

The Espalier, Time Importuned, Opus 7, Rainbow, Whether a Dove or Seagull, Boxwood, King Duffus, Twelve Poems, Collected Poems, Selected Poems, Lolly Willowses, Mr Fortune's Maggot, The True Heart, Summer Will Show, After The Death of Don Juan, The Corner that Held Them, The Flint Anchor, The Maze, Some World Far From Ours and 'Stay Corydon, Thou Swain', Elinor Barley, A Moral Ending, The Salutation, More Joy in Heaven, The Cat's Cradle Book, A Garland of Straw, The Museum of Cheats, Winter in The Air, A Spirit Rises, Sketches from Nature, A Stranger with a Bag, Swans on an Autumn River, Two Conversation Pieces, The Innocent and The Guilty, Kingdoms of Elfin, Scenes of Childhood, One Thing Leading to Another, Selected Stories, Somerset, Jane Austen, T.H.White, A Biography, Letters, The Diaries of Sylvia Townsend Warner, The Espalier, Time Importuned, Opus 7, Rainbow, Whether a Dove or Seagull, Boxwood, King Duffus, Twelve Poems, Collected Poems, Selected Poems, Lolly Willowses, Mr Fortune's Maggot, The True Heart, Summer Will Show, After The Death of Don Juan, The Corner that Held Them, The Flint Anchor, The Maze, Some World Far From Ours and 'Stay Corydon, Thou Swain', Elinor Barley, A Moral Ending, The Salutation, More Joy in Heaven, The Cat's Cradle Book, A Garland of Straw, The Museum of Cheats, Winter in The Air, A Spirit Rises, Sketches from Nature, A Stranger with a Bag, Swans on an Autumn River, Two Conversation Pieces, The Innocent and The Guilty, Kingdoms of Elfin, Scenes of Childhood, One Thing Leading to Another, Selected Stories, Somerset, Jane Austen, T.H.White, A Biography, Letters, The Diaries of Sylvia Townsend Warner, The Espalier, Time Importuned, Opus 7, Rainbow, Whether a Dove or Seagull, Boxwood, King Duffus, Twelve Poems, Collected Poems, Selected Poems, Lolly Willowses, Mr Fortune's

The Sylvia Townsend Warner Society Newsletter Number Six

Maggot, The True Heart, Summer Will Show, After The Death of Don Juan, The Corner that Held Them, The Flint Anchor, The Maze, Some World Far From Ours and 'Stay Corydon, Thou Swain', Elinor Barley, A Moral Ending, The Salutation, More Joy in Heaven, The Cat's Cradle Book, A Garland of Straw, The Museum of Cheats, Winter in The Air, A Spirit Rises, Sketches from Nature, A Stranger with a Bag, Swans on an Autumn River, Two Conversation Pieces, The Innocent and The Guilty, Kingdoms of Elfin, Scenes of Childhood, One Thing Leading to Another, Selected Stories, Somerset, Jane Austen, T.H.White, A Biography, Letters, The Diaries of Sylvia Townsend Warner, The Espalier, Time Importuned, Opus 7, Rainbow, Whether a Dove or Seagull, Boxwood, King

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The Society's own website is online at:
<http://freepages.pavilion.net/users/tartarus/warner1.htm>

NEWSLETTER NUMBER SIX

Welcome to the SPRING 2003 edition of the Newsletter - and thank you to all contributors. This year is the twenty-fifth anniversary of Sylvia Townsend Warner's death, and a number of activities have been planned to commemorate it. As well as giving more details of these - and of last September's trip to Norfolk - this Newsletter contains some uncollected Warner material and an account of a series of coincidences worthy of one of Sylvia's short stories. Now read on...

SUBSCRIPTIONS: a reminder

If you haven't yet paid for 2003, please send your subscription to Judith Bond, 26 Portwey Close, Weymouth, Dorset DT4 8RF. UK members £10, overseas members \$20. Cheques should be made payable to the Sylvia Townsend Warner Society.

