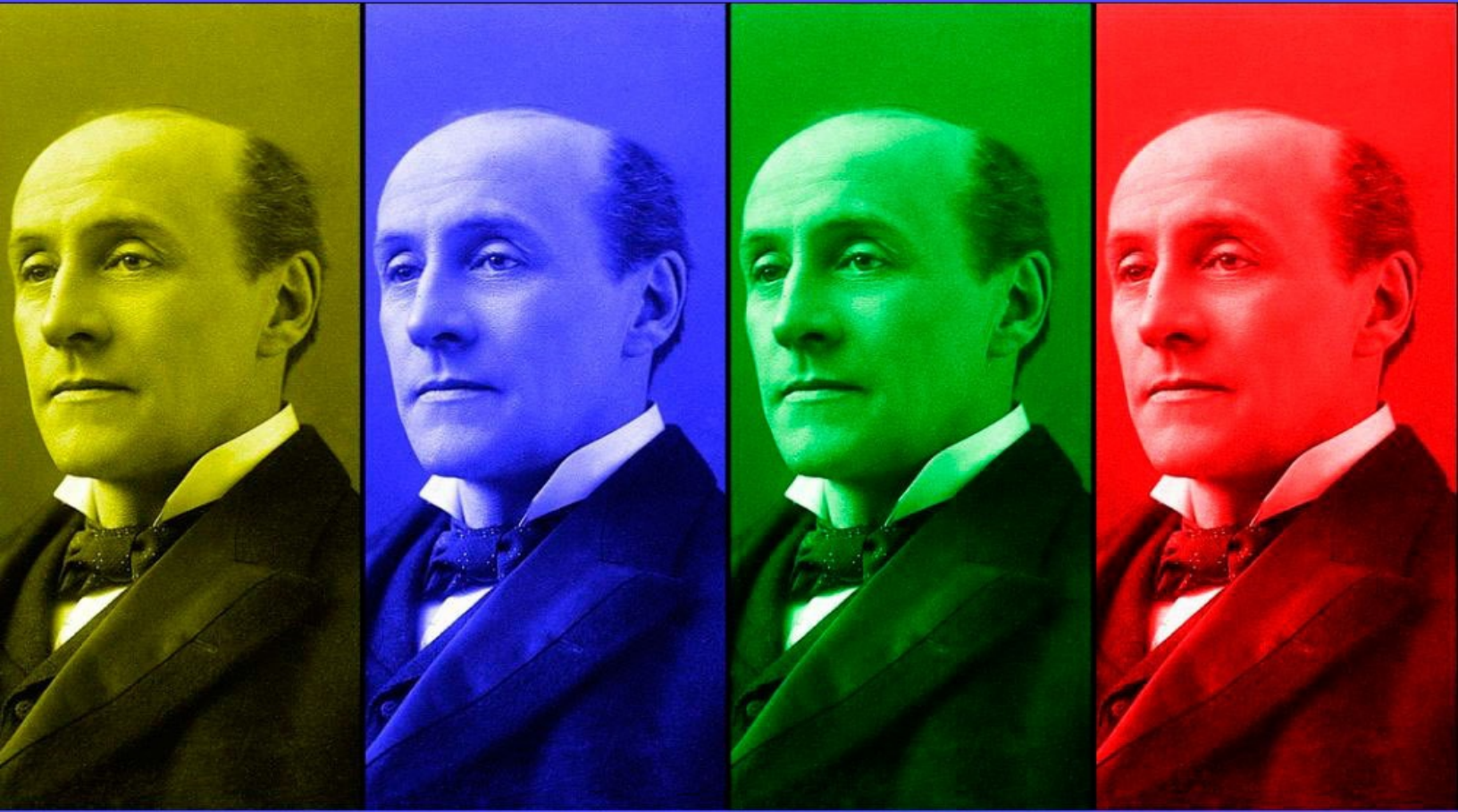


ANTHONY HOPE



QUISANTÉ

BIOGRAPHICALLY ANNOTATED

Quisanté

Anthony Hope

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Quisanté

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Anthony Hope - His Life And Work

By Frederick Taber Cooper

It is a sufficiently pleasant task to undertake to write a brief appreciation of Mr. Anthony Hope. The prevailing urbanity of his manner, the sustained sparkle of his wit, the agreeable expectation that he arouses of something stimulating about to happen, largely disarm criticism. Besides, he does not seem to demand to be taken too seriously; he is not a preacher or reformer, he is not trying to revolutionize the world; he is too well pleased with men

and women as they actually are, to desire to make them something different. In short, he is a suave and charming public entertainer, and like all wise entertainers he alters the character of his program in accordance with the fluctuations of public taste. And being both versatile and farsighted he is usually in the van of each new movement. The God in the Car, his story of gigantic land speculations in South Africa, with the Herculean figure whom he chooses to disguise under the name of "Juggernaut," appeared in 1894, thus antedating by five years The Colossus, by Morley Roberts. Phroso, with its romantic setting among the islands of modern Greece, anticipated by a year Mr. E. F. Benson's analogous attempts, The Vintage and The Capsina. When the revival of the English historical novel was at its height, he succeeded once more in coming in ahead of his competitors, and Simon Dale, which appeared in 1898 and is a study of Restoration manners, with Nell Gwynn for its central interest, led the way for The Orange Girl by Sir Walter Besant, issued in 1899, and F. Frankfort Moore's Nell Gwynn, Comedian, which was not published until 1900.

