through the side passage and lit up the clump of white asters by the apple tree.' This was what the First World War soldier longed for; this, he imagined, was what he was fighting for and would return to (as in fact Sherriff did).

He had had the idea for his novel at Bognor Regis (as in *Journey's End*, and *The Hopkins Manuscript*, Persephone Book No. 57, the physical setting is wonderfully evoked): watching the crowds go by, and wondering what their lives were like at home, he 'began to feel the itch to take one of those families at random and build up an imaginary story of their annual holiday by the sea... I wanted to write about simple, uncomplicated people doing normal things.'

Sherriff adds, in his memoir *No Leading Lady* (a few pages of which we have reprinted at the beginning of our edition of *The Fortnight in September*): 'The story was a simple one: a small suburban family on their annual fortnight's holiday at Bognor: man and wife, a grown-up daughter working for a dressmaker, a son just started in a London office, and a younger boy still at school. It was a day-by-day account of

their holiday from their last evening at home until the day they packed their bags for their return; how they came out of their shabby boarding house every morning and went down to the sea; how the father found hope for the future in his brief freedom from his humdrum work; how the children found romance and adventure; how the mother, scared of the sea, tried to make the others think she was enjoying it.'

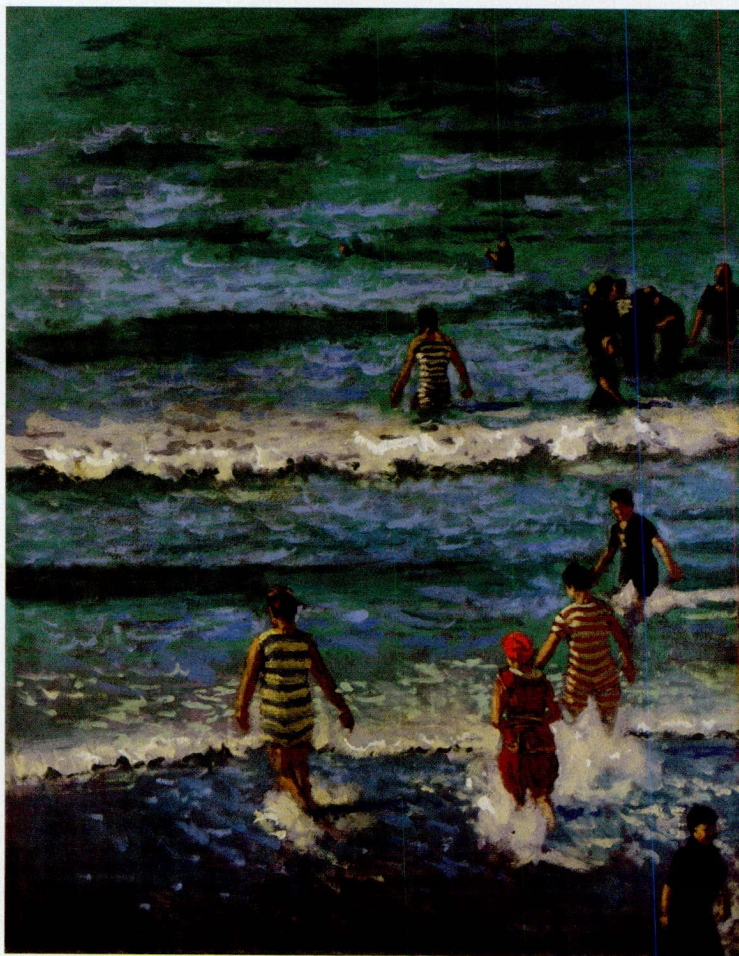
The *Fortnight in September* was a very brave book to write because it was not obviously 'about' anything except the 'drama of the undramatic'. And yet the power of the novel is that it is about each one of us: all of human life is here in the seemingly simple description of the family's annual holiday in Bognor. Thus, for reasons we do not have to explain to readers of the *Persephone Quarterly*, this is a book which fits fairly and squarely on the Persephone list.

Sherriff never mentions politics in *The Fortnight in September*. But there is a sense throughout the book that the Stevens' kind of ordinariness might be under threat and that Sherriff is celebrating it while he can. In this respect *The Fortnight in September* does indeed express 'the genius of a people', as the *Spectator* put it when its reviewer concluded: 'Here is a subject which could have been treated satirically,

cleverly, patronisingly, sentimentally. But Mr Sherriff comes to it fresh, and makes it universal. The sympathy with which each character is seen is so perfect, that even its pettiest details brings a lump into one's throat. Many will welcome this book, which expresses the genius of a people.'

The *Expendable Man* by Dorothy B Hughes is Persephone Book No. 68. Our second thriller, it follows the very successful *The Blank Wall*

(to be dramatised on BBC R4 this autumn). The critic HRF Keating chose *The Expendable Man* as one of his *Crime & Mystery: The 100 Best Books*. 'A late addition to the thirteen crime stories Dorothy B Hughes wrote with great success in one prolific spell between 1940 and 1952,' it was, in his view, her best book. But it is far more than a crime novel. Just as her earlier books had engaged with the political issues of the 1940s – the legacy of the Depression, and



'Bathers, Dieppe' 1902, Walter Sickert © Walker Art Gallery, National Museums Liverpool/DACS

the struggles against fascism and racism – so *The Expendable Man*, published in 1963 during Kennedy’s presidency and set in Arizona, evokes the emerging social, racial and moral tensions of the time.

Right from the start, continues Keating, ‘you are engrossed – Ms Hughes is a fine storyteller – in an account of a young American intern doctor driving his parents’ white Cadillac between Los Angeles, where his hospital is, and Phoenix, Arizona, where his well-off parents live and his sister is about to get married. He stops in a stretch of desert highway and picks up a young, feckless girl wanting a lift.

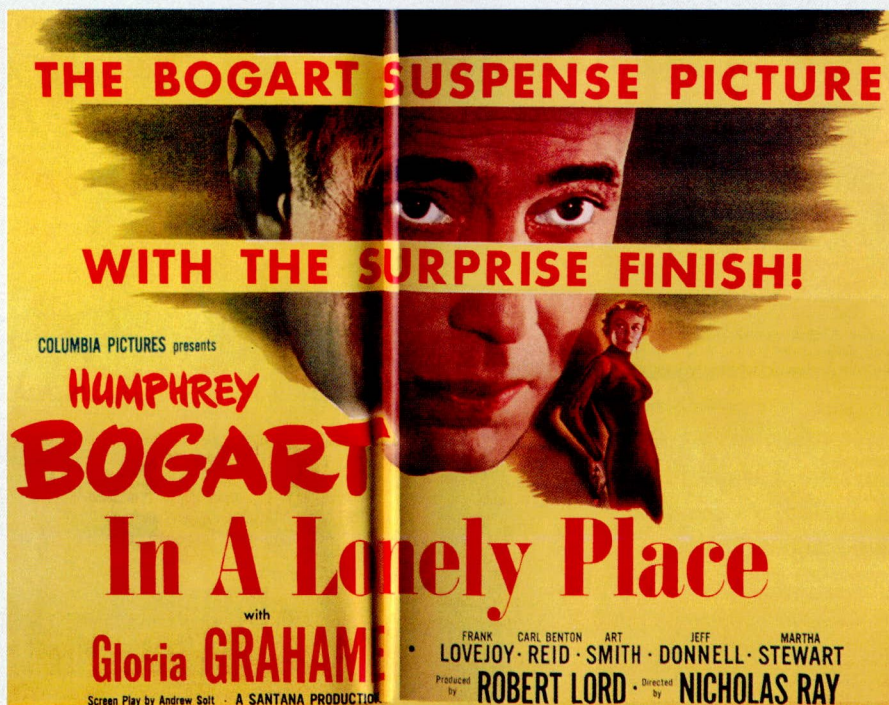
So far, so fine. Vivid descriptions of the landscape – Ms Hughes began her writing career with a volume of poetry – and a nice study of the girl, a fluent liar and apparently ready at the drop of a scarf to use a little moral blackmail to extend that lift all the way to her destination, also in Phoenix. The young man, one begins to feel, is perhaps a little paranoid about the

