SAMPLE ARTICLES FROM THE GLADSTONE REVIEW

As it is likely that several readers of this e-journal have discovered the existence of the New Gladstone Review for the first time, I thought it would be helpful to give more idea of the style adopted by providing some examples of articles that were published during 2017.

I begin with the introduction on page 1 of the January 2017 issue, and thereafter add seven articles published in subsequent issues.

THE GLADSTONE REVIEW

January 2017

a monthly e-journal

Informal commentary, opinions, reviews, news, illustrations and poetry for bookish people of philanthropic inclination

INTRODUCTION

This is the first issue of the successor to the Gladstone Books Newsletter, the publication which was launched in November 2015 in association with the Gladstone Books shop in Southwell. The shop was named after William Gladstone, who became an MP for near-by Newark when only 23 years old in 1832, and was subsequently Liberal Prime Minister on four occasions until his death in 1898.

It was Gladstone's *bibliophilia*, rather than his political achievements, that led to adoption of this name when I first started selling second-hand books in Newark in 2002. For he was an avid reader of the 30,000 books he assembled in his personal library, which became the nucleus of the collection in St Deiniol's library in north Wales, and which is his most tangible legacy. I retained the name when moving the business to Lincoln in 2006, and since May 2015, to the shop in Southwell. *

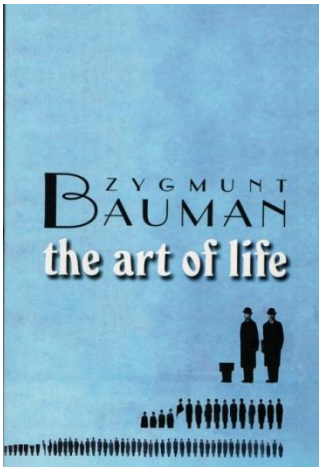
Ben Mepham

* **Of course, Gladstone Books is now back in Lincoln!**

Zygmunt Bauman (1925-2017): an obituary

The name of Zygmunt Bauman, who died last month, while largely unknown to the general public, reputedly induced a state of awe among his fellow sociologists. His extraordinarily prolific literary output, even following his official 'retirement' from Leeds University in 1990, meant that he published another book almost annually, with virtually all of them breaking new ground and winning admiration for his perceptive reflections on a wide range of issues - everything from intimacy to globalisation, from the Holocaust to so-called 'reality television' programmes.

Born in 1925 in Poland, Zygmunt Bauman was first a victim of the Nazis and then of communists. His father Moritz, with wife and family, fled to the Soviet Union at the beginning of WW2 and was awarded military honours by the Polish government for fighting the Nazis. Zygmunt became a lecturer at Warsaw University, but in the late 1960s, he, his wife and three children,[1] were exiled by the ruling communist regime as part of an antisemitic campaign. After short-term posts in a number of countries, he was appointed in 1971 to the headship of the Sociology department at Leeds University, where he remained for the rest of his academic career and subsequent retirement.



Over the years, I have read several of his books, often with rapt attention and much admiration. But as he wrote over 60 of them, and I have savoured only a fraction of this output, I cannot claim to know his work in any depth. Yet he is one of those authors whose perceptive analyses and pellucid style have influenced my own thinking, to the extent that I felt a real sense of loss in learning of his death.

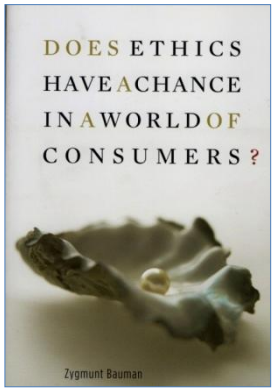
Distinguished thinkers are often most readily brought to mind by some phrase which has assumed iconic significance, e.g. *'the hidden hand of the market*' (Adam Smith), *'it all depends what you mean by ..*', (Joad) and *'philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.'* (Marx). To extend that paradigm, two key phrases of Bauman that for me encapsulate the underlying theme of much of his thinking, are *Liquid modernity* and *The art of life* - as it happens, the titles of two of his books.

The metaphor of *liquidity* seems to perfectly describe our modern world, in which the stable institutions and structures that provided a secure basis for well-ordered societies are now in an ever-accelerating state of collapse or disintegration, with disorientating effects on individuals and societies. Nothing seems dependable, leaving many people alienated and outside their 'comfort zone.' But perhaps even more threatening are the various forms of polarisation and discrimination in society, on grounds of race, colour, gender, religion and wealth - the extents of which are growing apace.[2] And among the most corrosive of such schisms is that legitimised by the official endorsement of consumerism.

[1] Until recently, his daughter Lydia, who is a distinguished artist, maintained an art gallery near Lincoln Cathedral

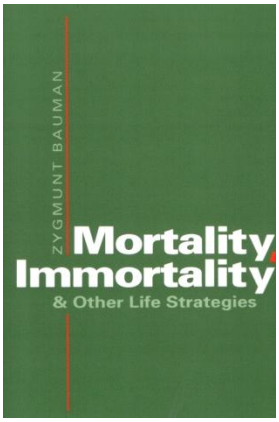
[2] Bauman might be said to have foreseen recent events in the USA more clearly than most.

Virtually all politicians accept unquestioningly the mantra that economic growth (measured by the GNP) is the main strategy for enhancing the standard of living (and 'happiness') of their electorates, and hence ensuring their re-election. But Bauman's response is typified by the following comment:



"*In a consumer society, people wallow in things, fascinating, enjoyable things. If you define your value by the things you acquire and surround yourself with, being excluded is humiliating.* [But] *in a world of communication ... there is universal comparison and you don't just compare yourself with the people next door, you compare yourself to people all over the world and with what is being presented as the decent, proper and dignified life. It's the crime of humiliation*."

But growth, as measured by GNP, is a flawed metric in many other ways. For as well as including all expenditure that satisfies 'wants' it also entails the cost of attempts to remedy the unwanted consequences, e.g. due to environmental pollution from air and road transport, medical treatment of diseases like diabetes caused e.g. by overeating, and new purchases resulting from built-in obsolescence of much modern equipment. Moreover, as the average 'standard of living' rises, so, invariably, do levels of crime and corruption.



In contrast, Bauman argued that in the pursuit of increasing personal income to afford yet more 'good and services' on which happiness is claimed to depend, those more authentic elements of a happy life that come virtually free (friendship, conversation, music, craft activities, reading, enjoyment of the countryside etc) are squeezed out by commodities many are seduced to buy by skilful advertising and the desire for 'one-upmanship' (see article 2!). Rather than engaging in an endless, and ultimately unattainable, pursuit of happiness, he claimed that: *Our lives, whether we know it or not, and whether we relish the news or bewail it, are works of art. To live our lives as the art of life demands, we must, just like any traditional artist, set ourselves challenges which are (at the moment of their setting, at any rate) well beyond our reach*.

Despite his academic eminence, Bauman saw nothing in the 'corridors of power' for his kind of sociology. Rather, the focus of his work was ordinary people *struggling to be human*, and his research was aimed at understanding how social conventions obstruct the possibility of human liberty. Moreover, in his preoccupation with morality he was an unusual sort of sociologist. He was unimpressed by the exhaustive statistical analysis and surveys that many sociologists felt necessary for them to be regarded as 'scientists' - preferring the grand, sweeping assertion which his readers might accept, reject or reason with. He didn't accept the traditional boundaries of sociology, but instead grounded many of his arguments on philosophical precepts.

In recent years Bauman had analysed the refugee crisis and the rise of right wing populism in Europe and the USA, considering them to constitute a *crisis of humanity.* He believed, firmly and ardently, in a socially progressive Europe, and that the EU served as a safeguard for hard-won rights and shared protection from war and insecurity. Indeed, in what proved to be his last lecture at Leeds, delivered in October 2016, he drew parallels *between the Holocaust and the capacity of today's populism to make everyone <u>other</u>, without compassion or remorse.* Whether you agreed with him or not, Bauman will be missed for his passionate humanitarian concerns and the clarity with which he advanced them.