But although he so cleverly adapts himself to the trend of public taste, Mr. Anthony Hope is not an innovator; he adapts but does not originate. Yet it is no uncommon thing to hear him erroneously praised for having created two new and widely popular types of fiction, the Zenda type and that of The Dolly Dialogues. Now, The Prisoner of Zenda, as we remember at once when we stop to think, is not the first up-to-date sword and buckler story of an imaginary principality; it was preceded, by nearly a decade, by Stevenson's Prince Otto; and the only reason that it so often gets the credit of being the forerunner of its class is simply because it was done with a defter, lighter touch, a more spontaneous inspiration. Similarly, The Dolly Dialogues are not the first attempt to imitate in English the

sparkle and the piquancy of the Gallic dialogue in the form that " Gyp " and Henri Lavedan have made familiar.

Although it is quite likely that at that time Anthony Hope had never even heard of it, *The Story of the Gadsbys* had at least three years the start of *The Dolly Dialogues*, and even though it was done with a heavier hand, it succeeded in getting a greater effectiveness out of the type.

But, after all, statistics of this sort, while interesting to a person of precise and inquiring mind, have little or no bearing upon the sources of enjoyment which a surprisingly large number of people undoubtedly find in Mr. Hope's writings. And there is variety enough among them to suit all tastes. He began in a spirit of blithe and irresponsible romanticism; he has gradually come, in his later years, to look upon life in a rather matter-of-fact way and to picture, by choice, the more serious problems of life in the social world to which he belongs. Yet his novels, even the most ambitious of them, never suggest the ponderousness of a novel-with-a-purpose; he never forgets what is expected from a conscientious entertainer. And one reason why he so uniformly succeeds is that he is an exceedingly good craftsman; he has mastered the sheer mechanics of his art. It is never wise for a novelist, whatever his literary creed may be, to be wantonly scornful of technique. There are just a few erratic geniuses who, because they have in them certain big thoughts that are struggling for utterance and apparently cannot be uttered in the simple usual way, boldly break the established rules and make new ones to suit their needs. To draw an offhand parallel, they are somewhat in the position of a man who, although untrained in public speaking, is listened to indulgently because of the importance of what he has to say. But your public entertainer enjoys no such license; and the lighter and more irresponsible his theme the more perfect must be his execution. And it is because Mr. Hope possesses that magic

touch of the born story teller, that such delightful triflings as *The Dolly Dialogues* and *The Indiscretion of the Duchess* seem to linger in the memory with perennial youth, while many another weightier volume has faded out with the passage of years.

Accordingly, Mr. Hope belongs to that order of novelists about whom it is not only more enjoyable but more profitable to gossip genially than to weigh strictly in the balance. It is so easy to become garrulous over volumes that have worn well and afford many a pleasant hour of relaxation. It would be purposeless to take up serially each one of his many volumes, analyze and pigeonhole it according to its relative value. The better and the franker thing to do is to admit that there are certain volumes by Mr. Hope which gave the present writer genuine pleasure, and certain others that gave him no pleasure at all, and that those falling under the first division are the only ones which it seems worth while to discuss. In his earlier period the mere mention of Anthony Hope conjured up scenes of spirited adventure, reckless daring, gallant heroes combining the good breeding, the patrician ease, the assured manner of the better class of young Englishmen possessing the double advantage of birth and education, who, nevertheless, despite their studied reserve and immaculateness of dress, are plunged by a whim of fate into adventures of extraordinary daring and sublime audacity, adventures that would have taxed the prowess of Dumas's Immortal Three. It is a clever formula, this trick of taking certain types of familiar everyday people straight out of prosaic actuality and compelling them, whether they will or no, to perform romantic deeds against a romantic background. This peculiar combination was certainly a happy thought. It appealed to that latent thirst for adventure which we almost all possess; it unconsciously flattered the reader with a new sense of daring, a feeling

that he too, if thus suddenly and surprisingly transported into Zendaland, might similarly rise to the occasion and achieve great deeds. There is no purpose served by analyzing once again the story of The Prisoner of Zenda. It is one of those stories the artificiality of which stands out glaringly the moment one starts to lay its bones bare.

Any story which depends upon the chance resemblance of two human beings, a resemblance so close, so misleading, that even the wife of one of the two is at a loss to distinguish them, takes on, when stated briefly, apart from the glamour of the tale itself, an air of palpable falsity to life. And yet the fact remains that tens of thousands of readers have lost themselves, forgotten time and space, in their utter absorption in the dilemma of the Princess Flavia, who finds in Rudolph Rassendyl all the qualities which might have made it possible for her to love her husband, if only he had been as close a replica of Rassendyl morally as he was physically.