dangers of giving a girl on her own a lift, and is even a little bit of a prig.’ Yet (Keating concludes) Hugh Densmore, the young man, ‘becomes one of those heroes one does not merely ride along with during the progress of a story, but a person one identifies with, palpatingly.’

Dorothy B Hughes had begun her career in 1940 when she was 36. In 1944 she went to Hollywood to work as an assistant on Alfred Hitchcock’s film *Spellbound*. ‘It was my job to sit on the set and see how he worked’; and here she met Ingrid Bergman, one result being that Humphrey Bogart bought the film rights to one of her books. This, the best

and most celebrated of the Dorothy B Hughes films, was derived from her dark masterpiece, *In a Lonely Place* (1947).

When *The Expendable Man* came out Anthony Boucher in the *New York Times* called it ‘Mrs Hughes’s finest work to date, of unusual stature both as a suspense story and as a straight novel’ and commended its ‘unrelenting suspense, deft trickery and firmly penetrating treatment of individual and social problems.’ ‘To read *The Expendable Man* today,’ writes Dominic Power in his *Persephone Afterword*, ‘is to experience a mature work by a mistress of her craft.’



Dorothy B Hughes, the author of the original book, does not get a mention!

OUR READERS WRITE

'I hope the word will soon get round about *Princes in the Land*. It's very funny but also thought-provoking about the whole thorny business of parenthood!' CS, Stroud

'I would like to congratulate you on your decision to reprint *Alas, Poor Lady*. On the surface a period piece, about "superfluous women", it is, however, a wonderful evocation of Victorian life; and the further you get into it, & think about it, the more you question the easy assumption that it has nothing to say to us just because single women no longer have the lack of opportunities and choices they did in Grace's day. I was full of wonder at the insight which enabled Rachel Ferguson to enter imaginatively into the narrow world of the Victorian spinster... and she is so astonishingly non-judgemental.' RH, Coventry

'*There Were No Windows* (as always with Persephone books, but especially with the novels) is a gem. Unpretentious but brilliantly written.' ST, Stoke sub Hamden

'I have just finished *Someone at a Distance*, thank you so much for the recommendation. I couldn't believe the end. I haven't cried so much in a book for a very long time, huge great

sobs, what a fabulous ending... I loved it, as I did *The Making of a Marchioness* and *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day*.' Rita Konig, New York

'I really can't imagine how books like *Little Boy Lost* (which I recommend evangelistically to everyone: friends, family, the girls I teach, the world in general via an Amazon review!), *Someone at a Distance* and *Saplings* could ever have been out of print. I know it's been said before, but I really feel that I could recommend any Persephone book; although your catalogue is varied, there is a Persephone style or quality which is truly reliable.' HN, Abingdon

"I have just finished reading *Consequences*, which I found to be stunningly heartbreaking and haunting but enjoyed very much indeed.' GS, Philadelphia

'I read *The Hopkins Manuscript* today and found it so compelling that I couldn't put it down. It was a very stormy, cold Sunday night here and just as the moon hit the earth in the book, and I was living through that awful night with Hopkins, a heavy rainstorm came through, the room got so dark and the wind was so high, it was uncanny... I found the book remarkable, I was impatient with

Edgar at the beginning, he was so pompous, but I gradually came to have enormous sympathy for him.' LB, Victoria

'I adored *The Priory* and was totally absorbed by this wonderful family saga. I was always longing to get back to my book, which provides a lovely "long read". I felt quite bereft when I had finished it!' JC, Holt

'I am a theologian and a writer and have introduced many people to Etty Hillesum's *An Interrupted Life* through the Persephone edition, which I had had for several years. It is very well thumbed at this stage, a quite remarkable work. I also knew of Rowan Williams's interest in her work and have corresponded with him in relation to that. So many thanks for publishing it.' AT, Dublin

What a compelling read *Princes in the Land* is – such spare, elegant prose, Patricia speaking for "Everywoman" and the Oxford period detail so delightful, which all make the book unputdownable.' SR, Cambridge

'I am so struck by the way Frances Towers, in *Tea with Mr Rochester*, combines her rarified style with such deep humanistic sympathy.' JD, Portland

TWO BLOGS ABOUT PERSEPHONE

Aurora Floyd' writes about *Good Evening, Mrs Craven*,

Persephone Book No. 8: "These short stories first appeared in *The New Yorker* between 1939 and 1944. Each story is a snapshot of people (particularly women) at a defining point in their lives, viewed against the backdrop of the War, which of course affected the lives of everyone, not just those 'in action'. Each story is brief and to the point, without any kind of extraneous detail or sub-plot. There is nothing difficult about them, but taken as a whole they give a very real and moving picture of women's lives during this period. The Mrs Craven of the title story is not actually Mrs Craven at all – she is the mistress of Mr Craven, who meets her in a restaurant where the waiter has assumed they are husband and wife. Mr Craven expects her to be calm, having made it clear that he has no intention of leaving his wife and children for her. She does her best to be the kind of mistress he requires, but the pose is shattered as she worries who will let her know if something happens to him when he's on active service. We are shown the relief (and guilt) of women disburdened of the evacuee

families foisted upon them, and the new pressures upon middle-class women having to manage their homes without servants. Although the war is ever present in each story, the emotions dealt with are timeless: the loneliness of a single woman who wishes she could make friends with her neighbours; the man living an uneventful life with his sister. Whilst there's nothing at all fancy about these stories, each one is deeply satisfying and, in its own way, quite perfect.'