NORFOLK WEEKEND: 27TH - 29TH SEPTEMBER 2002

It was a small group of members who gathered on the Friday evening - at Peter Tolhurst's suggestion - in the elegant surroundings of the very upmarket Pizza Express on the first floor of the new Forum Centre in Norwich for a most convivial meal: a perfect start to our first weekend away as a Society.

On Saturday, we awoke to unexpected sunshine. By 10am we were on the road to Sloley, which is about 12 miles north-east of Norwich, and soon arrived at Frankfort Manor (or Sloley Old Hall, as it is now called). Here, we were joined by another member of the Society, Cynthia Peacock from Aldeburgh. The owners of Sloley, Mr and Mrs Ambrose, were most welcoming. First we walked at our leisure round the grounds, trying to work out where the kitchen garden used to be and where the pear tree once grew, and marvelling at the great trees that still shadow the front lawn. The next thrill was to be invited into the huge kitchen and given coffee and biscuits by Mrs Ambrose, as we sat around the long table there and talked about Sylvia.

Better still, we were then given a conducted tour of the house - once we had discarded our damp boots in the kitchen! It was fascinating to realise how large the rooms were, and how the Edwardian hall and staircase squatted between much older ground floor rooms. After photographs in the garden, we reluctantly left for our next port of call: Winterton. We made a brief visit to Valentine's holiday home, now part of a holiday camp, and surrounded by a group of African-style round thatched houses. We stood on the terrace before the front door and gazed out over the dunes to the becalmed sea. Then we moved on to the village pub, The Fisherman's Rest - for an extended lunch.



Members outside Frankfort Manor. From the left: Judith Bond, Judith Stinton, Eileen Johnson, Cynthia Peacock, Annie Rhodes, Rosemary Sykes, Peter Tolhurst and Stephen Mottram.

Later than we had intended, we headed north again for the Shell Museum at Glandford, just north of Holt. This charming building was built to house a collection of shells garnered from around the world: rows and cases full of them, some decoratively arranged, all weird and wonderful. It also houses an enormous needlework picture of the North Norfolk coast by John Craske. And the Sylvia connection? In *The Flint Anchor* there is a long description of Miss Caroline Basham's collection of shells, which surely indicates that Sylvia and Valentine visited the strange little museum.

We should have liked to stop in Holt, but felt we had to hurry on to Salthouse before the light faded. We had a cup of tea in the tiny fishshop-cum-cafe before walking out to stand on the great shingle bank and survey the calm North Sea. Nothing, of course, can now be seen of Great Eye Folly, long since gone in the 1953 gales. Everything looked so serene (see below). We left Salthouse as darkness fell, and drove east to Cromer. Here we bought fish and chips, and ate them as we sauntered around the noisy Saturday night streets, eventually ending up on the pier. And so back to Norwich.



On Sunday, we all met at Peter's house in Norwich, where we had the opportunity of looking at some of his Black Dog publications. We had a leisurely coffee, during which we discussed how we could thank the Ambroses for their hospitality. We decided on a climbing rose, a *Gloire de Dijon*, which seemed appropriate as Sylvia made mention of them covering the front of the house in those days. Off to a garden centre, therefore. Unfortunately, stocks were very low and none was really suitable, so Peter offered to buy one later in the autumn and take it to Frankfort. (This was successfully completed a month or two later, and the Ambroses sent a photo of the rose in situ.)

Finally, Peter guided us to the Sainsbury Building at the University of East Anglia nearby, where we had the opportunity of seeing the marvellous art collection there, and browsing in the bookshop. And for more coffee. Since some of us had a long way to travel home, we said our farewells then. We had had a wonderful time, and there is still much to see in East Anglia which relates to Sylvia and Valentine. But that's another story...

Eileen Johnson.