Ben Mepham

Roget: The Man who became a Book

a synopsis of a book with the above title [3]

Roget is a name most familiar to people who have ever had occasion to express their ideas in writing. For this reference book is much more likely to be referred to by its eponymous title than by the designation *thesaurus*. But the fame that Roget's Thesaurus has acquired over the last 150 years is not what its author would have anticipated. For in a life of 90 years this was the outcome of a project initiated in his 70s, after 50 highly productive years during which he played important roles in many intellectual fields.

Born in London in 1779, Peter Mark Roget was the son of Jean Roget, a pastor in the French Protestant Church in Soho, himself a native of Geneva. But falling a victim of TB, Jean died when Peter was only four years old. His mother, Catherine, had a listless, erratic temperament, which resulted in Peter and his sister being subjected to constant and disruptive moves to 'pastures new' in southern England. So, although it might have seemed to assume unrealistic precocity, it probably came as a relief to Peter that, at the tender age of 14, he was enrolled to study medicine at Edinburgh University - with his mother and sister living nearby. He was awarded his MD at 19 years, with his written thesis on the subject of *chemical affinity*.

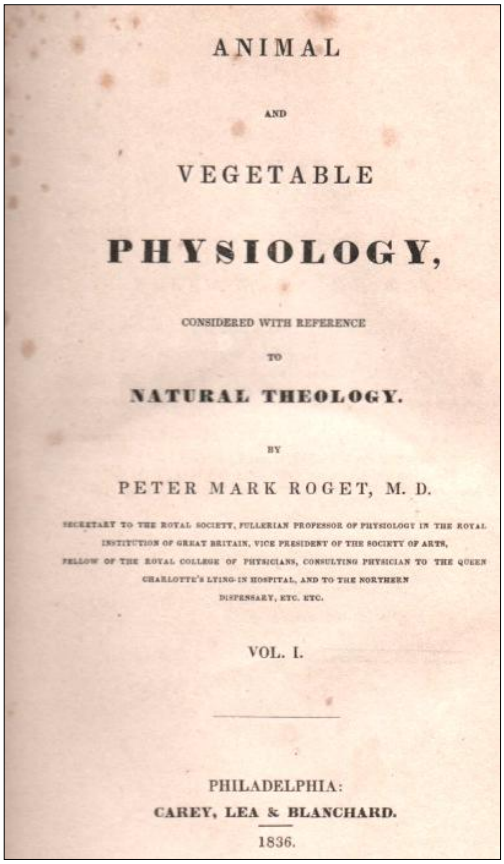
Edinburgh University was at the time one of the foremost academic institutions in Europe, with a reputation surpassing those of Oxford and Cambridge; and this was especially true for medicine, the teaching of which was then virtually non-existent in England. And although this was a period just after the great age of the Scottish Enlightenment (associated with philosophers like David Hume and Adam Smith), the university remained a centre of scholastic ferment. This environment must surely have been a major influence on Roget's subsequent intellectual development, to be revealed in his many publications over an extraordinarily wide range of fields.

With accreditation as a medical practitioner, but still only a teenager, Roget spent the next few years on exploits that, perhaps fortuitously, advanced his maturity more than his professional status. Involvement with the *Pneumatic Institution for Inhalation Gas Therapy* at Bristol did little to enhance his scientific credentials, but association with the likes of Coleridge, Wordsworth and Southey, who were keen to experience the claimed benefits of inhaling nitrous oxide, familiarised him with leading figures of the cultural scene. Similarly, his fields of interest were expanded through collaboration (albeit brief) with the philosopher and social reformer, Jeremy Bentham, in a project to design a *Frigidarium* to preserve food.

After a rather troublesome 'continental tour' to mainland Europe in 1802, he returned to England via Germany, and launched his medical career in Manchester, an industrial town which, with only about six physicians for 100,000 people, was desperately short of doctors. But it was here that alongside

[3] Nick Rennison's 157 page book of this title is published by Pocket Essentials (2007)

medical duties, he began to give public lectures, join the Literary and Philosophical Society, and become involved in the foundation of the Portico Library, a gathering place for the city's intellectuals - which still exists today. However, then as now, London was the magnet for ambitious professionals eager to make their name, so that in 1808 he moved to a house in Bloomsbury, having in addition to his private practice a number of other positions, including at the *Northern Dispensary* (a medical charity), at which he gave his services for free. Now installed in London, Roget began to establish a network of contacts with distinguished scientists, and became an inveterate 'joiner' of societies - of several of which he soon occupied key roles - as President, Vice-president or Secretary. Prominent among these were the *Medical and Chirurgical Society*, *Royal Institution*, *Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*, *British Association for the Advancement of Science*, and - most esteemed - the *Royal Society*, of which he was elected a Fellow in 1815, and later served as its Secretary for 20 years. At the *Royal Institution* he was on close terms with distinguished scientists like Humphrey Davy and Michael Faraday, and in 1834 he was appointed there to the Fullerian Professorship of Physiology.


ANIMAL

AND

VEGETABLE

PHYSIOLOGY,

CONSIDERED WITH REFERENCE

TO

NATURAL THEOLOGY.

BY

PETER MARK ROGET, M. D.

SECRETARY TO THE ROYAL SOCIETY, FULLERIAN PROFESSOR OF PHYSIOLOGY IN THE ROYAL INSTITUTION OF GREAT BRITAIN, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY OF ARTS, FELLOW OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS, CONSULTING PHYSICIAN TO THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE'S LYING-IN HOSPITAL, AND TO THE NORTHERN DISPENSARY, ETC. ETC.

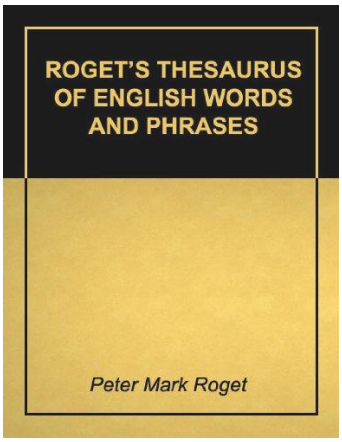
VOL. I.

PHILADELPHIA:
CAREY, LEA & BLANCHARD.
1836.

Roget's lecturing and writing talents, coupled with an insatiably curious mind, led to his being invited to produce hundreds of articles for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* - on everything from beekeeping to phrenology (of which he was highly critical) and from teaching the deaf and dumb language to the workings of kaleidoscopes! But the most noteworthy acclaim was that due to his invitation to write a two-volume book on *Animal and Vegetable Physiology*, in the series of 'Bridgewater Treatises' produced in accordance with the will of the late Earl of Bridgewater, the aim of which was to illustrate the '*Power, Wisdom and Goodness of God as manifest in The Creation*.' Published in 1834 (the title page illustrated is from the set that cost me two shillings, from a stall in Cambridge Market in 1962!), it was already meeting the challenges to be made public by Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859, and it seems that Roget had some reservations about the ideas his thesis was describing.

In fact, despite the impression that may have been given by the above account, Roget did not live a charmed existence, in which he rode on the crest of a wave, with praise and awards heaped upon him. Domestically, his mother's erratic behaviour was a source of constant worry, and his marriage at 45 years of age ended nine years later when his young wife died from cancer, leaving him to care for two children. But in his professional life he often encountered criticism, at least some of which seems to have been justified. An arch-opponent was Charles Babbage, the distinguished mathematician and pioneer of computing systems, who was critical of what he considered the amateurism of the Royal Society (of which Roget was then Secretary) and the way the Society pandered to the whims of royal and aristocratic patrons, rather than promoting people showing real scientific merit. Charges of plagiarism were also levelled against him, although not always apparently well-founded. But at age 70, Roget felt he had endured enough criticism and resigned from most of his scientific roles.