And 'Calebcrain' writes about *The Hopkins Manuscript*, **Persephone**

Book No. 57: 'In London a few weeks ago I made a pilgrimage to the office of the reprint house Persephone Books, where I admired the 1930s-era railroad posters on the walls and bought half a dozen titles. I was unable to resist *The Hopkins Manuscript* by RC Sherriff. As a publishing enterprise, Persephone aims unabashedly at women readers; most of its titles are by women, and those by men are often concerned with domestic life, so this was a bit of a puzzle as a Persephone choice. Not only was it written by a man, but it's a work of science fiction. Civilisation comes to an end, because

the Moon crashes into the Earth. But after reading it, I did see the link to the Persephone vision. The 1930s railroad posters in their office are the key; the book is a portrait of England in that moment, where the end of the world has the function of releasing a camera's shutter, and the impending Moon is an allegory of fascism. The world doesn't end at all suddenly, and there's pathos and, surprisingly, comedy in the decline. Edgar Hopkins, an amateur astronomer, learns that the Moon is on a course of collision long before the public does. The secret makes him feel terribly important – much more so than the fellows down at the pub appreciate, to his pain. Of course this is hardly a surprise, because they had earlier failed to appreciate his achievements as a breeder of prize hens. He then decides that since the crash will likely dislodge a lot of crockery, he will sell all his Great Western Railway Stock and buy as much as he can of Wigglesworth & Smirkin, manufacturers of cups, saucers, plates, and dishes. For all his venality and narcissism, one ends up liking Hopkins, as much because of his provincialism as in spite of it. It's hard to resist someone who claims not to be *that* excited about meeting a post-apocalypse member of Parliament because, as a breeder, he "had met, at different times, almost every famous personality in the *Poultry Times*."

OUR REVIEWERS WRITE

‘More excellence will not secure the survival of a work of fiction,’ wrote Nicholas Clee in the *Times Literary Supplement*. ‘Novels that fail to attain classic or cult status disappear rapidly from view; their only chance of resurrection is to enter the radar of an enterprising firm such as Persephone. *Princes in the Land* is a happy discovery: while it has no claims to be considered imperishable, it is astute and skilful, and is certainly as well worth reading as most of the new fiction on the market today. It opens as a cool, sharp social comedy... The narrative changes tone as it reaches the heroine’s married life in the 1920s. This is not a proto-feminist novel; Cannan has no critique to make of the roles of men and women. But she does give an affecting account of the suppression of personality that her heroine undergoes in order to adapt herself as a wife and mother. She focuses her thwarted desires on her children – who of course do not turn out as she hoped.’

In the *Observer* Rachel Cooke was asked for her ‘best ever beach read’: ‘That’d be a toss-up between *The Making of a Marchioness* by Frances Hodgson Burnett (plain girl bags an aristo) or almost anything by Georgette Heyer.’ And in *The Tablet* Mary Blanche Ridge chose five

Persephone books for her Summer Reading: ‘*Doreen, Princes in the Land, There Were No Windows, Alas, Poor Lady* and *The Woman Novelist and Other Stories* are all from the 1930s and 1940s, a glorious backlog of recent Persephone reprints, which are always riveting, always thought-provoking – and beautifully produced.’

In the *Cumnor Parish News* Harriet Bretherton wrote about *Princes in the Land*, ‘set largely on Cumnor Hill [near Oxford]... For the local reader the themes of social change and the role of women in the ‘30s are played out against the familiar backdrop of Botley and North Hinksey... The bus already ran from Carfax under the railway bridge to Botley; on the bus Patricia reflects on her need for false teeth and on the children’s growing independence. Now they no longer need her, she asks herself, what was the point of it all?’

The *Good Book Guide* recommended *Gardener’s Nightcap* as ‘an ode to everything garden, written in beautiful prose. Inspiring and educational in equal measure, the book is a quirky mix of ‘how-to’ gardening advice and insights into life in twentieth-century England. Covering everything from boarders and beavers to winter decorations and trees in spring, this gem is a

unique little gift for every garden enthusiast. Beautifully presented, with illustrations by Philip Gough, the descriptions are humorous and a lasting insight into Muriel Stuart’s England.’

In July *Every Eye* by Isobel English came out in the US; it is so far the first of our books to have been published over there. *The Wall Street Journal* reviewer wrote: ‘Words like self-effacing, self-critical and perfectionist only begin to describe this remarkably gifted, all but forgotten British writer whose fiction has been likened to that of Elizabeth Bowen, Muriel Spark and Anita Brookner, all of whom admired her work. Although Ms English may have some of Ms Bowen’s deft insight, a touch of Ms Spark’s wry humour and Ms Brookner’s sensitivity to nuance, she has a finely wrought yet cauterising style that is all her own. A good place to sample it is *Every Eye* (1956), Ms English’s fine second novel... Beyond its literary merits, which are considerable, *Every Eye* provides a wonderful opportunity for American readers to become acquainted with the entrancing voice of a truly original writer.’ And in another long review of *Every Eye* in the *New York Sun* Benjamin Lyal concluded that ‘almost every sentence presents a visual surprise’, yet it has ‘charms beyond language.’

THE PERSEPHONE 68

1. William - an Englishman by Cicely Hamilton: 1919 prize-winning novel about the effect of WW1 on a socialist clerk and a suffragette. Preface: Nicola Beauman

2. Mariana by Monica Dickens: First published in 1940, this very funny first novel describes a young girl's life in the 1930s. Preface: Harriet Lane

3. Someone at a Distance by Dorothy Whipple: 'A very good novel indeed' (*Spectator*) about the tragic destruction of a formerly happy marriage (pub. 1953). Preface: Nina Bawden

4. Fidelity by Susan Glaspell: 1915 novel by a Pulitzer-winning author brilliantly describing the long-term consequences of a girl in Iowa running off with a married man. Preface: Laura Godwin

5. An Interrupted Life by Etty Hillesum: From 1941-3 a young woman in Amsterdam, 'the Anne Frank for grown-ups', wrote diaries and letters which are among the great documents of our time. Preface: Eva Hoffman

6. The Victorian Chaise-longue by Marghanita Laski: A 'little jewel of horror': 'Melly' lies on a chaise-longue in the 1950s and wakes as 'Milly' 80 years before. Preface: PD James

7. The Home-Maker by Dorothy Canfield Fisher: Ahead of its time 'remarkable and brave 1924 novel about being a house-husband' (Carol Shields). Preface: Karen Knox

8. Good Evening, Mrs Craven: the Wartime Stories of Mollie Panter-Downes: Superbly written short stories, first published in *The New Yorker* from 1938-44. Five of them were twice read on R4. Preface: Gregory LeStage

9. Few Eggs and No Oranges by Vere Hodgson: A 600-page diary, written from 1940-45 in Notting Hill Gate, full of acute observation, wit and humanity. Preface: Jenny Hartley

10. Good Things in England by Florence White: This comprehensive 1932 collection of recipes inspired many, including Elizabeth David.