SUFFOLK WEEKEND

Following our successful foray into Norfolk, we thought we might try Suffolk this year. Sylvia and Valentine knew the county well, and Lavenham and Long Melford would be on the itinerary as well as Snape. The last weekend in September seemed ideal, we felt, so if anyone is interested and will be able to join us, please let me know as soon as possible. (There will be further details in the Summer Newsletter.)

Eileen Johnson.

CHALDON WEEKEND: MAY 3RD & 4TH 2003

Saturday May 3rd

10am.

The third AGM of the Sylvia Townsend Warner Society will be held in the Library of the County Museum, High West Street, Dorchester, at 10am on Saturday May 3 2003.

A G E N D A

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the AGM held on March 24, 2002.
3. Matters arising.
4. Secretary's report.
5. Treasurer's Report.
6. Membership Officer's Report.
7. Programme for the year.

8. Election of Officers.
9. The Constitution.
10. Any Other Business.

Resolutions for discussion at the AGM must be received in writing by the Secretary at least one month before the meeting, and must include the proposer and seconder.

Eileen Johnson, 2 Vicarage Lane, Fordington, Dorchester DT1 1LH.

11.15am Drive out to East Chaldon. Meet at the Sailor's Return inn. Stephen Mottram will lead a circular walk, with readings from Sylvia Townsend Warner and the Powys family. The walk will take us to Chydok and the cliffs and around the places made familiar by them. Time out: approximately four hours. Inquiries to Stephen Mottram, tel: 01271 379402, any evening between 7 and 9pm.

[Those not choosing this option can instead wander around Chaldon and lunch at the Sailor's Return.]

Sunday, May 4th

11am. Society visit to East Chaldon, to lay flowers on the grave of Sylvia Townsend Warner and Valentine Ackland, and for readings.

7pm. 'A Celebration of Sylvia' at St Nicholas Church, Chaldon. The programme will include music by composers who were friends of Sylvia Townsend Warner, among them Benjamin Britten, Gerald Finzi, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Percy Buck. It is hoped to include music she had herself edited in her *Tudor Church Music* days - two of her favourite composers of the period, John Wilbye and William Byrd - and some of her own original compositions.

Admission is by programme at £7 each from Marion Machen, 38 Oxford Avenue, Burnham, Bucks SL1 8HR (s.a.e. please). Tel: 01628 602581.

Proceeds from the evening (to include a glass of wine for a small extra charge) will be given to the St Nicholas Church Restoration Fund.

It would be good to see as many members as possible at all these events, which commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of Sylvia Townsend Warner.

*

The next item is an uncollected article by Sylvia Townsend Warner which first appeared in the *Aylesford Review*, Spring 1963. It is of particular interest because it is about her uncle - and the father of our patron - Arthur Machen.

'THE LAND OF GWENT'

'All my life,' Arthur Machen said to me, 'I have been trying to write well. And I have never succeeded.' This was in Pembrokeshire, in 1928. He had taken me to look at an ash tree whose curious shape attracted him, and we were standing beneath it when he spoke, breaking a long silence.

There are no consolations for Lucifer. Though I could have cited weightier opinions than my own, or disproved him by quoting passages from his books which are indisputably very well written, it wouldn't have availed, it wouldn't have applied.

I knew from his *Hieroglyphics* what he meant by writing well, and how sparingly, and how arbitrarily, he granted that patent. In any case, the remark was addressed to the ash tree rather than to me. He plainly felt a peculiar intimacy with it, or with what was behind it.

In *Far Off Things* Arthur Machen recalls his youth in Gwent and how, out of the child's first marvelling acceptance of its new world there had grown an acknowledgement of indwelling mysteries, both good and evil. This acknowledgement impelled him to write,

governed the course of his writings, determined much of his taste in letters. I remember him saying, apropos of his preference for the 17th century, that Shakespeare knew what grew on his bank, and that it was a fine bank in its way; but that there was nothing underneath it: Vaughan and Traherne would have seen the bank very differently. As with banks, so with books. It is usual for books to be written with an eye for what grows on them - characters, incidents, turns of narrative. Arthur Machen's concern was with what would be underneath the book. It was his ambition to write a book, a great book, that should have the quality of an incantation, and so convey the ecstasy that he insists upon in *Hieroglyphics*; and as part of that ambition he wanted to write well - that is, absolutely well: because being a practical man he knew that this was the only means by which the book he wanted to write could be written.