Most people, especially if they had been so energetic and written so much, might be happy to 'call it a day' and lapse into obscure retirement: but not Roget! Unquestionably, he was a pedant, anxious to express his ideas in the most accurate and concise way possible. To this end, from his student years he had attempted to list ideas in groups sharing a similar conceptual basis. Now, given the opportunity and time to address his aim of *'proposing a rigorous philosophy of language'* he set about compiling his *thesaurus* (derived from the ancient Greek word meaning 'treasure house') that would assist in formulating accurate expressions of ideas. In doing so he drew on the scientific approach adopted by Linnaeus in classifying plants and animals, in which they were first divided into families and genera, and then subdivided into smaller categories. For Roget, the classification of words first entailed assigning them to one of six primary classes, namely: *abstract reason*; *space*; *material world; intellect; volition*; and *sentient and moral powers* - which can be seen as analogous to the phyla of zoological classification. But Roget was adamant that his system was not meant to recommend certain synonyms as more appropriate than others, or to exclude words that some might regard as vulgar. The common usage of words to convey ideas was the sole criterion for inclusion.



Many people have found the thesaurus an invaluable tool in organising their ideas; but in a more recreational context it has also proved popular with crossword addicts! Although difficult to assess accurately, it's estimated that, since its first appearance, over 30 million copies of Roget have been sold. But even in this venture, away from the wrangling of competitive scientists, Roget has not escaped criticism for his assiduous efforts. For example, the noted historian Simon Winchester (to feature in a future issue of this Review), in his recent history of the Oxford English Dictionary opined that Roget had *'become little more than a crutch for the intellectually and linguistically challenged*.' Perhaps it is fortunate that Roget is not still around to experience this further damning critique.

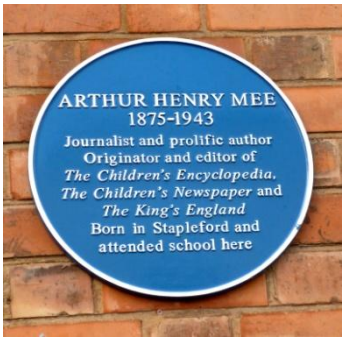
In this short book, the author has produced a perceptive and apparently balanced account of a little-known figure, whose posthumous fame would probably have greatly surprised him. He set some high standards in the attempt to provide a scientific categorisation of words by meaning. But I must confess that, personally I now find the *Oxford Compact Thesaurus* much easier to use. That might be because I am *intellectually-challenged*, but I should prefer to think it's due to just getting rather forgetful!

BM

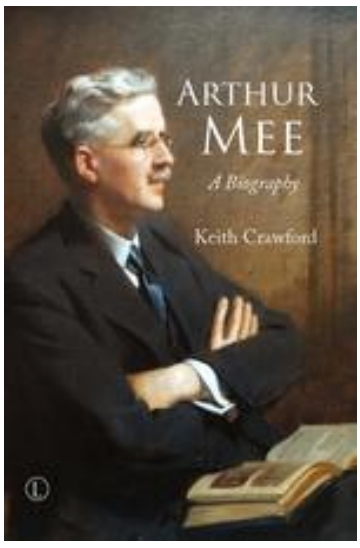
ARTHUR MEE (1875-1943): '*Journalist in Chief to British Youth*'

If his name is recognised at all (and when I recently enquired of a local library assistant whether they stocked one of his books, she asked 'Is that spelled 'Me?'), he is probably best known for the books in *The King's England* series. This extensive collection amounted to a comprehensive historical and topographical survey of the counties of England, that was published by Hodder & Stoughton under Mee's editorship. By 1945, volumes covering 36 counties had been published - and, to this day, they remain in popular demand. But during his lifetime, Arthur Mee had a much wider literary influence, particularly in his ambitious and highly successful publications for children.

Arthur Mee was born in 1875, the second child of a family of ten children, into a working class family living in the village of Stapleford, about five miles from the centre of Nottingham. His father, Henry, at one time a railway man and then engineer, and wife Mary, were esteemed for their piety as members of the local Baptist Chapel, and, reportedly, the family lived contentedly, despite the relative material impoverishment of their circumstances. According biographer, Gillian Elias, Arthur was 'exceptionally lucky' at school, in being taught by George Byford, an inspiring teacher who fostered an 'insatiable desire for learning and an excellent grounding in English' on which his future career depended.

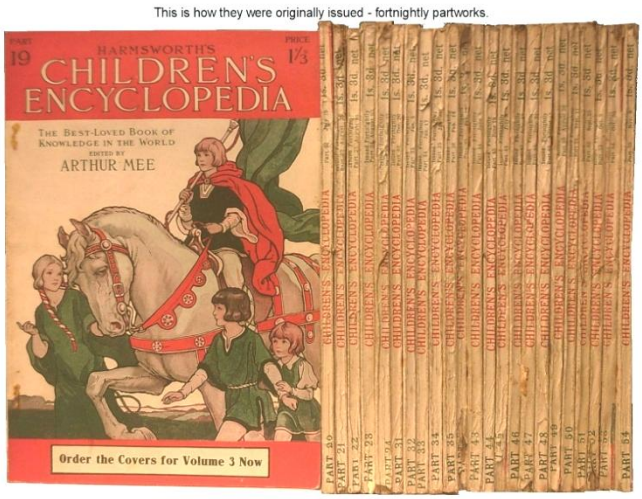


Leaving the village school at 14 years, his first job was that of a copyholder for the *Nottingham Daily Express*. However, his journalistic skills were soon recognised, so that when only 20 he was appointed Editor of the *Nottingham Evening Post.* But with his boundless energy, that job left him with free time to engage in other writing, which he initially used to write articles submitted for publication in *Tit Bits.* This was a weekly magazine founded in 1881 by an early father of popular journalism George Newnes, in response to the *Elementary Education Act (1870),* which made education compulsory for children and hence produced a new young generation able to read. When the magazine's headquarters moved from Manchester to London it paved the way for popular journalism - most significantly, in the form of the *Daily Mail*, founded by Alfred Harmsworth (later Lord Northcliffe), who was also a contributor to *Tit-Bits.* In fact, what might today sound a somewhat *risqué* or trivial publication was then highly regarded, publishing stories and articles by the likes of Rider Haggard and P G Wodehouse.



At Newnes' invitation, Mee joined the staff of the magazine in London, where his prodigious talents and energy led to him being sought to write newspaper columns, then books and edit magazines. Following marriage to Amy (whom he met on holiday in Skegness when he was 20 and she 18), he embarked on a freelance career, writing for journals like the *Morning Herald* and the prestigious *St James Gazette.* But it was Mee's association with Alfred Harmsworth (which lasted in various enterprises until his death) that was to launch his celebrated career. At first, Harmsworth appointed Mee as Features Editor of the *Daily Mail*, at £1000 p.a. Then, he became principal editor of *The Self Educator*, a fortnightly publication, for which he received another £1000 p.a.!

With evidence of the growing success of his style of writing for the general public, Mee persuaded Harmsworth to support another venture - *The Harmsworth History of the World*, like its predecessors to be published regularly in parts. The basis of this was to be a work by an author named Helmot, translated into English and greatly expanded with contributions from British historians, scientists and archaeologists. In his typically optimistic mood Mee suggested to the publisher, Heinemann, that it would make a profit of £20,000 on the Helmot text he had sold to Harmsworth - to which Heinemann replied that he would be happy to get half that sum! Mee responded, 'If you get £10,000 will you give me a motor car?' Heinemann agreed - and true to his word, when that profit was exceeded half way through the run of the *History*, a cream coloured Martini car was delivered to Mee at his Harmsworth office!



The car was a delight to Mee, who travelled in it widely, exploring the English countryside for his *King's England* books. But being himself unable to drive, his daughter Marjorie proved a willing and capable chauffeuse. (When she was young, Marjorie - the only child of the family - was the centre of Mee's emotional life, and it was her insatiable curiosity about the world and her persistent questioning of her parents to provide answers that provided the catalyst for much of Arthur's desire to write in a way that would be both accessible and attractive to young people.)