11. Julian Grenfell by Nicholas Mosley: A biography of the First World War poet, and of his mother Ettie Desborough. Preface: author

12. It's Hard to be Hip over Thirty and Other Tragedies of Married Life by Judith

Viorst: Funny, wise and weary 1960s poems about marriage, children and reality. Preface: author

13. Consequences by EM Delafield: By the author of *The Diary of a Provincial Lady*, this 1919 novel is about a girl entering a convent after she fails to marry. Preface: Nicola Beauman

14. Farewell Leicester Square by Betty Miller: Novel (by Jonathan Miller's mother) about a Jewish film-director and 'the discreet discrimination of the bourgeoisie' (*Guardian*). Preface: Jane Miller

15. Tell It to a Stranger by Elizabeth Berridge: 1947 short stories which were twice in the *Evening Standard* bestseller list; they are funny, observant and bleak. Preface: AN Wilson

16. Saplings by Noel Streatfeild: An adult novel by the well-known author of *Ballet Shoes*, about the destruction of a family during WW1; a R4 ten-part serial. Afterword: Jeremy Holmes

17. Marjory Fleming by Oriel Malet: A deeply empathetic novel about the real life of the Scottish child prodigy who lived from 1803-11; now published in France; was a play on Radio Scotland.

18. Every Eye by Isobel English: An unusual 1956 novel about a girl travelling to Spain, highly praised by Muriel Spark: a R4 'Afternoon Play' in 2004. Preface: Neville Braybrooke

19. They Knew Mr Knight by Dorothy Whipple: An absorbing 1934 novel about a man driven to committing fraud and what happens to him and his family; a 1943 film. Preface: Terence Handley MacMath

20. A Woman's Place by Ruth Adam: A survey of C20th women's lives, very readably written by a novelist-historian: an overview full of insights. Preface: Yvonne Roberts

21. Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day by Winifred Watson: A delightful 1938 novel about a governess and a night-club singer. Read on R4 by Maureen Lipman; to be published in France this autumn. Preface: Henrietta Twycross-Martin

22. Consider the Years by Virginia Graham: Sharp, funny, evocative WWII poems by Joyce Grenfell's closest friend and collaborator. Preface: Anne Harvey

23. Reuben Sachs by Amy Levy: A fierce 1880s satire on the London Jewish community by 'the Jewish Jane Austen' who was a friend of Oscar Wilde. Preface: Julia Neuberger.

24. Family Roundabout by Richmal Crompton: By the *William* books author, 1948 family saga contrasting two matriarchs and their very different children. Preface: Juliet Aykroyd

25. The Montana Stories by Katherine Mansfield: Collects together the short stories written during the author's last year; with a detailed publisher's note and the contemporary illustrations. Five were read on R4 in 2002.

26. Brook Evans by Susan Glaspell: A very unusual novel, written in the same year as *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, about the enduring effect of a love affair on three generations of a family.

27. The Children who Lived in a Barn by Eleanor Graham: A 1938 classic about five children fending for themselves; starring the unforgettable hay-box. Preface: Jacqueline Wilson

28. Little Boy Lost by Marghanita Laski: Novel about a father's search for his son in France in 1945, chosen by the *Guardian's* Nicholas Lezard as his 2001 Paperback Choice. A R4 'Book at Bedtime' read by Jamie Glover. Afterword: Anne Sebba

29. The Making of a Marchioness by Frances Hodgson Burnett: A wonderfully entertaining 1901 novel about the ensuing melodrama when a governess marries well. Preface: Isabel Raphael, Afterword: Gretchen Gerzina

30. Kitchen Essays by Agnes Jekyll: Witty and useful essays about cooking, with recipes, published in *The Times* and reprinted as a book in 1922. 'This is one of the best reads outside Elizabeth David' wrote gastropoda.com.

31. A House in the Country by Jocelyn Playfair: An unusual and very interesting 1944 novel about a group of people living in the country during WW1. Preface: Ruth Gorb

32. The Carlyles at Home by Thea Holme: A 1965 mixture of biography and social history which very entertainingly describes Thomas and Jane Carlyle's life in Chelsea.

33. The Far Cry by Emma Smith: A beautifully written 1949 novel about a young girl's passage to India: a great Persephone favourite. 'Book at Bedtime' in 2004. Preface: author