I do not mind admitting that personally I revert more frequently to The Dolly Dialogues than to any other volume by Mr. Hope. This is not merely because of the delicate touch and epigrammatic neatness for which they have been so universally praised. Superficially considered they are a series of encounters between a sparkling and fascinating little lady and a sedate and nimble-witted gentleman, whom it is insinuated that the Lady Dolly has jilted. Now, the real fascination about these brilliant exchanges of repartee lies chiefly in the subtle and yet elusive implications that we are always on the point of reading between the lines, and yet never quite get in their entirety. That Mr. Carter has long been a worshiper at the shrine of Lady Dolly, that he has many a time felt a pang of regret that his fortune in life has made him ineligible, that he considers her husband not half grateful enough to Providence and that his own

assumed air of sentimental resignation has in it a little touch of genuine regret, all this we get pretty clearly. And yet, we are well aware, all the time, that Mr. Carter, in spite of an occasional twinge of envy, would not change his condition if he could; that, although he may not be precisely aware of it, he is already confirmed in his bachelor habits; that he likes his freedom from responsibility, his harmless, unprofitable daily routine, his favorite corner in his favorite club, his innocent philandering with various young women, married and unmarried. He may, at times, deceive the Lady Dolly into commiserating him and blaming herself as a thoughtless coquette, but never for very long at a time. The whole thing is a sort of grown-up game of make-believe in which the players get a curious transitory, almost illogical enjoyment in feigning broken hearts and blighted lives. And yet there is just enough truth underlying it all to suggest that Mr. Hope was capable of more serious work than he had yet done. There was, for instance, everywhere a pervading suggestion of the infinite number of contradictory motives and impulses that determine every human action, and the impossibility which every man and woman must admit to themselves of deciding just how much gladness and how much regret is entailed in every least little thing that they do.

Almost without warning Mr. Hope proved that the vague promise of more serious work was well founded, by producing what, I think, the sober judgment of posterity will recognize as his most ambitious and most enduring work, Quisante. Alexander Quisante, from whom the volume takes its name, is not an Englishman either by birth or ancestry. He comes of antecedents almost unknown beyond the fact that they are a mixture of French and Spanish. With scanty means he comes, an absolute outsider, preparing to lay siege to the political and social

world of London. In every way he finds himself handicapped. The foreordained course of education through which the English ruling classes pass as a matter of course and by which their prejudices and points of view are determined, has not been his privilege. In addition to this he lacks that inborn refinement which sometimes makes up for good breeding and social experience. His taste is often exceedingly bad; his manner is alternately too subservient and too arrogant. Of the higher standards of morality he has no perception; he is the typical adventurer, unscrupulous, insincere, monumentally selfish. But, to offset all this, his intellect is quite extraordinary; his brain is an instrument marvelously under control, and he uses it at his pleasure, to bring the lesser intellects about him under his dominion. Above all, he has the gift of eloquence; and when he chooses to give full rein to his rhetorical powers, he can sway his audience at will, and thrill and sweep them with him through the whole gamut of human emotions. Of the men and women whom he meets, fully one-half are antagonized and repelled; the others give him an unquestioning, almost slavish devotion. But he has a personality which cannot leave negative results; it must breed love or hate.

The other character in the book who shares the central interest is Lady May Gaston, a woman who, by birth and training, participates in all those special privileges of rank and caste, all the traditions of her order from which Quisante is shut out. There is another man, one in her own class, who would be glad to make her his wife. He is in all respects the sort of man whom she is expected to marry; and she is not wholly indifferent to him. But she meets Quisante, and, from the first, comes under the spell of his dominant personality. There is much in him from which she shrinks. His social ineptitude, his faculty for doing the wrong thing, or the right thing at the wrong time, makes

her shudder. Although fascinated, she is not blinded. She sees his vulgarities, she questions his sincerity, she even doubts whether he is deserving of her respect.

Nevertheless, the spectacular, flamboyant brilliancy of the man dominates her better judgment, and in spite of her relatives' remonstrances, in spite of warnings from a member of Quisante's own family, she marries him, unable to resist the almost hypnotic spell cast over her by this man, who is something of a charlatan and something of a cad. The greater part of the book concerns itself with the story of the married life of this curiously ill-assorted couple; of his success in the public eye; of her gradual disillusionment, which, bitter though it is in its completeness, finds her somewhat apathetic, unable to feel the resentment that she knows she ought, unable to acknowledge that she regrets her choice. This, indeed, is the most interesting aspect of the book, the domination, mentally and morally, of a woman of rare sensitiveness and infinite possibilities by a man with whom companionship inevitably means deterioration.

The next of Mr. Anthony Hope's volumes, which personally appealed to the present writer, is entitled *A Servant of the Public*, and is enjoyable chiefly because of the tantalizing witchery of its heroine. Ora Pinsent is a young actress, who has taken London by storm. She has a husband somewhere, it is said, "whose name does not matter"; indeed, it matters so little that it does not prevent her from letting Ashley Mead make ardent love to her, one Sunday afternoon, though all the while she "preserves wonderfully the air of not being responsible for the thing, of neither accepting nor rejecting, of being quite passive, of having it just happen to her." Thus with a single pen stroke Mr. Hope has set the woman unmistakably before us. Throughout the book she practices the art of having things just happen to her, the art of dodging responsibility. With Ashley she

drifts, dangerously one thinks, at first, until one sees how easily she checks his ardor when she chooses, with a nervous laugh, and a low whispered " Don't, don't make love to me any more now." She talks much solemn nonsense about her duty to the husband whose name does not matter, and about her intention to renounce Ashley, although one realizes that there is really nothing to renounce, nor ever will be. And when the time comes for her company to leave London and start on their American tour, here also she plays the passive role, neither accepting nor rejecting. It is only when the weary months of her absence are over and she comes back as the wife of her leading man, that Ashley begins to see her as she really is; only then that he feels her power over him has ceased; only then that he can say, " I no longer love her, but I wish to God I did! " It is not easy to convey an impression of a woman's charm, when it lies not in what she says, but in the way she says it; not in what she does, but in the way she does it. But this is precisely what Anthony Hope has done triumphantly in his portraiture of Ora Pinsent, Ora, with her upturned face, with its habitual expression of expecting to be kissed, is one of the heroines in contemporary fiction that will not easily be forgotten.