He wrote with difficulty, with anguish, with stubborn perseverance, with sudden glories of hopefulness and long tracts of disillusioned industry. His ambition continually disabled his intentions. He says of *The Hill of Dreams*: 'I sat down every night for three weeks with blank paper before me, trying to get the second chapter.' If, as an exception, 'I set about this task with the utmost relish and enjoyment. For once I knew what to write about', the task is the Epilogue for a book not yet begun, a flourish of fancy and nothing to do with what he ambitioned. *For once, I knew what to write about.* There is a sharp difference, a difference in kind, between that and knowing what one wants to write, between knowing what grows on the bank and invoking what may lie underneath it, kingdom of Elfin, pit of iniquity, buried temple. It is easy for an outsider to see this distinction; I doubt if Arthur Machen was aware of it. What he saw was the image of the book he had wanted to write; and that he had not succeeded in writing it.

He was not embittered by his failure. He was not even embittered by the success of his *Far Off Things* and *Things Far and Near*, epitaphs, as it were, of the ambition he had

put away. 'I have always had a kindly feeling for the two books of reminiscences, partly because they recalled old days, and partly because I wrote them with comparative ease, which has not been a common fortune for me.'

1 From a letter to the writer.

Sylvia Townsend Warner.

SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER NEWS

Award for the Tartarus Press

Society members Ros and Ray Russell's Tartarus Press have recently received a World Fantasy Award. The awards are for those working in non-realist literature. Their specific award was in the non-professional category (excluding the Gollanczs and Harper Collins

of the publishing world). It was for Tartarus's publishing exploits over the previous year, including the STW Society's Journal.

Also, in the last summation of *The Year's Best Fantasy and Horror*, edited by Datlow and Windling, Tartarus's reprint of STW's *The Salutation* was named as one of the publishing highlights of 2000. Congratulations!

A Distant Cry: Stories from East Anglia, Black Dog Books, Norwich, 2002

Among the twenty-six stories in this generous and evocative selection are two by Sylvia Townsend Warner: 'The Maze', which first appeared in *The Salutation*, 1932, and 'On Living for Others' from *A Spirit Rises*, 1962. 'The Maze' contains an affectionate portrait of Warner's friend David Garnett, in the shape of the unworldly, kindly Mr Slumber. The maze of the title was inspired by the turf maze at Garnett's Cambridgeshire home, with its central pillar commemorating the Restoration.

'On Living for Others' is another humorous tale, about a composer - 'eminent rather than well-known' - and the curious sequence of inharmonious events that happen to him one day when he plays truant from a performance in London by the Ferrabosco Society of a 17th century masque.

Other stories in the book are by authors as various as Roald Dahl, M R James, Susan Hill and P G Wodehouse. And there's a tough and touching tale, 'The Witch of Dulditch' by the little-known Mary Mann, once a famous author of romantic fiction. The introduction is by Louis de Bernieres.

A Distant Cry is available from the publishers, Black Dog Books, 104 Trinity Street, Norwich, Norfolk, NR2 2BJ (01603 623771) for £14.95 post free UK.

A companion volume, *Line Dancing* will be published this autumn. It will include two further short stories by Warner: 'Two Children' and 'Elphenor and Weasel'.

Literary Lectures

Last autumn, there was a series of literary lectures at the Dorset County Museum, two of which featured Sylvia Townsend Warner. John Lucas's lecture was entitled 'Sylvia Townsend Warner Among Women Poets' and discussed the work of her contemporaries, notably Elizabeth Daryush and E J Scovell. In the second lecture, Roger Peers read and discussed some of Sylvia Townsend Warner's unpublished letters.