- 34. Minnie's Room:** The Peacetime Stories of Mollie Panter-Downes 1947–1965: Second volume of short stories first published in *The New Yorker*, previously unknown in the UK.
- 35. Greenery Street** by Denis Mackail: A delightful, very funny 1925 novel about a young couple's first year of married life in a (real) street in Chelsea. Preface: Rebecca Cohen
- 36. Lettice Delmer** by Susan Miles: A unique 1920s novel in verse describing a girl's stormy adolescence and path to redemption, much admired by TS Eliot.
- 37. The Runaway** by Elizabeth Anna Hart: A Victorian novel for children and grown-ups, illustrated by Gwen Raverat. 'There never was a happier book' (*Country Life*, 1936). Afterwords: Anne Harvey, Frances Spalding.
- 38. Cheerful Weather for the Wedding** by Julia Strachey: A funny and quirky 1932 novella by a niece of Lytton Strachey, praised by Virginia Woolf. Preface: Frances Partridge. *Also read on two cds or two cassettes by Miriam Margolyes*
- 39. Manja** by Anna Gmeyner: A 1938 German novel, newly translated, about five children conceived on the same night in 1920 and their lives until the Nazi takeover. Preface: Eva Ibbotson (daughter of the author)
- 40. The Priory** by Dorothy Whipple: A much-loved 1939 novel about three generations of a family, and their servants, living in a large country house. Preface: David Conville.
- 41. Hostages to Fortune** by Elizabeth Cambridge: 'Deals with domesticity without being in the least bit cosy' (Harriet Lane, *Observer*), a remarkable fictional portrait of a doctor's family in rural Oxfordshire in the 1920s.
- 42. The Blank Wall** by Elisabeth Sanxay Holding: 'The top suspense writer of them all' (Chandler). A 1947 thriller about a mother who shields her daughter from a blackmailer, filmed as both *The Reckless Moment* in 1949 and *The Deep End* in 2001.
- 43. The Wise Virgins** by Leonard Woolf: This is a wise and witty 1914 novel contrasting the bohemian Virginia and Vanessa with Gwen, the girl next door in 'Richstead' (Putney). Preface: Lyndall Gordon
- 44. Tea with Mr Rochester** by Frances Towers: Magical and unsettling 1949 stories, a surprise favourite, that are unusually beautifully written; read on R4 in 2003 and 2006. Preface: Frances Thomas
- 45. Good Food on the Aga** by Ambrose Heath: A 1932 cookery book for Aga users which can nevertheless be used by anyone; with numerous illustrations by Edward Bawden.
- 46. Miss Ranskill Comes Home** by Barbara Euphan Todd: An unsparing, wry 1946 novel: Miss Ranskill is shipwrecked and returns to wartime England. Preface: Wendy Pollard
- 47. The New House** by Lettice Cooper: 1936 portrayal of the day a family moves to a new house, and the resulting tensions and adjustments. Preface: Jilly Cooper.
- 48. The Casino** by Margaret Bonham: Short stories by a 1940s writer with a unique voice and dark sense of humour; they were read on BBC Radio 4 in 2004 and 2005. Preface: Cary Bazalgette.
- 49. Bricks and Mortar** by Helen Ashton: An excellent 1932 novel by a very popular pre- and post-war writer, chronicling the life of a hard-working and kindly London architect over thirty-five years.
- 50. The World that was Ours** by Hilda Bernstein: An extraordinary memoir that reads like a novel of the events before and after the 1964 Rivonia Trial. Mandela was given a life sentence but the Bernsteins escaped to England. Preface and Afterword: the author
- 51. Operation Heartbreak** by Duff Cooper: A soldier misses going to war – until the end of his life. 'The novel I enjoyed more than any other in the immediate post-war years' (Nina Bawden). Afterword: Max Arthur
- 52. The Village** by Marghanita Laski: This 1952 comedy of manners describes post-war readjustments in village life when love ignores the class barrier. Afterword: Juliet Gardiner
- 53. Lady Rose and Mrs Memmery** by Ruby Ferguson: A romantic 1937 novel about Lady Rose Targent, who inherits a great house, marries well – and then meets the love of her life on a park bench. Preface: Candia McWilliam
- 54. They Can't Ration These** by Vicomte de Mauduit: A 1940 cookery book about 'food for free', full of excellent (and now fashionable) recipes.
- 55. Flush** by Virginia Woolf: A light-hearted but surprisingly feminist 1933 'life' of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's spaniel, 'a little masterpiece of comedy' (*TLs*). Preface: Sally Beauman
- 56. They Were Sisters** by Dorothy Whipple: The fourth Persephone book by this wonderful writer; a 1943 novel that contrasts three very different marriages. Preface: Celia Brayfield
- 57. The Hopkins Manuscript** by RC Sherriff: What might happen if the moon crashed into the earth in 1946: 1939 science fiction 'written' by 'Mr Hopkins'. Preface: Michael Moorcock, Afterword: the late George Gamow
- 58. Hetty Dorval** by Ethel Wilson: First novel (1947) set in the beautiful landscape of British Columbia; a young girl is befriended by a beautiful and selfish 'Menace' – but is she? Afterword: the late Northrop Frye
- 59. There Were No Windows** by Norah Hoult: A touching and funny novel, written in 1944, about an elderly woman with memory loss living in Kensington during the blitz. Afterword: Julia Briggs.
- 60. Doreen** by Barbara Noble: A 1946 novel about a child who is evacuated to the country during the war. Her mother regrets it; the family that takes her in wants to keep her. Preface: Jessica Mann
- 61. A London Child of the 1870s** by Molly Hughes: A classic autobiography, written in 1934, about an 'ordinary, suburban Victorian family' in Islington, a great favourite with all ages. Preface: Adam Gopnik.
- 62. How to Run Your Home Without Help** by Kay Smallshaw: A 1949 manual for the newly servantless housewife full of advice that is historically interesting, useful nowadays and, as well, unintentionally humorous. Preface: Christina Hardyment
- 63. Princes in the Land** by Joanna Cannan: A novel published in 1938 about a daughter of the aristocracy who marries an Oxford don; her three children fail to turn out as she had hoped.
- 64. The Woman Novelist and Other Stories** by Diana Gardner: short stories written in the late 1930s and early 1940s that are witty, sharp and with an unusual undertone. Preface: Claire Gardner
- 65. Alas, Poor Lady** by Rachel Ferguson: A 1937 novel, which is polemical but intensely readable about the unthinking cruelty with which Victorian parents gave birth to daughters without anticipating any future for them apart from marriage.
- 66. Gardener's Nightcap** by Muriel Stuart: A huge variety of miniature essays on gardening – such as Dark Ladies (fritallary), Better Gooseberries, Phlox Failure – which will be enjoyed by all gardeners, keen or lukewarm. First published in 1938.
- 67. The Fortnight in September** by RC Sherriff: Another novel by the author of *Journey's End*, and *The Hopkins Manuscript*, about a family on holiday in Bognor in 1931; a quiet masterpiece.
- 68. The Expendable Man** by Dorothy B Hughes: A 1963 book set in Arizona by the well-known American crime writer; it was chosen by the critic HRF Keating as one of his hundred best crime novels. Afterword: Dominic Power

‘HOLIDAY GROUP’

BY E M DELAFIELD

The Reverend Herbert Cliff-Hay’s legacy had been paid at last. It seemed almost incredible, they had waited for it so long, talked about it so much, and alas! borrowed money upon it twice already. It reached them, indeed, in a terribly diminished form, what with death duties, and mysterious stamps, and fees of which they had had no previous cognisance.

The Reverend Herbert paid back all the borrowed money, and paid the premium on little Martin’s Educational Annuity Policy a whole month before it was actually due, and took out a brand new Educational Annuity Policy for little Theodore, who had reached the age of nineteen months without his parents’ having been able to afford this so necessary outlay on his behalf.

Their second child, Constance, being a girl, Herbert had not thought it necessary to do more than open a Post-Office Savings Account for her. Constance, as a matter of fact, would have been his favourite child, if he had considered it right to have a favourite child – which he didn’t – but with boys, one had to think about education. The legacy paid their debts, enabled him to put a tiny nest-egg into the

bank, and caused Herbert to make an announcement to his wife.

‘We are going to have a holiday,’ he said. ‘A real holiday, Julia.’

Julia looked startled.

‘A second honeymoon!’ he cried.

‘Except for the children...’ hinted Julia, rather tactlessly, and almost indelicately.

‘Naturally,’ said the Reverend Herbert, frowning. He told her his plan...

‘What about Ethel?’

Ethel was their general servant. It was very difficult for Mrs Cliff-Hay to find a servant, and still more difficult for her to keep one. Ethel had been with them six months, and Julia’s great preoccupation in life, after the welfare of Herbert and the children, was how to make certain that Ethel would never leave.

‘Ethel will look after the house, of course.’

‘Dear, she won’t sleep here alone, I’m perfectly certain. You know what girls are.’

‘Well, well, we can settle about Ethel later, surely,’ said the Reverend Herbert rather peevishly. ‘Here am I, full of a surprise plan which I hope will be a joy and a pleasure to you,

and all you can talk about is the wretched Ethel!’

It did indeed seem ungrateful looked at in that way.

‘I didn’t really mean it like that,’ said Julia – although she had really meant it exactly like that. ‘Of course it’s a glorious idea, Herbert, and so kind of you to think of it all...’

When twelve o’clock on the 15th of July came, the packing was done, the suit-case and portmanteau belonging to Herbert, and a small tin trunk containing the effects of Julia and the three children, were locked and labelled, the basket, with sandwiches and bananas in it, stood ready. The village Ford that was to take them to the station was due in twenty minutes – and Herbert, Julia and their two elder children waited anxiously for the infant Theodore to wake from his morning sleep, so that the pram could be put into its sacking and get its label tied to the handle.

‘You know how it’ll upset him if we do wake him. I’d wake him in a minute, if it didn’t mean that he’ll be so cross all the way down,’ said Julia for about the seventh time.

‘That’s all very well, dear, but I can’t tie the covering on to the pram all in a minute, and we do

not want to miss the train.'

'Miss the train!' echoed Martin, aged five, in great dismay.

'Shall I have a spade, Daddy?' said little Constance.

'If you're good, dear.'

'I can't think why he's sleeping so late this morning – it's always the way when one doesn't want them to –'

Julia made a hasty trip to the front door, outside which stood the pram. Theodore, inside it, still slept peacefully.