Helena's Path deserves something more than a passing word of commendation, for it is an excellent example of Mr. Hope's deftness in doing a very slight thing extremely well. It has an outward framework of actuality, the atmosphere of present day English country life; yet into this he has infused a certain spirit of old-time chivalry and homage that gives to his whole picture something of the grace and charm of a Watteau landscape. The whole theme of the volume, which is scarcely more than a novelette, concerns itself with a right of way. The hero's estates lie somewhere on the east coast of England; but between his land and the strip of beach where he and his fathers before him have for

generations been in the habit of bathing lies the property which the heroine has recently purchased; and, unaware of any right of way, she closes up the gate through which it is his habit to pass for his daily swim. He writes courteously but firmly, insisting on his right. She answers in the same spirit, emphatically denying it. He refuses to be robbed of his legal rights, even by a pretty woman; she refuses to yield, at a command, what she would have graciously granted to a prayer. As neither side chooses to adopt legal measures, a state of mimic war ensues, in which he continues to invade the enemy's territory, while she continues to barricade and entrench. And all the while, although they have not once met face to face, each is quietly falling in love with the other, so that when finally honorable terms of peace are concluded, it is already a foregone conclusion that the whole dainty little comedy will end with oaths of fealty and bestowal of favors worthy of a knight and a lady of the olden times.

With the passage of years, however, the author of *The Dotty Dialogues* has tended to give us fewer and fewer of these dainty trifles and more and more of his serious and careful social studies. In this class belongs *The Great Miss Driver*, and there is no exaggeration in saying that since the publication of *Quisante* it is easily the biggest, best-rounded, and altogether worthiest book he has written. And yet, the first thing you are apt to think of is that the germ idea of the story goes straight back to *The Dolly Dialogues*; that in a superficial way, yes, and perhaps in a deeper way, too, there is a certain rather absurd similarity between them; just as though the author, having once made a pleasant little comedy out of a certain situation, had ever since been turning over in his mind the possibility of using it in a bigger and more serious way, until eventually he evolved the present volume. Not that *Jennie Driver*, heiress to *Breysgate Priory*, bears any close resemblance to Lady

Mickleham beyond the very feminine desire for conquest, any more than the Mr. Austin of the one story is a close relative of Mr. Carter in the other. The resemblance lies in this, that both stories are told in the first person by the man who in his secret heart loves the woman of whom he writes, but knows that because he is poor, because he has the natural instinct of an old bachelor, because, also, she has given her heart elsewhere, he must remain content to look upon her joys and sorrows in the capacity of a friend, and not that of a lover. To this extent *The Great Miss Driver* may be defined as *The Dolly Dialogues* rendered in a different tempo.

Yet, such a definition gives no hint of the strength, the variety, the vital interest of this story. In the character of Jennie Driver Mr. Hope has given us a woman whose ruling passion is to hold sway, to fascinate and bend to her will every one who comes within her sphere. And because of this desire she can never bear to lose the allegiance of any man, no matter how mean and unworthy he has proved himself; and herein lies the source of her life's tragedy. She is not content to be merely the richest woman in the county, to play the part of Lady Bountiful, and build memorials and endow institutions with fabulous sums; she wants also to be a social leader with undisputed right to take precedence over all the other ladies of the community, and this she could do if she married Lord Fillingford, whom she respects, and who badly needs her fortune; but not if she should marry Leonard Octon, big, brusque, rather brutal, who is cut by the whole county, and whom she happens to love. It is a rather unique situation in fiction for a woman to be forced into publicly slighting the one man on earth that she cares for; still more unique for a woman who is pledged to marry one man to be secretly meeting the other man, and thus atoning for deliberately cutting him whenever they meet in public. And, surely, it was a

rather audacious thing for Mr. Hope to attempt to make us feel that in spite of her double-dealing Jennie Driver is a rather big and fine and splendid sort of woman; that she would have kept faith with Fillingford had he been big enough to trust her when appearances were heavily against her; and that in defying convention and scandalizing the little world she lives in by fleeing with Octon to Paris, she is doing the one big, brave, inevitable act. Yet, that is precisely what the author does succeed in making us feel; and when because Fate intervenes and wrecks the last chance of Jennie's happiness through the death of Octon, we not only sympathize with her bitterness toward the narrow-minded social circle that had forced her lover into exile, but we also glory with her in the big, carefully planned and altogether adequate revenge by which she forces the county to pay tardy homage to the name of Octon.