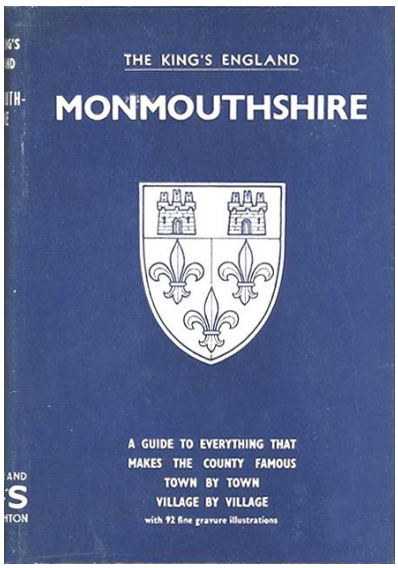
The experience Mee gained in this writing style led to the first of the publications for which Mee became famous in his time - *The Children's Encyclopaedia*. In a highly innovatory approach, which avoided the conventional alphabetical listings, the contents were presented as items organised under subject groups, such as biology, history and geography, but these were interspersed with stories, poems, songs and practical concerns, like 'Things to make and do.' The first of the fortnightly issues of the encyclopaedia appeared in 1908, to be followed by 49 more to complete the set in 1910. But the true success of the venture is revealed by the fact that between 1910 and 1948, the hardback version of the set sold 5,380,000 volumes throughout the world, being translated into several languages. According to Elias, *The Children's Encyclopaedia* was 'a landmark in publishing for children ... and probably the most influential reference book ever devised for young people.'


The Children's Newspaper
The Weekly Companion of the Best-loved Magazine in the World
A LITTLE HOUSE OF THE 20TH CENTURY
WHY DOES THE BEETLE STOP?
Opening the Doors of Pharaoh's Shrine
TWO MEN ON A MAST
A BOY'S MIDNIGHT ADVENTURE
THE CURSE OF THE WORLD

It's important to recognise that Arthur Mee was 'a man of his time' (indeed, like the vast majority of us are of 'our time'). To quote Elias 'his principal characteristics were his 'deeply-held Christian convictions, patriotism, belief in the benevolence of the British Empire, anxious concern for the rising generation, hero-worship and the abiding love of his work.' But after the onset of the First World War, he was transformed from a 'cheerful populariser of general knowledge' to an 'earnest crusader with a mission to promote Christian virtues above all else.' In line with this, as a firm believer in international brotherhood, in

1919 he launched another novel publication, *The Children's Newspaper* - coinciding with the inauguration of the League of Nations. At a weekly cost of just a *penny-ha'penny* it achieved a circulation of half a million, and is alleged to have had an enormous influence on the children of Britain and the Empire. Publication of the newspaper continued until 1964, over 20 years after his death.

From the early 1930s, Mee had been working on a plan to publish a huge descriptive and pictorial survey of England, which he envisaged would be a 'New Domesday Book of the Motherland.' But given the challenging nature of the project, volumes on the first four counties only appeared in 1936. It became a massive undertaking, involving the hiring of a large staff of writers and compilers to do the bulk of the work. But Mee's personal stamp is evident in almost all the volumes. According to the publishers, the complete *The King's England* series of 41 volumes (including some published after his death), county by county, covers *10,000 towns and hamlets in the most famous of modern surveys, with over 6000 photographs.*" They proceeded "*Nothing like these books has ever been presented to the English people. Every place has been visited. The Compilers have travelled half-a-million miles and have prepared a unique picture of our countryside as it has come down through the ages, a census of all that is enduring and worthy of record."* As such, the series is perhaps the most tangible and enduring legacy of Mee's literary accomplishments.



The book on Monmouthshire is illustrated here for two reasons. Firstly, it is the only county not in England to be included in the series, and secondly for the personal reason that I spent my early years in that county. The historic county of Monmouthshire was formed from the Welsh Marches by the Laws in Wales Act of 1535, but while the second Laws in Wales Act of 1542 enumerated the counties of Wales it omitted Monmouthshire, which led to ambiguity as to whether the county was part of Wales or England. The anomaly was only corrected in 1974, when local government changes led to the county being officially recognised as a county in Wales. Not that the locals had any doubt, when Welsh place names were so common. Moreover, with my School's motto *Nid da lle gellir gwell* (Nothing is good when better is possible) and my form master at the grammar school being a Welsh rugby international and Olympic sprinter, our allegiance was never in doubt!

One of Mee's many distinguished friends was another Nottingham man, Jesse Boot (later Baron Trent), who founded the international retailing company *Boots the Chemists*. Their friendship is illustrated by the story that when Mee was viewing the plans for the Trent Building at University College Nottingham, he suggested to Boot (with a candour that surely only a friend could voice) that the tower was too tall. Boot agreed, and the tower was accordingly shortened.

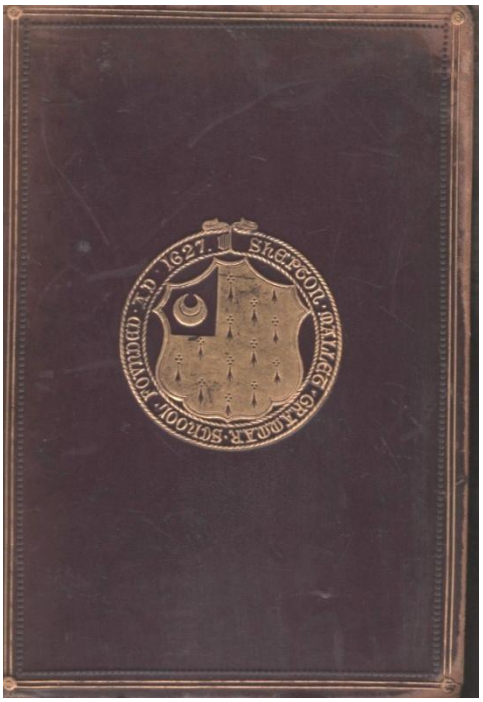
<u>Biographies of Arthur Mee</u>

- Gillian Elias (1993): Arthur Mee: Journalist in Chief to British Youth.(Notts County Council)
- Keith Crawford (2016): Arthur Mee: a biography (Lutterworth Press)
- John A Hammerton (1946) Child of Wonder: an intimate biography of Arthur Mee (Hodder & Stoughton)

Books in stock at Gladstone Books in the *King's England series* include those on Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Shropshire and Oxfordshire

Embossed leather book covers: biblaesthetics

School prizes: when books were valued both for their content and their enduring aesthetic appeal



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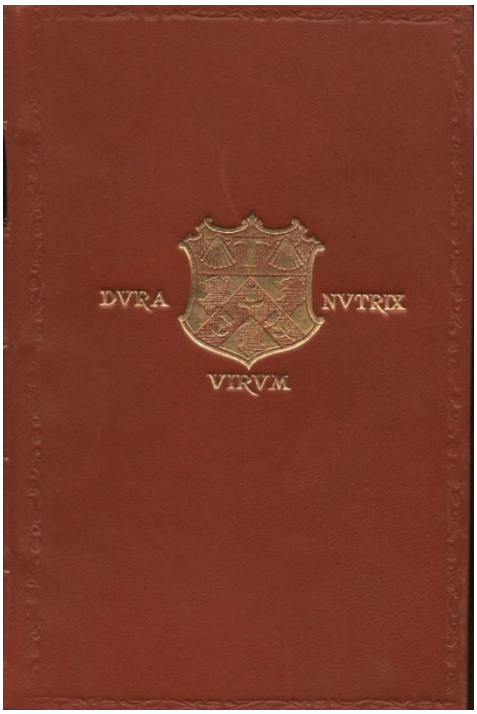