'Daddy, shall I have a spade?' Constance said, earnestly.

'Yes, darling.'

'A real spade, Daddy?'

'Yes, yes, certainly, when we get there. I say, Julia, you must really wake the child. This is nonsense.'

'I'd wake him in a minute, if it didn't mean that he'll be so cross all the way down. I can't think why he's sleeping like this – he never does as a rule, but it's always the way –'

Ethel appeared in the hall.

'The car is just coming up the lane, 'm. Didn't we ought to wake Baby?'

'He'll be so cross – there! isn't he moving?'

'Mummie,' said Constance in a voice of passionate and uncontrollable anxiety, 'can't I have a spade?'

'Certainly, my pet, you shall have a spade. I promise you. Well, if that's the car, Ethel ...'

Ethel darted towards the pram.

Theodore was awakened, and cried pitifully, and Julia hurried him into the house, and changed

all the clothes he had on for other, similar clothes, that were clean instead of dirty, and Herbert tied up the pram and helped the driver to put the luggage on the car.

'Martin dear, run and tell Mother that we shall miss the train,' said Herbert, who had all his life suffered from train-fever.

Martin rushed in, shrieking: 'We shall miss the train, we shall miss the train!' And Julia said, 'Oh no, darling,' soothingly, and finished off Baby as quickly as she could, and ran out with him to the car.

'Can I sit in front?' said Martin.

'No, me,' said Constance.

'Daddy will sit in front.'

'With me on his lap –'

'No, me!'

'It's Martin's turn,' said Julia, who had to remember these things. 'Constance darling, come and sit with Mother and Theodore in the back.'

'Tell me a story, Mother!' cried Constance.

Julia immediately said, 'Once upon a time there was a little pig who lived in a wood and – wave goodbye to Ethel, darling – Baby wave his little hand – ta-ta, Ethel! Are you all right Herbert?'

'Quite, thank you, dear. Have you any room for your feet?'

'Yes, thank you Lived in a wood and went out every day to look for acorns ...'

The story lasted until they reached the station, when Julia said: 'Get out carefully, my pet, and wait for Mother.'

'Am I going to have a spade for the sands?'

'Yes, you shall all have spades.'

On these lines, the journey proceeded. Herbert was very kind, and took his turn in amusing the fractious Theodore, and Julia told stories, and reassured Constance about her spade, and from time to time smiled her pleasure at the holiday having really begun, and received Herbert's equally pleased and sympathetic smile in return. And it was a fine day, even if not a very warm one.

Everything was ready for them at 'Eventide', down to the six plain buns upon the tea-table; and the moment tea was finished, they went out.

'To the shops, please, dear,' Julia said. 'I've got to order the things for our meals tomorrow. It's Sunday, you know, and she's got nothing in for us, except just the milk and the bread.'

'And shall we get my spade now, Mother?' said Constance in a trustful, uncomplaining voice.

'Yes, of course. Poor little thing, you have been patient!' cried Julia, really believing this, owing to the fabulous number of times that she had heard her daughter's request.

'Will you let me have some money, Herbert?'

'I'll come with you,' said the Reverend Herbert, and he took Martin's hand.

'Is the pram undone, darling? Because of Baby. It's too early to put him to bed, and besides, I couldn't leave him alone, in a strange room, anyway – but we ought to hurry, because the shops shut at six.'

They unwrapped the pram, and set out. Julia had a list, and they went – as fast as the pram, the narrow streets, the people, their unfamiliarity with the locality, and the short legs of Martin and Constance – would permit from the butcher to the grocer, and the grocer to the greengrocer, and the green-grocer to the baker. Everything seemed to be a little more expensive than the same things would have been at home, but one expected that, on a holiday.

When the shopping was done – and it included spades, buckets and sand-shoes for all the child-ren – it was time for Julia to go back and put Theodore to bed.

Herbert took the other two down to the sands. He was so good about the children, Julia reflected thankfully. Even at home, where he was busy, he often helped her with them on Ethel's afternoon out. Theodore was good, and went to sleep quickly, and Julia had done nearly all the unpacking before Herbert and the elder children came back and she had to put Martin and Constance to bed.

At half-past seven Mr. and Mrs. Cliff-Hay had supper. Mrs. Parker had made it perfectly clear that when she said 'No cooking' in the evenings, she included things like potatoes, or even cocoa. But Julia had

disappoin-*ted*, was quite ready to come in again by nine o'clock. By ten, Julia, who could scarcely keep her eyes open, having seen that Martin and Constance and Theodore were all sleeping, went to bed herself.

'You won't be quite so tired, I hope, at nights, after a few days' holiday,' said the Reverend Herbert, when he in his turn got into the double bed.

He tried to make his voice sound only kind, and not resentful, but the effort was wasted upon Julia, who was sleeping like the dead.

The days sped by, only too quickly.

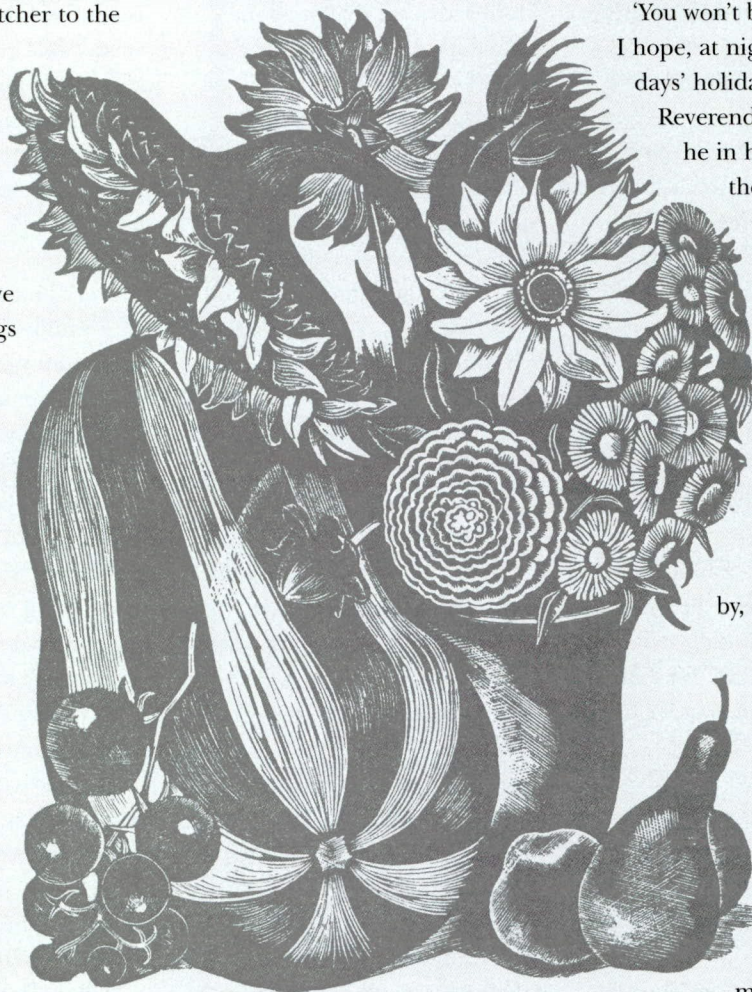
The order of them was always the same.