Both talks attracted large audiences, suggesting a growing interest in Warner's work.

Judith Stinton.

A JAR OF SWEETS

Research for my article on the Norfolk fisherman-artist John Craske (STW Journal 2002) involved a trip to Snape Maltings to view the paintings and needleworks held by the Aldeburgh Foundation. The bulk of the collection consists of the original bequest made by Sylvia in 1971, which soon attracted Craske's donated by friends including Peg Manisty, Peter Pears and Joyce Scudamore, a regular visitor at Valentine's antique shop ('Unconsidered Trifles', Newsletter No 4). In addition, two watercolours in limed wooden frames that caught my eye, one of a lighthouse and the other of two wherries, had been presented in 1980 by a Miss D Dickson.

Some while later, in response to Judith Stinton's suggestion that we might attempt to compile a catalogue of all Craske's work, I wrote to Miss Dickson at the Norwich address listed on the back of her paintings. To my surprise I received a prompt reply from Delphine Dickson which, although it dashed any lingering hope of undiscovered Craske's, confirmed that she had purchased the pictures from Elizabeth Wade White. She decided to donate them after seeing one of the Craske exhibitions at the Aldeburgh Festival in the early 1970s, without realising that most of the works on display had been bequeathed by Sylvia as a memorial to Valentine.

I also learnt that Miss Dickson had been living in Dorchester in the early 1950s while engaged on a research project for the World Health Organisation. During her stay she paid several visits to Valentine's shop in Frome Vauchurch. On one occasion her eyes lighted on a blue and white striped marmalade jar in the hatchway between the lean-to shop and the dining-room; only to discover that it was where Sylvia and Valentine kept their sweets. They were persuaded to sell the jar when Delphine explained it was exactly like one owned by her mother which she had broken and was anxious to replace. Back in Norwich, Miss Dickson discovered a maple-framed Victorian painting in a dealer's yard off Elm Hill that looked very like one she had seen hanging in the living-room at Frome Vauchurch. After some negotiating she managed to purchase the picture and sent it to Sylvia and Valentine as a 'thank you' for the marmalade jar. On June 9th 1954, Sylvia wrote:

'...I cannot begin to express how entranced and be-magicked we felt when out of the

mysterious parcel came - first, the familiar scrawly patterned carpet, then the tea-leaf feet and the well-known cat, then the whole family of the little boy whom Valentine brought back from Norwich Market in 1951. It would be the most delightful present in any case, and the finest English Primitive we have ever set eyes on, let alone dreaming of

possessing; but to have this family re-union happening under our noses completely swept us off our feet.

I was so fascinated by all the details of the family group, the little book on the table from which Mamma has been reading aloud a Tale for the Young, her pocket-book in which she has noted the events of the day, the brass boot on the table-leg, the fact that the little boy is still wearing the same chequered handkerchief, and that remarkable view with a perspective of peaked mountains, Wales, do you think, or the West Indies...As for me, I shall not think it more extraordinary when some visitor walks in, looks at the two pictures and says, I see you have my great-great-great-Aunt Maria and her two children; the cat is still a family legend, it was called Wellington.'

Valentine's shop often furnished Sylvia with ideas for her stories set in Mr Edom's antiques' gallery. Although 'The Listening Woman' (included recently in *The Music at Long Verney*) refers to the Warner family heirloom now in the Dorset County Museum, Sylvia's letter suggests that Miss Dickson's present some years earlier may have prompted Miss Mainwaring's discovery in Abbey Antiques. Curiously, at the time of her gift Miss Dickson had a dog called Wellington and the marmalade jar had been given to her mother by one of the Cotman sisters.