Notwithstanding the statement made at the beginning of this chapter, to the effect that Mr. Anthony Hope does not write problem novels, the volume entitled Mrs. Maxon Protests comes critically near the border-line. Mrs. Maxon is simply one more young woman who has discovered marriage to be something vastly different from what she had imagined; and her difficulty is of the variety which she regards as almost humiliatingly commonplace namely, incompatibility. Her husband happens to be one of those narrow, self-satisfied, dictatorial men, with old-fashioned ideas about women in general and a rooted conviction that a man has a high moral responsibility for his wife's conduct and must mould her in all fashions to his own way of thinking. Mrs. Maxon bears the strain for five years; then she consults a lawyer. She learns that while she cannot get a divorce in England, she can leave her husband and he cannot force her to come back. At the time of their separation, or to be more accurate, her desertion of him for

Maxon refuses to take the matter seriously there is no other man in her life; but in the weeks that follow during which she stays at the country home of some friends with lax ideas of life and a houseful of curious and often irregular people, she suddenly surprises herself by falling in love with a certain Godfrey Ledstone and promptly scandalizes society by eloping with him openly and unashamed. The rest of the book traces, with a clear-sightedness that Mr. Hope has not always shown in his books, the subsequent career of a woman who thinks that by the force of her own example she can bring the whole world over to her way of thinking. He does not spare us any of her disillusionings, her humiliations, her heartache and loneliness. But through it all she is learning, strangely and cruelly learning, much that is exceedingly good for her. She is learning, for instance, that charity and sympathy and understanding are often found where least expected. She is learning, too, that there are many other standards in this world as well as her own and that they are just as reasonable and perhaps nobler. She learns that one of the best men she has ever had the good fortune to meet, loving her, pitying her, utterly disapproving of her, would nevertheless have made her his wife in spite of the scandal that had preceded and followed her divorce but for one reason: he is an army officer, and a woman with a taint upon her name would lower the social tone of his regiment and be in some degree a menace to the moral tone of the younger set. It is a temptation to analyze at some length the separate episodes of this rather unusual book throughout the years while Mrs. Maxon is slowly finding her way out of the quagmire of her own making into a belated peace and happiness. Yet, after all, what the book stands for is so admirably summed up in the concluding paragraph that one cannot do it a greater service than to close with one brief quotation. It is a satisfaction to find a book written upon this theme which, while recognizing that

there is much to be said on both sides, shows neither vindictiveness toward the woman nor a misplaced championship that would exalt her into a martyr.

In the small circle of those with whom she had shared the issues of destiny she had unsettled much; of a certainty she had settled nothing. Things were just as much in solution as ever; the welter was not abated. Man being imperfect, laws must be made. Man being imperfect, laws must be broken or ever new laws will be made. Winnie Maxon had broken a law and asked a question. When thousands do the like, the Giant, after giving the first comers a box on the ear, may at last put his hand to his own and ponderously consider.

Such are the volumes chosen as a matter of personal preference, out of the generous series that Mr. Hope has so industriously turned out, during a score of years. Another reader's choice might be different, and who shall say whether it would not be as well justified? Because, the first duty of a public entertainer is to entertain; and, taking this for a criterion, the most that any one can say of his own knowledge is, such-and-such volumes have entertained me. It is obvious that Mr. Hope's own preference is for his more serious work, that with the passage of years he has grown more willing to allow the books of his romantic period to fade from sight. Yet, by doing this, he challenges a harder competition, a stricter measurement against a host of rivals. There has been no one to give us a second Prisoner of Zenda, excepting Mr. Hope himself, notwithstanding that many another writer has tried his best. But it would be easy to name a dozen contemporary novelists who could give us the annals of another Servant of the People, or chronicle some further Intrusions of Peggy, and one or two who, perhaps, could do it better. Mr. Hope is not one of the great novelists of his generation; but he is never mediocre, and

even in his uninspired moments never dull. His *Prisoner of Zenda* and his *Dolly Dialogues* were both gems of the first water; his *Quisante* certainly suffers nothing by comparison with George Gissing's *Charlatan*, separated from it by barely a year. As a chronicler of English manners he is certainly of rather more importance than Mr. E. F. Benson or Mr. Maarten Maartens, although not in the same class with Galsworthy, Bennett, or W. H. Maxwell. He will be remembered, I think, somewhat as William Black and Marion Crawford are remembered, as having preserved a wholesome optimism, an unshaken belief in human nature, and as having done his part to keep the tone of the modern novel clean and wholesome.

Quisanté

Chapter I. Dick Benyon's Outsider.

A shrunken sallow old lady, dressed in rusty ill-shaped black and adorned with an evidently false 'front' of fair hair, sat in a tiny flat whose windows overlooked Hyde Park from south to north. She was listening to a tall loose-built dark young man who walked restlessly about the little room as he jerked out his thoughts and challenged the expression of hers. She had known him since he was a baby, had brought him up from childhood, had always served him, always believed in him, never liked him, never offered her love nor

conciliated his. His father even, her only brother Raphael Quisanté, she had not loved; but she had respected Raphael. Alexander—Sandro, as she alone of all the world called him—she neither loved nor respected; him she only admired and believed in. He knew his aunt's feelings well enough; she was his ally, not his friend; kinship bound them, not affection; for his brain's sake and their common blood she was his servant, his heart she left alone.