Between six and half-past six, Theodore woke, and was taken into his parents' bed so that he

might not disturb the other two

children, who seldom opened their eyes till seven o'clock. At half-past seven Mrs Parker brought the early-morning tea – without bread and butter – and Julia got up and washed and dressed and brushed the three children.

At half-past eight they had breakfast.



John Nash: illustration in Flowers and Faces (1935) by HE Bates

brought a spirit lamp, and boiled water herself, which made them independent.

After supper Herbert wanted to go for a walk, and Julia, who didn't like leaving the children, and was very tired besides, reluctantly went with him. She was but an abstracted companion, and Herbert,

Then the sands – Julia doing the necessary shopping on the way. There was always something to be ordered, or bought, for the children.

The weather wasn't too bad, for an English July. Julia thought it rather chilly, but then she had to adjust her pace to that of the baby, who could only toddle about, or sit on the sands scooping holes with his fingers.

While Theod-ore had his sleep in the pram, the others bathed.

Julia, years ago, had liked swimming, and Herbert was 'very good at it'. It brought home to her the fact that she was no longer very young, when she found herself secretly rather dreading the daily treat of the bathe. Perhaps it was the difference between being able to swim with Herbert, and having to remain close to the edge of the water, encouraging Martin, who was inclined to be nervous, and calling out, 'Yes, I see, darling,' to Constance, who was under the impression that she was swimming if she stuck her fat arms straight out in front of her, and kicked the water with her feet.

Herbert, as usual, was goodness itself.

He tried, although not successfully, to teach the two elder children to swim, and he squeezed out their wet bathing-dresses while Julia hurriedly dried and dressed them in the bathing-machine, and then he generally struck out to sea again, so as to give her time to dress herself before he sought the bathing machine. Still feeling damp and mottled, Julia would

hasten out into the rather fitful sunshine, and distribute buns to the children, and try to warm her slightly discoloured hands by rubbing them in the sand. At least she kept her hair dry, for it was no longer the sort of hair that one rather enjoyed wetting, for the sake of letting it dry in the open air afterwards...

Her thoughts went back to other holiday-times, which, strangely enough, seemed not at all remote, when she hadn't been 'Mother', but only Julia, and Mamma had been 'Mother' – the omniscient, all-powerful and ever-present universal provider.

Was it possible that Mamma, who had been dead ten years, had then felt exactly as Julia felt now?

She could certainly remember a reluctance, at the time incomprehensible, on the part of Mamma to join in delightful hlllchmbing expeditions, or early-morning swims, at Weymouth.

Every year they had gone to Weymouth, Papa and Mamma and Julia.

One hadn't realised, in those days, that one was lucky to be taken to a nice hotel, where nobody bothered about 'extras', and there was a real meal at the end of the day as a matter of course – not just a slice of cold ham, and bread and cheese, and cocoa made over a spirit lamp.

('Oh, what a pig I am, to think about the food like that!' thought Julia. 'Though really it's on Herbert's account – except for the cocoa, which is such a comfort when one's cold or tired...')

Had Papa and Mamma really been well off? Julia, who had inherited their small savings, knew that they hadn't, although, of course, the value of money had altered altogether since the War. It had just been that, in the past, she hadn't had the responsibility of any of it – hadn't known or cared how the holiday was paid for, how the plans were made, how the meals were ordered, or anything else.

She had gone on being blissfully irresponsible until she was quite grown-up. She could remember the last Weymouth holiday before Papa's death, when she had just left school, and she had wanted to go every night to the concert on the pier, with the school friend who was staying with her. Papa had taken them, and Mamma, to their incredulous astonishment, evening after evening, had declared that she preferred to go to bed.

'But she was much older then, than I am now,' reflected Julia.

'Mother, look at me!' screamed Constance.

'I see, darling. Wonderful!'

'But did I turn head-over-heels?'

'Well – very nearly. Next time it'll be quite.'

'Mother, may I have the last bun?'

'No, Martin dear. It's really too near dinner-time.'

'Then will you help me to build a castle exactly like the one we made yesterday?'

Julia got up, feeling stiff.

'Did I nearly turn head-over-heels?'

'Very nearly.'

Herbert emerged from the bathing-machine.

'Daddy, I turned head-over-heels.'

'Nearly,' Julia inserted automatically.

'I nearly turned head-over-heels.'

'Did you, dear? Well, Julia, did you enjoy the water? You look cold, my dear. If you didn't stay in the shallow water so much, but went right out of your depth at once, you wouldn't feel cold.'

'The walk up the hill will warm me.'

The steep ascent to York Terrace was not much liked by Martin and Constance with their short legs, and Julia always told them a story while they climbed.

Herbert pushed the pram.

After dinner, the two elder children were sent to rest for an hour on their beds, and Julia amused the baby downstairs, and Herbert read the paper.

Then they all went on the sands again, or once or twice, for an excursion by charabanc, but the children were too young to enjoy these, and rendered the whole family unpopular with their fellow-passengers, except, indeed, with those who had with them children of the same age.

But Julia, unreasonably, didn't like being told that 'the little ones were all alike,' and never let this opening lead to anything further.

Tea – the day fell naturally into the categorical division of time that separated one meal from another – was generally taken at their lodgings. The café

in the High Street, where there was a small string band, was amusing, but it cost money, and little Theodore was really too young for that sort of place, and Constance, who was easily made bilious, was sure to eat something that would disagree with her later.

Very soon after tea Theodore was put to bed, and the other two children played in the sitting-room, since it would be too much for them to walk down to the sea and back once more.

Julia came downstairs, read about 'Little Black Sambo' or 'The Story of Peter Rabbit', and then took Constance and Martin upstairs. When she came down again it was usually nearly seven o'clock, and there was only time to do the mending that always seemed to be required on one garment or another.

At half-past seven, supper – that cold and skimpy meal that was disposed of in rather less than twenty minutes.

'How the time flies, doesn't it? I can't believe we've been here so long already. What about a little walk this evening?'

'Yes – only I don't much like leaving the childre – if Baby did happen to wake –'

'Surely, with two women in the house –'

'Dear, I can't possibly ask Mrs. Parker to go to him, and it wouldn't be any good if she did, either –'

'I suppose not. Well. You're not tired, are you, Julia?'

'Did I yawn? It must be the air. It's much stronger than the air at home.'

'It'll do us all good. The children look quite different.'

'Yes, don't they?' she said eagerly, and then immediately yawned again.

'Julia!' exclaimed the Reverend Herbert. The truth was, as they both knew too well, that Julia was intolerably sleepy. She was often sleepy at home, too, since she had never been without a baby in her room after the first year of her marriage, and was always awakened early in the morning – but at home she sat at her desk in the evenings, or sometimes played the piano, and kept herself awake that way.