Carrow House in Norwich, home of the mustard dynasty, now contains the Norfolk Textile Collection, amongst which is John Craske's huge 'Dunkirk' embroidery which, by being 'extravagantly unpleasant to the authorities', Sylvia had managed to get hauled out of a lumber-room and 'de-mothed'. As for the letter, Miss Dickson entrusted it to me as a 'safer receptacle than the copy of *After the Death of Don Juan* I thought I had it in. (Actually it had migrated to Thornton Wilder while in the bookcase, so clearly it wasn't safe at all!) It has since migrated to the STW/VA Archive.

Peter Tolhurst.

* Does anyone know the whereabouts of any works of John Craske outside the public collections? If so, please contact the Newsletter Editor.*

The following story was first published in the *London Mercury*, Vol.XXXI No 184 in February 1935.

STORY WITH AN HYPOTHESIS

After the noise and speed of the car - a speed that was rendered trifling and unreal by the car being a closed car - the stillness of the country road was quite extraordinary. It was as though the whole world were standing still - a solid and positive stillness, an everlasting element in which trees grew and flowers were plaited among wayside grasses.

The place where she had so abruptly quitted the car was a long stretch of road with wide grassy margins. A double row of irregularly spaced trees made it almost as formal as an avenue, and the tall stone park gate at the end of the perspective corroborated this aspect of what was, in truth, but a straight stretch of unfrequented road in Norfolk. "Somewhere

near Cromer," she said to herself, looking about her. But after all that was only a guess; she had really no notion where she was. During the long drive she had remained quite indifferent to the country through which she was conveyed, except once or twice, when a name on a signpost had signalled itself to her memory as a name which she had heard spoken by Edmund. He talked often of his native county, his finger trudging over Ordnance maps, showing her where, one day, they would go to visit together the places of his boyhood.

But names then, they were still only names. The car hastened on, the by-roads were swept aside by its speed, the continuous conversation kept up by Elfrida and Nancy overlaid any stir of memory, any quickening of thought.

Now the utmost she could say to herself was, "Somewhere in North Norfolk, somewhere near Cromer," Cromer she knew. At the time when Edmund was stumping out with his first gun she, with her spade and bucket had played, intently and stealthily, as solitary children play, on that chilly beach. The summer following the tide of holiday had cast her upon another strand, and from that day to this she had not set foot in Norfolk.

A little farther along the road stood a cottage, and from the cottage came a smell of frying onions. It must be lunch-time, midday probably, since cottage people eat early. Time, though, troubled her as little as place. All her sense of being was absorbed in the relief of being out of that car, alone, in this world that stood so still. She seemed to herself expanded and immemorial as the trees above her, rooted in quiet grass like them, like them secure from human cares and human conversation.

For how those two women had talked! Zealously, brightly, ruthlessly keeping up their conversation, so that she, staring at the red, hair-prickled neck of the hired driver had thought of his silence as a garden into which she might gaze but could never enter.

Well, they were gone! Recalling the driver, so red, and young, and sturdy, she felt a momentary pang. But she could feel no regret for Elfrida and Nancy. They were gone, she had escaped them, and was, as far as she could gather, free - free, should she please to do, to do as she pleased. The motionless world was before her, and all this motionless day, poised on its midsummer noon. For it was the Eve of Saint John, when one could gather fern-seed and walk invisible.

Without much interest but with a certain sense of elation, as though she had come into a pair of wings, her mind began to frame projects and flip them away again. There was really a considerable choice of what to do next. She might, for instance, enter a lunatic asylum and set tle down there. She would be perfectly inoffensive, and a long unmolested leisure in which to study lunatics might be very tolerable. Or some sort of nocturnal nature study might be entertaining. She might slide herself into a bird sanctuary - there was one in Norfolk, Edmund had spoken of it, called Horsey Mere. To sleep all day and watch birds at night, there was nothing in that which people could object to, and the nocturnal behaviour of birds is a subject little explored. Or, of course, like so many others in her position, she might travel.