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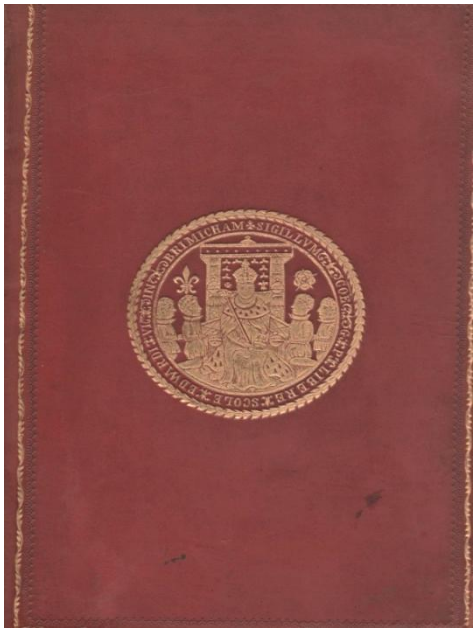

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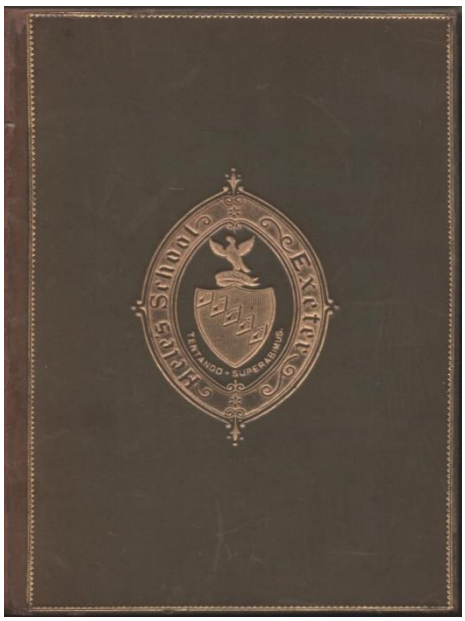

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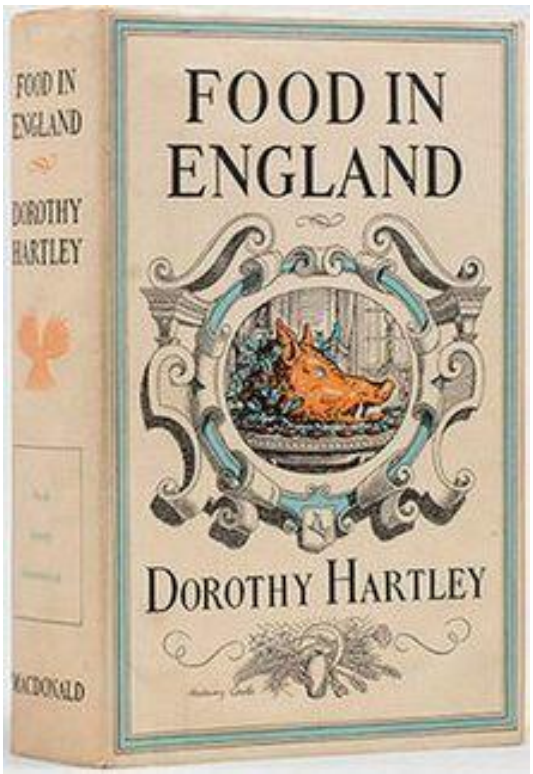
1.Boswell's Life of Johnson (1867) Routledge [Shepton Mallet Grammar School]
2.The Oxford Book of Latin Verse (1981) [Sedburgh School]
3.The Odyssey of Homer (1887) Macmillan ['Scole of Edward VI in Brimichcham']
4. White's Natural History of Selborne (1901) Methuen [Hele's School, Exeter]

Dorothy Hartley:

unconventional social historian of English rural crafts and customs

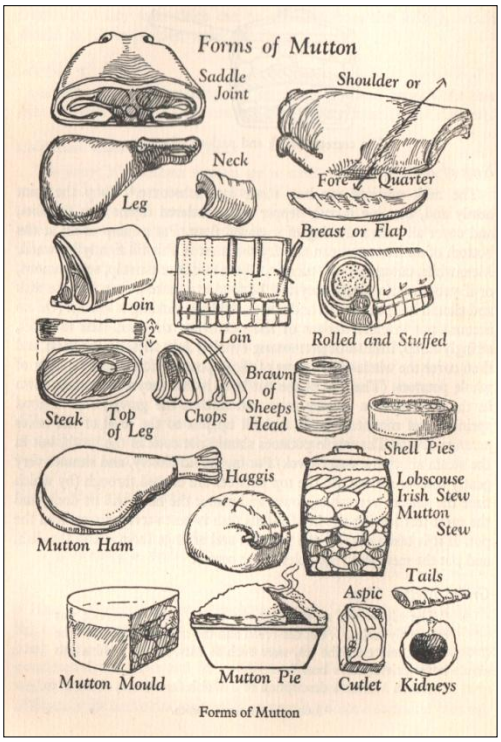
Regular readers of the Review and its predecessor, the Newsletter, will know that several of my articles have explored the historical background of contemporary issues, and I have often tried to invest this approach with some topicality by featuring the contributions made by people with local connections. Some readers have expressed surprise that I have featured several such people whose names have become largely forgotten. One, who is still held in high regard by professionals in her field, but probably unknown to a modern 'bake-off' generation, is the social historian, Dorothy Hartley - who is most notable for her monumental book, *Food in England*, which was first published in 1954.

Dorothy was born in 1893 at home in Skipton, Yorkshire - which happened to be at the Ermystead Grammar School, where her father, the Reverend Edward Hartley, was headmaster. But on his retirement from that position in 1904, the Hartleys moved to Nottinghamshire, where Edward became Rector of the parish of Rempstone. Dorothy later recalled her childhood there as in *'a lovely old house with every medieval inconvenience ...'* features of which, having no car, were the nearest shop being 5 miles away, a butcher calling weekly, a grocer fortnightly, and only twice yearly visits from a coal merchant, brewer and vintner.



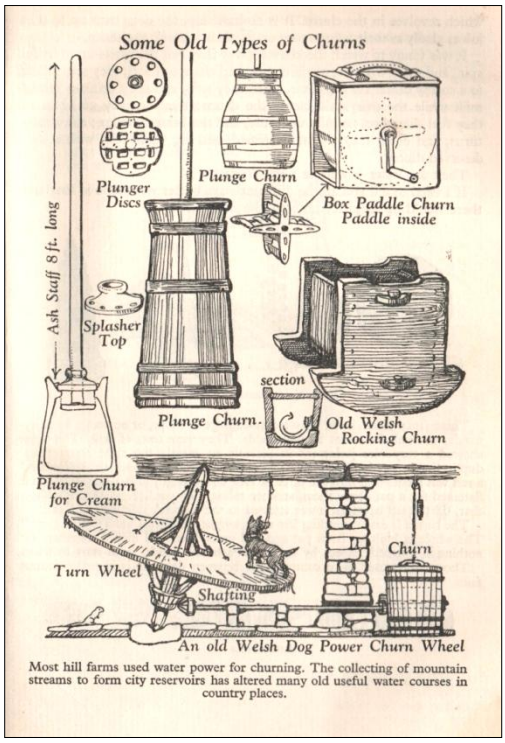
Dorothy's secondary education was at Loughborough High School, and thereafter she went to the Nottingham Art School - but during the first World War she temporarily abandoned her studies to work in a munitions factory. In 1919 she became a student at the Regents Street Polytechnic in London, and after a spell as an art teacher in Nottingham in the early 1920s, taught in London for many years. But while teaching she also took up writing in her spare time, and although having no appropriate formal training, with Margaret Eliot she wrote the scholarly six-volume *Life and Work of the People of England*, published between 1925 and 1931, which received much acclaim from expert reviewers.