Thus aware of the truth, he felt no obligation towards her, not even when, as now, he came to ask money of her; what else should she do with her money, where else lay either her duty or her inclination? She did not love him, but he was her one interest, the only tie that united her with the living moving world and the alluring future years, more precious to her since she could see so few of them.

"I don't mean to make myself uncomfortable," said Miss Quisanté. "How much do you want?" He stopped and turned round quickly with a gleam of eagerness in his eyes, as though he had a vision of much wealth. "No, no," she added with a surly chuckle, "the least you'll take is the most I'll give."

"I owe money."

"Who to?" she asked, setting her cap uncompromisingly straight. "Jews?"

"No. Dick Benyon."

"That money you'll never pay. I shan't consider that."

The young man's eyes rested on her in a long sombre glance; he seemed annoyed but not indignant, like a lawyer

whose formal plea is brushed aside somewhat contemptuously by an impatient truth-loving judge.

"You've got five hundred a year or thereabouts," she went on, "and no wife."

He threw himself into a chair; his face broke into a sudden smile, curiously attractive, although neither sweet nor markedly sincere. "Exactly," he said. "No wife. Well, shall I get one with five hundred a year?" He laughed a little. "An election any fine day would leave me penniless," he added.

"There's Dick Benyon," observed the old lady.

"They talk about that too much already," said Quisanté.

"Come, Sandro, you're not sensitive."

"And Lady Richard hates me. Besides if you want to impress fools, you must respect their prejudices. Give me a thousand a year; for the present, you know."

He asked nearly half the old lady's income; she sighed in relief. "Very well, a thousand a year," she said. "Make a good show with it. Live handsomely. It'll pay you to live handsomely."

A genuine unmistakable surprise showed itself on his face; now there was even the indignation which a reference to non-payment of debts had failed to elicit.

"I shall do something with it, you might know that," he said resentfully.

"Something honest, I mean."

"What?"

"Well, something not criminal," she amended, chuckling again. "I'm sorry to seem to know you so well," she added.

"Oh, we know one another pretty well," said he with a nod. "Never the jam without the powder from you."

"But always the jam," said old Maria. "And you'll find the world a good deal like your aunt, Sandro."

An odd half-cunning half-eager gleam shot across his eyes.

"A man finds the world what he makes it," he said. He rose, came and stood over her, and went on, laughing. "But the devil makes an aunt once and for all, and won't let one touch his handiwork."

"You can touch her savings, though!"

He blazed out into a sudden defiance. "Oh, refuse if you like. I can manage without you. You're not essential to me."

She smiled, her thin lips setting in a wry curve. Now and then it seemed hard that there could be no affection between her and the one being whom the course of events plainly suggested for her love. But, as Sandro said, they knew one another very well. In the result she felt entitled to assume no airs of superiority; he had not been a dutiful or a grateful nephew, she had not been a devoted or a patient aunt; as she looked back, she was obliged to remember one or two occasions when he had driven or betrayed her into a severity of which she did not willingly think. This reflection dictated the words with which she met his outburst.

"You can tell your story on Judgment Day and I'll tell mine," she said. "Oh, neither of 'em will lose in the telling, I'll be bound. Meanwhile let's be——"

"Friends?" he suggested with an obvious but not ill-natured sneer.

"Lord, no! Whatever you like! Banker and client, debtor and creditor, actor and audience? Take your choice—and send me your bank's address."

He nodded slightly, as though he concluded a bargain, not at all as though he acknowledged a favour. Yet he remarked in a ruminative tone, "I shall be very glad of the money."

A moment's pause followed. Then Miss Quisanté observed reluctantly,

"The only thing I ever care to know about you is what you're planning, Sandro. Don't I earn that by my thousand a year?"

"Well, here you are. I'm started, thanks to Dick Benyon and myself. I've got my seat, I can go on now. But I'm an outsider still." He paused a moment. "I feel that; Benyon feels it too. I want to obviate it a bit. I mean to marry."

"An insider?" asked the old lady. She looked at him steadily. "Your taste's too bad," she said; he was certainly dressed in a rather bizarre way. "And your manners," she added. "She won't have you," she ended. Quisanté took no notice and seemed not to hear; he stood quite still by the window, staring over the park. "Besides she'll know what you want her for."

He wheeled round suddenly and looked down at his aunt. His face was softer, the cunningness had gone from his smile, his eyes seemed larger, clearer, even (by a queer delusion of sight) better set and wider apart.

"Yes, I'll show her that," he said in a low voice, with a new richness of tone.

Old Maria looked up at him with an air of surprise.

"You do want her for that? As a help, I mean?" she asked.

His lips just moved to answer "Yes." Aunt Maria's eyes did not leave his face. She remembered that when he had come before to talk about contesting the seat in Parliament he had now won, there had been a moment (poised between long periods of calculation and elaborate forecasts of personal advantage) in which his face had taken on the same soft light, the same inspiration.

"You odd creature!" she murmured gently. "She's handsome, I suppose?"

"Superb—better than that."

"A swell?" asked old Maria scornfully.

"Yes," he nodded.

His aunt laughed. "A Queen among women?" was the form her last question took.

"An Empress," said Alexander Quisanté, the more ornate title bursting gorgeously from his lips.