Meanwhile, she began to walk down a small track which led across the grass margin of the road towards a plantation. It was the sort of path just kept going by the usage of, perhaps, a dozen people a week - children birds'-nesting or brambling, a woman gathering an apronful of sticks, a gamekeeper, a tramp. Their usage had not been enough to tread

out the flower growing underfoot. Edmund would know its name, a tiny white flower, a fine speckle of blossom like the stars in the Milky Way.

The plantation thickened about her, but the path kept on, small and steadfast. Looking back she saw it receding from her heels. "It follows me like a tame wild animal," she thought.

There were a number of young poplars, their leaves lined with woolly silver. The smell of their bark was pungent under the sun, a smell at once savage and innocent. The larger, more separate stars of stichwort spangled the grass on either side of the track, a few dog-roses were still in bloom, bleached by the sun.

It was astonishingly silent. But no one could expect bird-song now, for the elder-tree was in bloom; and *Between elder-blossom and elder-fruit birds are mostly mute*. That was one of the rhymes so unexpectedly made up by Edmund to impress on her memory facts, which he considered of importance. They came out of him, round, sudden, unexpected and complete; like button-mushrooms. And all around the button-mushroom the surface remained exactly as it had been, so that no one looking at Edmund would surmise for a moment that he was capable of poetry.

"Mostly mute," she said aloud, staring at the elder-tree, so luxuriantly in flower, foaming out at every side with its exact, lace-pattern, flat-faced bucklers of yellow-white blossom. Under the blossom and the dark-green leaves were the elder-wands, the straight rods of this year's growth, whose outer pith could be delicately peeled off with a knife, leaving a pattern of green and white. Country lovers would make such wands for their young women, spending an hour, maybe, incising the pattern, breathing heavily, with pursed lips. There was a quantity of most promising wands in this bush, long, straight, unknuckled, as they should be. She hoped that some young man would bring his young lady here and make her an elder-wand.

She walked on, but the scent of the elder-blossom followed her; and she set her mind to recollect all the things she knew about the elder tree. Wine and jelly can be made of the fruit, a face-wash from the blossom, steeped in spring-water; and from the dried blossoms a tea can be distilled, which is said to cure colds and fevers, this was the tea made for the little boy in Hans Christian Andersen, among the fumes of which the Elder-Tree Mother appeared and told stories to the sick child. Hulda, or Hildre, a Norse goddess; and in Norfolk the elder is called hilder to this day.

How true it was that one should collect as much miscellaneous information as possible, storing it away against the hour of need! - from these casual musings on the elder-tree she had plaited herself something like comfort. Yes, this was undoubtedly what people meant when they spoke of the pleasures of memory. To those who have endless time to pass away and dare not think too near to heart, such fragments of information, however slight, however childish, were a blessing indeed - could be woven, as tufts of moss and oddments of hair and feathers are woven to line a birds' nest, into a warm kind of cubby-hole for the mind.

"A remedy in every hedge, either for sickness or wound." So Evelyn had written of the elder, kind tree! Nor had she yet exhausted its virtues, she could stay a little longer in its shelter, although the two vistas of Hans Christian Andersen and Northern mythology opened so promisingly between its branches. She could consider it botanically. Its leaves are pinnate, its blossoms of the order called cyme, its habitat is Northern Europe. But

how far north? - are there, for instance, elder-trees in Iceland? It would be a help if one could turn to books of reference, *John's Wild Flowers* and the *Dictionary of Non-Classical Mythology* - all the books which one never has time to read thoroughly. And why not? She could spend many winters in public reading-rooms, she might even get into the London Library.

Suddenly, too suddenly for surprise, she saw him. His back was toward her, he was leaning on a gate, contemplating a field of young wheat. When he turned round the aspect of that crop, so peacefully thriving, so nobly and classically elemental, was still mirrored in his quiet looks.

"Edmund!"

"Anastacia!"