She began *Food in England,* which ran to 676 pages, with an engaging account of the kitchens of the houses in which she had lived since childhood. Thus '*My largest kitchen, masculine and enterprising, was at a boys' school. Being "northern" the bread was homemade, rising each week in a huge tub set before the fire ...*' Of her Rempstone kitchen she recounts that *'it was in a country rectory in the shires between Nottingham and Leicestershire: a rambling Elizabethan house with a garden and orchard, pig sties and barns; more like a small farm than a rectory. It had an apple loft with slatted shelves, and a meat larder with a pulley to lift a carcase of mutton to the ventilated roof. Strange bleached frogs swam in the underground soft-water tanks. We had neither gas nor electricity, and during the dark winter months there were seventeen lamps a day to be set and trimmed...'*



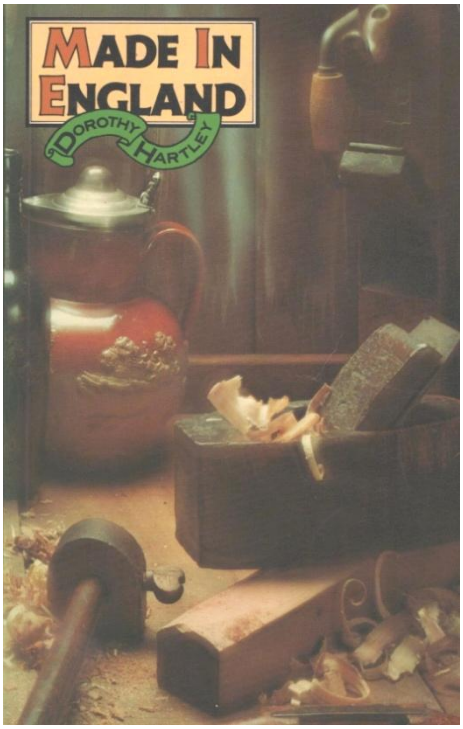
Forms of Mutton

The book proceeded in its delightfully idiosyncratic style (complete with her own quirky drawings, as illustrated here) to devote chapters to fuels and fireplaces, meat, poultry, game, eggs, medieval feasts and festivals, fish, fungi, salting, drying, preserving, dairy produce, bread, Elizabethan households, the New World, the Industrial Revolution and 'sundry household matters.' And in each case, the chapters were written from the viewpoints of both the historian and the practical, old-fashioned, cook.



Most hill farms used water power for churning. The collecting of mountain streams to form city reservoirs has altered many old useful water courses in country places.

It has remained in print ever since its first publication in 1954, and continues to win plaudits from many contemporary cooks and food writers. Thus, Delia Smith describes it as '*a classic without a worthy successor - a must for any keen English cook*', while a reviewer in the *Sunday Times* wrote '*For food scholarship at its best see Dorothy Hartley's robust, idiosyncratic, irresistible* (book). *As packed with diverse and fascinating information as a Scotch bun with fruit, this untidy bundle of erudition is held together by the writer's huge enjoyment of her subject, her immense curiosity about everything to do with the growth, preparation, preservation and eating of food in this country since the Middle Ages*.'



But the same level of appreciation could be expressed of her equally fascinating account of country crafts *Made in England*, which has chapters on wood; straw, reed, grass and willow; stone; metal; brick and pottery; leather and horn; and wool and feathers - each illustrated with the trademark drawings and photographs. Dorothy was nothing if not thorough and unstinting in her approach.

As well as her skills as a writer and illustrator, she was a very keen photographer, and during 1931 she travelled by car from Egypt to the Congo taking many photographs which were subsequently exhibited at London's Imperial Institute.

More parochially, she toured England by car and bicycle, describing the experiences in weekly articles for the *Daily Sketch*; while in a tour of Ireland she retraced the steps of the medieval prelate Giraldus Cambrensis. Her account of the latter was published in *Irish Holiday*, of which a reviewer in *The Observer* commented '*If you want to see Ireland in extreme and unnecessary discomfort, this book will tell how to do so* - (but this is) *my only criticism of an enthralling book*

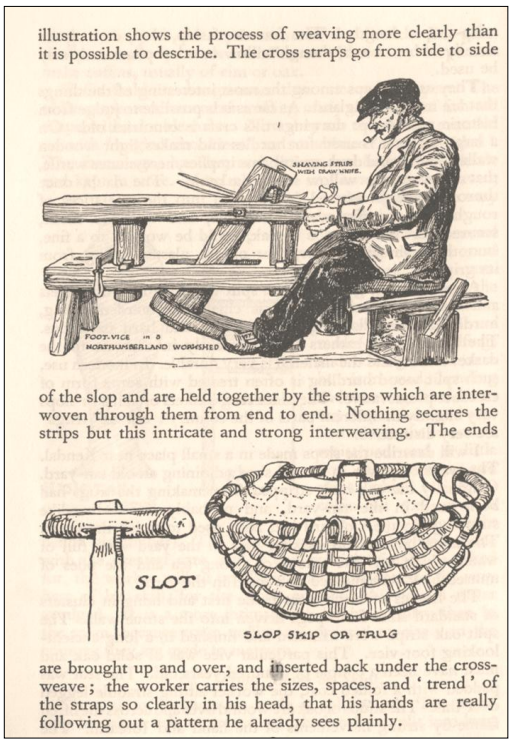


illustration shows the process of weaving more clearly than it is possible to describe. The cross straps go from side to side

of the slop and are held together by the strips which are interwoven through them from end to end. Nothing secures the strips but this intricate and strong interweaving. The ends

are brought up and over, and inserted back under the cross-weave; the worker carries the sizes, spaces, and 'trend' of the straps so clearly in his head, that his hands are really following out a pattern he already sees plainly.

After the second World War, she taught at University College and Goldsmiths' College in London, advised the script writers of the BBC's *The Archers*, and even appeared on TV with Philip Harben. But she was undoubtedly by instinct and habit a very independent and eccentric person. The food writer Bee Wilson, writing in the *Guardian* a few years ago opined that she seemed to have a quixotic need for solitude, and sometimes hung up on friends who telephoned, snapping '*I can't talk to you now - I'm in the 14th century!'*

In some ways, she might be said to have always been in the 14th century, because as she recounted in *Food in England* she had then lived alone for the past 20 years in a workman's cottage in a village near Llangollen in north Wales, where her mother's family owned quarries and property. She remained unmarried and died at her house in north Wales at the age of 92.

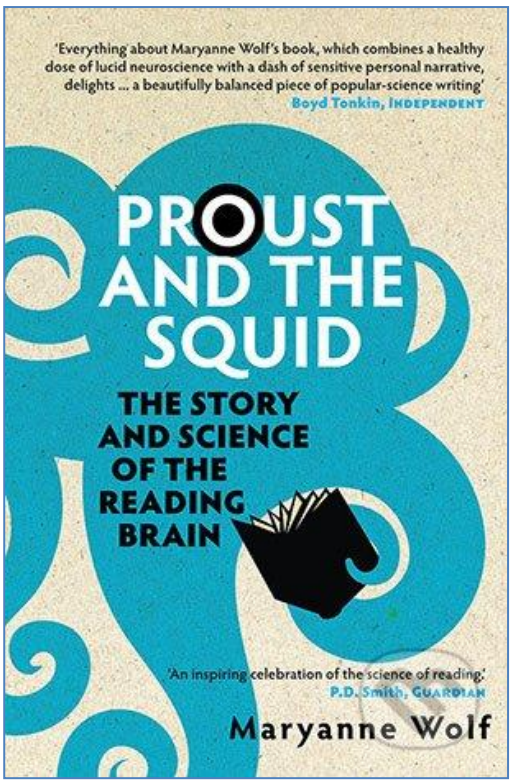
BM

Proust and the Squid

the story and science of the reading brain

a review

The title clearly needs more explanation than the subtitle provides. It refers to two, contrasting, ways that the process of reading has been investigated - a schism which the author tries to bridge. But I suspect that this is not an easy book for those with only a limited education in science. So, with an academic background in the physiological sciences, I shall try to explain, in more user-friendly ways, the claims made for the crucial role of reading in enabling virtually all of humanity's distinctive achievements. The importance of so-doing is, not least, to convey what the author says about the merits of book-reading in comparison with electronic means of providing information and amusement. In the following, the text in *italics* is quoted directly from the book



Marcel Proust - the French novelist, critic, and essayist best known for his monumental novel *À la recherche du temps perdu* (*Remembrance of Things Past*), which was published in seven parts between 1913 and 1927, – regarded reading as a kind of intellectual 'sanctuary,' where readers have access to thousands of different realities they might otherwise never encounter or understand. Each encounter has the potential to transform the readers' lives without requiring them to leave their armchairs. Some would describe this as a romantic, perhaps somewhat mystical, description – but, even so, one that many bibliophiles might share.