"Just the woman for you then!" remarked Aunt Maria. A stranger would have heard nothing in her tone save mockery. Quisanté heard more, or did not hear that at all. He nodded again quite gravely, and turned back to the window. There were two reasonable views of the matter; either the lady was not what Quisanté declared her, or if she were she would have nothing to do with Quisanté. But Aunt Maria reserved her opinion; she was prepared to find neither of these alternatives correct.

For there was something remarkable about Sandro; the knowledge that had been hers so long promised fair to become the world's discovery. Society was travelling towards Aunt Maria's opinion, moved thereto not so much by a signally successful election fight, nor even by a knack of distracting attention from others and fixing it on himself, as by the monstrous hold the young man had obtained and contrived to keep over Dick Benyon. Dick was not a fool; here ended his likeness to Quisanté; here surely ought to end his sympathy with that aspiring person? But there was much more between them; society could see that for itself, while doubters found no difficulty in overhearing Lady Richard's open lamentations. "If Dick had known him at school or at Cambridge——" "If he was somebody very distinguished——" "If he was even a gentleman——" Eloquent beginnings of unfinished sentences flowed with expressive freedom from Amy Benyon's pretty lips. "I don't want to think my husband mad," she observed pathetically to Weston Marchmont, himself one of the brightest hopes of that party which Dick Benyon was understood to consider in need of a future leader. Was that leader to be Quisanté? Manners, not genius, Amy declared to be the first essential. "And I don't believe he's got genius," she added hopefully; that he had no manners did not need demonstration to Marchmont, whose own were so exquisite as to form a ready-make standard.

And it was not only Dick. Jimmy was as bad. Nobody valued Jimmy's intellect, but every one had been prepared to repose securely on the bedrock of his prejudices. He was as infatuated as his brother; Quisanté had swept away the prejudices. The brethren were united in an effort to foist their man into every circle and every position where he seemed to be least wanted; to this end they devoted time, their social reputation, enthusiasm, and, as old Maria knew, hard money. They were triple-armed in confidence. Jimmy met remonstrances with a quiet shrug; Dick had one answer, always the same, given in the same way—a confident assertion, limited and followed, an instant later, by one obvious condition, seemingly not necessary to express. "You'll see, if he lives," he replied invariably when people asked him what there was after all in Mr. Quisanté. Their friends could only wonder, asking plaintively what the Duke thought of his brothers' proceedings. The Duke, however, made no sign; making no sign ranked as a characteristic of the Duke's.

When Lady Richard discussed this situation with her friends the Gaston girls, she gained hearty sympathy from Fanny, but from May no more than a mocking half-sincere curiosity.

"Is it possible for a man to like both me and Mr. Quisanté?" Lady Richard asked. "And after all Dick does like me very much."

"Likes both his wife and Mr. Quisanté! What a man for paradoxes!" May murmured.

"Jimmy's worse if anything," the aggrieved wife went on. This remark was levelled straight at Fanny; Jimmy being understood to like Fanny, a parallel problem presented

itself. Fanny recognized it but, not choosing to acknowledge Jimmy's devotion, met it by referring to Marchmont's openly professed inability to tolerate Quisanté.

"I always go by Mr. Marchmont's judgment in a thing like that," she said. "He's infallible."

"There's no need of infallibility, my dear," observed Lady Richard irritably. "Ordinary common sense is quite enough." She turned suddenly on May. "You talked to him for nearly an hour the other night," she said.

"Yes—how you could!" sighed Fanny.

"I couldn't help it. He talked to me."

"About those great schemes that he's filled poor dear Dick's head with? Not that I doubt he's got plenty of schemes—of a sort you know."

"He didn't talk schemes," said Lady May. "He was worse than that."

"What did he do?" asked her sister.

"Flirted."

A sort of gasp broke from Lady Richard's lips; she gazed helplessly at her friends. Fanny began to laugh. May preserved a meditative seriousness; she seemed to be reviewing Quisanté's efforts in a judicial spirit.

"Well?" said Lady Richard after the proper pause.

"Oh well, he was atrocious, of course," May admitted; her tone, however, expressed a reluctant homage to truth rather than any resentment. "He doesn't know how to do it in the least."

"He doesn't know how to do anything," Lady Richard declared.

"Most men are either elephantine or serpentine," said Fanny. "Which was he, dear?"

"I don't think either."

"Porcine?" asked Lady Richard.

"No. I haven't got an animal for him. Well, yes, he was a little weaselly perhaps. But——" She glanced at Lady Richard as she paused, and then appeared to think that she would say no more; she frowned slightly and then smiled.

"I like his cheek!" exclaimed Fanny with a simplicity that had survived the schoolroom.

Lady Richard screwed her small straight features into wrinkles of disgust and a shrug seemed to run all over her little trim smartly-gowned figure; no presumption could astonish her in Quisanté.

"Why in the world did you listen to him, May?" Fanny went on.

"He interested me. And every now and then he was objectionable in rather an original way."

With another shrug, inspired this time by her friend's mental vagaries, Lady Richard diverged to another point.

"And that was where you were all the time Weston Marchmont was looking for you?" she asked.

May began to laugh. "Somehow I'm generally somewhere else when Mr. Marchmont looks for me," she said. "It isn't deliberate, really; I like him very much, but when he comes near me, some perverse fate seems to set my legs moving in the opposite direction."