At home, also, Herbert was busy, and took it for granted that she should go to bed before he did, but on a holiday – a second honeymoon – things should have been different.

He was kind, as ever – but he evidently didn't understand it.

Julia tried going to bed very early indeed, and getting some sleep before Herbert came up, on the understanding that he should wake her, when she would then be fresh and lively and ready for conversation.

But she wasn't fresh or lively, and indeed it proved to be almost impossible to wake her without the employment of real, physical violence.

'And yet,' said the Reverend Herbert, rather reproachfully, 'if one of the children so much as turns over in the night, you're awake directly.'

Julia wondered, but did not like to ask, if that was perhaps the reason she was so sleepy now. She said feebly that she thought

there was an Instinct which woke mothers on behalf of their children. 'When we get home,' she said hopefully, 'and I know that Martin and Constance are in their own nursery with Ethel next door, I shan't wake so early in the mornings, and then I shan't be so tired at night. Besides, it's this wonderful sea-air. It's – doing – wonders.'

Julia's eyes grew fixed and watery, the muscles of her jaw became strangely set, and she tightly compressed her lips, in the suppression of an enormous yawn.

'Go to bed, my dear,' said her husband forbearingly. And she looked so miserable that he added, entirely to try and comfort her for her inadequacy. 'It's the sea-air.'

Right up to the very last day of their fortnight at 'Eventide' the sea-air continued to demonstrate its effects upon Julia.

The final evening was marred by the usual discrepancy between the visitors' attitude towards their bill, and that of the landlady.

'Of course, I knew she'd stick it on at the end, as they always do,' said Julia, 'but really! When it comes to cruet, sixpence – and neither of us touches mustard or pepper, and I'm sure the poor children haven't eaten six-pennyworth of salt, the whole time they've been here.'

'Absurd! But still, if that's the only extra –'

'The only extra!' cried Julia. 'Why, the whole thing is extras. And she's put down that hideous glass vase that Baby smashed in our room as valued at three-and-eightpence.'

'Shall I have her in?' said the Reverend Herbert wearily. 'It's no use letting that sort of person think that one doesn't know one's being robbed.'

'No, of course it isn't.'

They both of them dreaded the interview with Mrs. Parker, and knew that they had no possible chance of getting the better of her, but they felt, confusedly and miserably, that in some mysterious way they owed it to their caste to show Mrs Parker that her extortions were resented by them.

Julia, in a deprecating, apologetic voice, called Mrs. Parker.

An interview on lines exceedingly familiar to Mrs. Parker ensued.

At the end of thirty-seven minutes, the sum at the foot of Mrs. Parker's bill, reduced by half-a-crown, had been paid by the Reverend Herbert, and the bill duly receipted by the landlady.

'Thank you, sir,' said Mrs. Parker, her voice suddenly pitched in a more natural key. 'I'm sure I hope you've all enjoyed your stay?'

'Very much indeed, thank you. It's done us all so much good.'

'A thorough rest,' said Herbert, not without a glance at Julia.

'Perhaps we shall come again another year.'

'I hope so, sir, I'm sure. Good night, sir, good night, 'm.'

'Good night, Mrs. Parker,' they replied together with amiable smiles.

The door shut behind Mrs. Parker.

'I suppose they're all alike,'

said Julia tolerantly. 'After all, they've their living to get.'

'It must be a dog's life. And extortionate though she's been, she's let us down pretty lightly over the damage the children did. I saw that ink-stain on the counterpane myself.'

'And naughty little Constance's hole in the wall, over the bed –'

'It isn't everywhere where they'll take children at all.'

'No, that's true. One might do a great deal worse than come here another year. I mean, supposing we're able to afford another holiday one year.'

'Now that we've got this legacy, Julia dearest, and that our debts are all paid, I want to afford a holiday every year,' said the Reverend Herbert, adding, with unwonted effusiveness, for he was a reserved man, 'You and I, and little Martin and Constance and the baby – and perhaps other little ones, if we should be blessed with them. To get right away from home cares and worries and responsibilities, and have a thorough rest and change. I value it on your account even more than on my own.'

Julia laid her thin hand upon his plump one, and her eyes – her tired eyes – filled with the easy tears of utter contentment. She thought, as she had often thought before, that she was a very fortunate woman. Her heart swelled with gratitude at the thought of her kind husband, her splendid children, and the wonderful holiday that they had all had together.

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FINALLY

There are three forthcoming **Persephone Lunches**: on Wednesday 27th

September Anne Sebba will talk about 'American Heiress weds English Aristocrat: Henry James, Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Shuttle*, and Jennie Churchill.' On Tuesday 17th October Eleanor Bron will talk on a subject to be announced. And on Thursday 7th December Pamela Norris will talk about 'Mr Knightley, Mr Rochester and Miss Pettigrew's Joe: Women Writers and the Romantic Hero.' Lunches (excellent salads provided by Tutti's opposite) take place at 59 Lamb's Conduit Street from 12.30-2.30; the cost is £28.

The film of *They Knew Mr Knight* on 21st November is sold out. However, on Tuesday 23rd January we shall show the film of *They Were Sisters*, again at the British Film Institute from 1-4 with a sandwich lunch being served beforehand and tea and brownies afterwards. This event also costs £28.

Hermione Lee, author of *Virginia Woolf*, will give **The Second Persephone Lecture** on Tuesday 28th November from 6-8 (lecture at 6.30) at the Art Workers Guild 6 Queen Square WC1. Her subject will be 'Edith Wharton: Work in Progress' (her biography comes

out in 2007). The cost is £20 and includes a glass of wine, and cheese straws, before the lecture and afterwards.

Meanwhile, the first **Persephone Book Group** took place in July. Over madeira and bread and cheese



from *Plats du Jour*

(from Kennards next door) **William – an Englishman** was discussed by the twenty-five participants. **Mariana** will have been discussed on September 6th; on Wednesday 4th October we will talk about **Someone at a Distance** and on Wednesday 1st November **Fidelity**. The cost of the book group is £10 and it lasts from 6.30-8.00.

There will be **Persephone Teas** on Saturday 25th November from 4-5.30 at West Stoke Village Hall near Chichester and on Saturday 2nd December from 4-5.30 at the All Saints Centre, Weston near Bath. There will be tea and a short talk about Persephone Books; all the books will be on sale for £9 (as usual, if we do not have the one you want it will be sent out post-free). The cost of the tea is £5. Directions will be sent out to participants. Please ring the office to book for these and the other events.

Our November books are the *Journal of Katherine Mansfield*, first published in 1927, five years after her death, and a huge influence on the writers we have reprinted; it was a favourite book of Irène Nemirovsky (author of *Suite Française*). Our other Christmas book is Patience Gray and Primrose Boyd's 1957 cookery book *Plats du Jour*, a bestseller at the time (it outsold Elizabeth David). The superb illustrations are by David Gentleman.

Persephone will be appearing at the Cheltenham Literary Festival: on Monday 9th October at 4pm Penelope Lively and Sally Vickers will join Nicola Beauman 'to champion the neglected writers of the last century.' Tickets £6 from 01242 227979

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