They ran to each other, their feet noiseless on the turf. He had a wild rose in his buttonhole, in the shade of the trees his eyes, small and vivid, had the glitter of a sword in good condition.

"Did you get here all right?" he asked. In his voice was the exactly-remembered intonation, the slight rigour of mistrust, the erected solicitude of capability for one affectionately deemed incapable.

"Yes, I think so. Why? Have I lost my hat?"

Hearing their voices greet each other, tears of relief began to course down her face.

"It's such heaven to see you again, that's why I'm crying. But, Edmund - when I was in that car with Elfrida and Nancy they told me I was going to your funeral."

"Hush," he said. "Don't cry. It's perfectly all right. Curse those bitches, though, I always thought that the Scotch were right about keeping women off funerals."

They stood close to each other, she could see every freckle on his nose, the scar where the falcon had pecked him. But still they had not touched. Now for it, she thought; and put out her hand, pressing it against his waistcoat. It did not go through.

"You're there!" she exclaimed, "you're really there! You are not a ghost. You are Edmund."

"You're Anastacia," he answered, "my ring-dove. But you look damned ill."

"It was thinking you were dead, and then that awful journey. It was hellish, Edmund, truly hellish. All the windows were shut, the car was swarming with sandwiches, and Elfrida and Nancy incessantly screeched. I thought I should never get out, but somehow the car fell to bits and I did. It was an accident, I suppose."

He stroked her cheek, looking at her with furious tenderness.

"The driver was nice, though. Quite young, and never said a word. Oh! I hope he wasn't killed, too."

"He'll be all right," he answered with assurance.

"And Elfrida and Nancy?"

"They're all right too, I expect." But he spoke with less fervour. He had never cared for his step-sisters.

"Edmund! Suppose they are *alive*! Suppose in a moment we hear them, coming after me, still talking. Can we hide?"

"They won't come here. But if they did, they wouldn't see us."

"Why? I can see you."

"We can see each other, we always shall. But generally speaking, ghosts are invisible."

And warming to a congenial theme he began to explain the rare concatenation of chances by which the dead are side-slipped from their safe invisibility. There must, for instance, be a certain wateriness in the air; the vicinity of a moat might do it, an exceptionally heavy dew, a sudden fall of the barometer; or a deeply-felt grief might exert the same embodying power as these.

"Like tears," she said. "If I had waved to you with my very wet handkerchief..."

He continued to explain. It was clearly one of those natural laws which it was important that she should grasp; and walking at his side, rubbing her cheek against his shoulder, she awaited the moment when a rhyme, one of his button-mushrooms, would emerge, and sum it up for her.

Sylvia Townsend Warner.

DONATIONS/GIFTS

Any reader of the newsletter should know that the Sylvia Townsend Warner & Valentine Ackland Collection/Archive and the Sylvia Townsend Warner Society are two entirely separate bodies.

Both the Society and the Archive need money for their upkeep. Any potential donor should be aware that s/he will need to give a donation or gift either to the Society or to the Collection/Archive. A joint gift is not possible.

Gifts to the Society should be sent to the treasurer. Gifts to the Collection/Archive should go to the owner/copyright holder, Susanna Pinney, 7 Southbrook Road, London SE12 8LH. She would be happy to discuss how a donation could best forward the work of the Collection/Archive.

The Committee would like to apologise for any confusion caused by the last newsletter over this matter.

ACCESS TO THE SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER & VALENTINE ACKLAND COLLECTION/ARCHIVE.

This is to remind members of the STW Society that their membership does not allow access to the Sylvia Townsend Warner & Valentine Ackland Collection/Archive. Members must fulfil the necessary criteria for access to be granted by the owner and the Curator/Advisor to the Collection, Dr Morine Krissdóttir, Well House, Higher Odcombe, Nr Yeovil, Somerset BA22 8XE. kriss@planetmail.com

Exec: Susannah Pinney, 7 Southbrook Rd, SE12 8LH