"Well, Alexander Quisanté's a perverse fate, if you like," said Lady Richard.

"It's curious how there are people one's like that towards. You're very fond of them, but it seems quite certain that you'll never get much nearer to them. Is it fate? Or is it that in the end there's a—a solution of sympathy, a break somewhere, so that you stop just short of finding them absolutely satisfying?"

Neither of her friends answered her. Lady Richard did not deal in speculations; Fanny preferred not to discuss, even indirectly, her sister's feelings towards Marchmont; they bred in her a mixture of resentment and relief too complicated for public reference. It was certainly true enough that he and May got no nearer to one another; if the break referred to existed somewhere, its effect was very plain; how could it display itself more strikingly than in making the lady prefer Quisanté's weaselly flirtation to the accomplished and enviable homage of Weston Marchmont? And preferred it she had, for one hour of life at least. Fanny felt the anger which we suffer when another shows indifference towards what we should consider great good fortune.

But indifference was not truly May's attitude towards Marchmont. Nobody, she honestly thought, could be indifferent to him, to his handsomeness, his grace and refinement, the fine temper of his mind, his indubitable superiority of intellect; in everything he was immeasurably above the ordinary run of her acquaintance, the well-groomed inconsiderables of whom she knew such a number. Being accustomed to look this world in the face unblinkingly, she did not hesitate to add that he possessed great wealth and the prospect of a high career. He was all, and indeed rather more, than she, widowed Lady Attlebridge's slenderly dowered daughter, had any reason to expect. She wanted to expect no more, if possible really to regard this opportunity as greater luck than she had a right to anticipate. The dissatisfaction which she sought to explain by talking of a solution of sympathy was very obstinate, but justice set the responsibility down to her account, not to his; analysing her temperament, without excusing it, she found a spirit of adventure and experiment—or should she say of restlessness and levity?—which Marchmont did not minister to nor yet assuage. The only pleasure that lay in this discovery came from the fact that it was so opposed to the general idea about her. For it was her lot to be exalted into a type of the splendid calm patrician maiden. In that sort of vein her friends spoke of her when they were not very intimate, in that sort of language she saw herself described in gushing paragraphs that chronicled the doings of her class. Stately, gracious, even queenly, were epithets which were not spared her; it would have been refreshing to find some Diogenes of a journalist who would have called her, in round set terms, discontented, mutinous, scornful of the ideal she represented, a very hot-bed of the faults the beauty of whose absence was declared in her dignified demeanour. Now what May looked, that Fanny was; but poor Fanny, being slight of build, small in feature, and gay in manner,

got no credit for her exalted virtues and could not be pressed into service as the type of them. For certainly types must look typical. May's comfort in these circumstances was that Marchmont's perfect breeding and instinctive avoidance of display, of absurdity, even of betraying any heat of emotion, saved her from the usual troubles which an unsatisfied lover entails on his mistress. He looked for her no doubt, but with no greater visible perturbation than if she had been his handkerchief.

An evening or two later Dick Benyon took her in to dinner. Entirely in concession to him—for the subject had passed from her own thoughts—she asked, "Well, how's your genius going on?" Before the meal was over she regretted her question. It opened the doors to Dick's confused eloquence and vague laudations of his *protégé*; putting Dick on his defence, it involved an infinite discussion of Quisanté. She was told how Dick had picked him up at Naples, gone to Pompeii with him, travelled home with him, brought him and Jimmy together, and how the three had become friends. "And if I'm a fool, my brother's not," said Dick. May knew that Jimmy would shelter himself under a plea couched in identical language. From this point Dick became less expansive, for at this point his own benefactions and services had begun. She could not get much out of him, but she found herself trying to worm out all she could. Dick had no objection to saying that he had induced Quisanté to go in for politics, and had "squared" the influential persons who distributed (so far as a free electorate might prove docile) seats in Parliament. Rumour and Aunt Maria would have supplemented his statement by telling of substantial aid given by the Benyon brothers. May, interested against her wish and irritated at her interest, yet not content, like Dick's wife, to shrug away Dick's aberrations, turned on him with a sudden, "But why, why? Why do you like him?"

"Like him!" repeated Dick half-interrogatively. He did not seem sure that his companion had chosen the right, or at any rate the best, word to describe his feelings. In response she amended her question.

"Well, I mean, what do you see in him?"

Here was another fatal question, for Dick saw everything in him. Hastily cutting across the eulogies, she demanded particulars—who was he, where did he come from, and so forth. On these heads Dick's account was scanty; Quisanté's father had grown wine in Spain; and Quisanté himself had an old aunt in London.

"Not much of a genealogy," she suggested. Dick was absurd enough to quote "*Je suis un ancêtre*." "Oh, if you're as silly as that!" she exclaimed with an annoyed laugh.

"He's the man we want."

"You and Jimmy?"

"The country," Dick explained gravely. He had plenty of humour for other subjects, but Quisanté, it seemed, was too sacred. "Look here," he went on. "Come and meet him again. Amy's going out of town next week and we'll have a little party for him."

"That happens best when Amy's away?"

"Well, women are so——"

"Yes, I know. I'm a woman. I won't come."