The metaphor of the squid refers to the way scientists have investigated the transmission of nerve impulses - and hence, by extrapolation, the changes occurring in brain tissue during different forms of mental activity - seeing, hearing etc. The reason the squid was chosen as an object of study was because these animals have exceptionally large nerve fibres (axons) which facilitated the physiological investigations. (One of these scientists was my erstwhile professor, the late Sir Andrew Huxley, who with his colleagues was awarded a Nobel Prize for their groundbreaking discoveries.)

The academic interests of the author, who is a professor of 'citizenship and public service' at Tufts University in the USA, as well as director of the Centre for Reading and Language Research, span these two perspectives; and together with her particular interest in dyslexia make her highly qualified to present this novel analysis.

Perhaps the first point to note is that although it is well-known that perception of different sensual stimuli (light, sound, smells) is largely confined to specific centres in the brain, there is no centre for 'reading' – so, as we learn to read, humans have to make novel connections in the brain tissue by laying down new nerve pathways (rather like adding wiring in an electrical system) which link up areas of the brain that evolution has largely assigned to other mental activities.

The building of these new neural links in so-called *association areas* of the brain adds enormously to an individual's mental experiences, and the habit of hearing the spoken word – notably as a parent reads to a child, especially when e.g. associated with graphic emotional messages (as in fairy tales) broadens the child's experience far beyond the limits of personal encounters in their home environment. In a supportive home, young children's eagerness to read on their own, rather than be just passive listeners, often boosts their intelligence, curiosity and sense of judgement. It has been claimed (echoing the oft-quoted assertion that 'we are what we eat'), that also '*we are what we read.*'

A startling discovery reported in the book is that *by the age of 5 years in some environments the average middle-class child hears 32 million more spoken words than a child of the same age from an underprivileged home*. The study was carried out in the USA, but it seems unlikely to be much different from the situation in, say, the UK.

But I am jumping ahead too quickly, because reading was obviously preceded by the emergence and development of *the act of putting spoken and unspoken thoughts into written words.* This achievement, first occurring about 5000 years ago in the forms of Egyptian hieroglyphs and Sumerian cuneiform marks, enabled the recording of thoughts. And, as humans learned to express themselves more precisely, *the capacity for abstract thought and novel ideas accelerated*. Consequently, *the experience of reading is our best vehicle to a transformed mind, and literally and figuratively, to a transformed brain*. (But, perhaps unsurprisingly, the particular areas of the brain activated when we read using our 26-letter alphabet differ significantly from those reading in Chinese, where the construction of the language is totally different.) *Reading,* in whatever language, *depends on the brain's ability to connect and integrate various sources of information – specifically visual with auditory, linguistic and conceptual areas*.

However, it's a striking fact that Socrates, universally acknowledged as one of humanity's most profound philosophers, was sceptical of the benefits of reading the written word. This was because he feared that without the guidance of wise teachers what was written might be invested with unwarranted authority – and swallowed uncritically by gullible readers. To understand his point, we have only to consider the perverse actions of certain fanatics, who justify their random murderous acts by citing scriptural authority. The result was that Socrates left no written texts: and most of what we know of his ideas is derived from the writings of his pupil Plato, in works such as 'Plato's Republic.'

Tellingly, the author, Maryanne Wolf, admits: *I am haunted by Socrates' perspective when I watch my two sons use the Internet to finish their homework - and then tell me they 'know all about it,'* It seems to me that whereas we used to say 'God knows' as a reflection of our ignorance, many people now consider 'Google knows' to be a truism.

Even so, I'm with the author in believing that the advantages of our access to the enormous wealth of diverse ideas and perspectives now afforded by our literary heritage outweighs by far Socrates' reservations – although his emphasis on critical thought remains equally crucial in an era of 'fake news.' It's also important to recognise that the *dynamic interaction between text and life experiences is* ('a two-way process'): *we bring our life experiences to the text, and the text changes our experiences of life.*

But we shouldn't get the idea that fluency in reading is the touchstone of higher intelligence. Witness the fact that e.g. *Thomas Edison, Leonardo da Vinci and Albert Einstein were all said to*

have had dyslexia. For, as the author's research has established, the dyslexic brain processes information in different areas with quite distinct inherent properties – leading her to deduce that dyslexia is our strongest evidence *that the brain was never wired to read*.

I want to conclude by considering the potential impact of the accelerating, and all-pervading, influence of information technology (IT) – increasingly linked to artificial intelligence (AI) – on human intelligence and wisdom. There are certainly a number of prominent technophiles who welcome such developments with enthusiasm, e.g. Kevin Kelley for whom: *In the clash between the conventions of the book and the protocols of the screen, the screen will prevail. On this screen now visible to one billion people on earth, the technology of the search will transform isolated books into the universal library of all human knowledge.* But, we might ask, what is the quality, indeed the meaning, of such pre-packaged factoids?

For, along with Prof Wolf, I have grave doubts about the ability of the human brain, which has evolved over millennia to address quite different challenges, to understand the wealth of data that technological means of communication presents to us. Admittedly, the development of literacy has occurred over a very short time when we consider human evolution as a whole; but in contrast to the rampant invasion of IT it has had time and multiple opportunities, as books have become increasingly accessible, to accommodate to the mind's cognitive abilities.

Prof Wolf admits that her *major conclusion from an examination of the developing reader is a cautionary one. I fear that many of our children are in danger of becoming just what Socrates warned us of – a society of decoders of information, whose false sense of knowing distracts them from a deeper development of their intellectual potential. But it does not need to be so if we teach them well.* Of course, this does not mean that all that IT provides is questionable, for much useful factual information can be accessed with great ease.

But when the line between *fact* and *opinion* is blurred without the reader realising it, we are into dangerous territory. And, to be even-handed, those who profess their *love* for books include some whose literary diet might best be described as *pulp fiction*. My own, often-expressed, concerns pertaining to this predicament, are concisely expressed in the following lines from T S Eliot's 1934 poem: *The Rock*:

Where is the knowledge
we have lost in information?
Where is the wisdom
we have lost in knowledge?

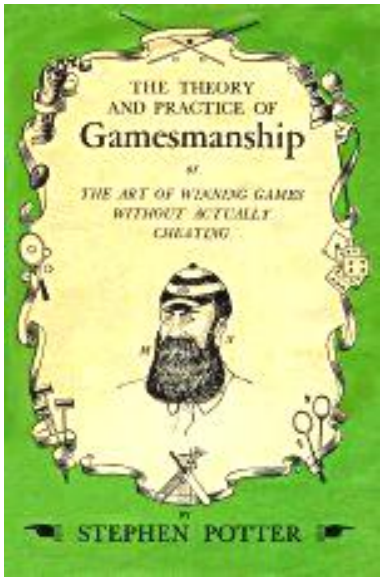
Proust and the Squid is undoubtedly an important book, which conveys a message that we ignore at our peril. But it's a pity that the overly technical presentation might deter many who would benefit from its insights.

Proust and the Squid: the story and science of the reading brain. by Maryanne Wolf, Icon Books, Cambridge, 2008

BM

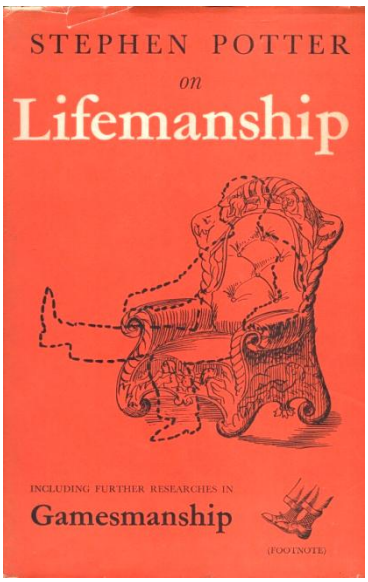
Stephen Potter and the *Upmanship* books

People of a certain age might well succumb to a wry, and probably involuntary, smile when they note the title of this piece. For in the 1950s Potter attracted a cult following for his series of ostensibly 'self-help' guides - which in reality were prime examples of the self-effacing humour affected by members of the 'educated' class in adapting to a more egalitarian post-war world. It was Potter's *Gamesmanship* (written in 1947), with its subtitle *or the art of winning games without actually cheating* that set the distinctive style for the succeeding three books. And it immediately won plaudits from the most discerning critics. Thus, J B Priestley commented *For successful solemn drollery, it is the Book of the Year,* while John Betjeman opined that *it was easily the funniest book* he had read that year.



Potter claimed (on page 12) that the origin of gamesmanship was a tennis match on 8th June, 1931, in which he and the philosopher C E M Joad (of *Brains Trust* fame), were playing two students at University College London[4], and being outplayed with relative ease. In an effort to unnerve the students, Joad hit the ball straight into the back-netting a good 12 feet behind the back-line, and while their opponents were preparing for the next serve, he called across the net, in an even tone: *Kindly state clearly, whether the ball was in or out*. Being suitably deferential to their distinguished elders the students offered to replay the point, but Joad declined.

Because they were young and polite, this veiled implication that their etiquette and sportsmanship were in question proved to be very off-putting, and so-effectively distracted them for the rest of the match that Potter and Joad managed to win it! Potter proceeded: *That night I thought hard and long. Could not this simple gambit of Joad's be extended to include other aspects of the game - to include all games*? For me it was the birth of gamesmanship.[5]



It's clear that I can provide no more than a very few examples of the sardonic tone adopted in these books. But collectively they may acquaint the unfamiliar with a sense of Potter's arcane style, while reminding others of how wittily supercilious it all seemed at the time. Take, for example, the following excerpt from his chapter on Week-Endmanship that appeared in *Lifemanship* (the second book in the series). It refers to the 'Grand Lifeman,' G Cogg-Willoughby, who when staying with friends at their Suffolk cottage contrives to earn an unwarranted reputation for selflessness. Immediately the first evening meal is over, 'Cogg' rolls up his sleeves, clears the table in a trice, does all the washing up (this, of course predated modern dish-washers) and, with ungrudging zest, does all the drying up as well. *'Having planted this good impression in the mind of his hostess, for the rest of the week-end Cogg lays not a single finger in the kitchen or garden, nor brings in so much as a single log of firewood from the shed.'*

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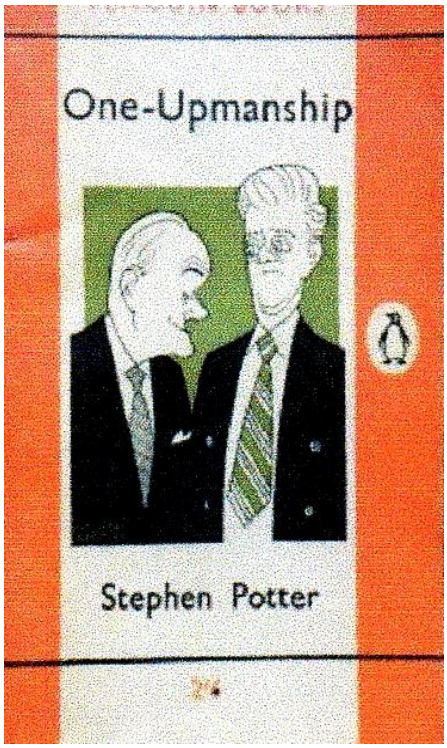
[4] As it happens, my *alma mater* - though well before my time!

[5] Unfortunately, Joad's gamesmanship sometimes went too far, for having declared *'I cheat the railway company whenever I can,'* in 1948 he was fined just £2 for fare-dodging. But this effectively finished his academic and broadcasting careers.

And when it came to games that traditionally featured on such occasions, with the others feebly organising bowls, ping-pong or croquet, Cogg - who was incapable of any kind of sport - would produce an enormous pair of field glasses and declare *Well, I'm going off for my game, see you all later!* Sometimes it was bird watching, sometimes butterflies, occasionally wild flowers, about all of which he was almost entirely ignorant. But a feigned recognition of the call of some fictitious bird (*that's an easy one to recognise - a frog -pippit* - and after a pause - *as I believe they call it in these parts*) would leave the other townie week-enders full of admiration!



A ploy I recall from reading Potter all those years ago, listed as 'telephone managementship,' was recommended for someone aiming to give the impression they ran a major business enterprise when, in fact, they worked alone from the sitting room at home. When the phone rang, the 'lifeman' would get up very slowly to answer it and begin a fictitious conversation with an imaginary secretary, while raising the receiver so that the caller would presume he was interrupting an important conversation. Rubbing the mouthpiece of the receiver against his trouser leg, so muffling the actual speech, would add to the sense that this was a hive of office activity. Eventually our lifeman would speak calmly into the mouthpiece '*Gattling-Fenn* (or somesuch) *here*' - giving the impression that although his minions were hard at work, he, the boss, occupied a plane quite above the hectic activity of his staff!

A CORNER IN THE LIBRARY

Note here the new student (H) breaking finger-nails on dummy books. *How will he deal with this situation?* Note desk with signatures of former students. Note empty bust-case. *One day it might be You.* On the left, genuine books. (D) *Gamesmanship* and *Lifemanship*. (F) The complete works of all nineteenth-century novelists in six volumes (shortened). (G) Classic French literature (abbreviated and epitomized for easy reading).

In *One-Upmanship* Potter introduced his fictional 'Lifemanship Correspondence College,' *housed modestly in a converted section of a converted mansion, yet from the files and the classrooms, the laboratories and the libraries* (illustrated on left) *Lifemanship throws its lifeline from Alaska in the West to Colchester in the East.*

The final book in the series was *Supermanship*. It concluded with a comment on Cold War tactics, that might have some relevance to our current predicament, in which the trumpeting of hollow phrases often elicits delirious applause.

Deducing that the Russian President Khrushkev was an accomplished 'brinkman' (*who had depended for 30 years on diverting attention from the making of lethal weapons by sidelines made to please the public*), Potter opined:

But Khruschev must always be one-up because he uses more words of one syllable. 'End the bomb' can be understood by three quarters of the world: 'Organise a committee for international inspection and mutual restraint' can only be understood by one twentieth of it. 'Summit Conference is very easy

to understand': 'Exploratory committee to ensure that a conference is effective is a <u>one-down</u> phrase because it needs thought to understand what it means.'

And yet, the tone of this last book was largely the same as the others, wry satire coupled with self-deprecation. The figure on the right reminds us that in the 1950s car ownership was available to very few. And in close-knit communities owners often felt under an obligation to share their good fortune with neighbours in a way that would be largely unthinkable today.

CORRECT POSITION FOR SUGGESTING:
'I don't in the least mind stopping to pick you up, but if you *could* get a
on . . .'

At the time of writing I have for sale more than one copy each of
Gamesmanship and
Lifemanship - but unfortunately none of the other two volumes.

BM