

STRACHEY' PATENT BLOOMSBURY ROBOT.

# SAY IT WITH LEAVES!

By Wyndham Lewis.

A PATENT INTELLECTUAL ROBOT, OR CRITICAL-MACHINE. \*

"There is something distasteful about it (Elizabeth and Essex): it marks so definitely the final surrender of Elizabethan to Bloomsbury England."

Edmund Wilson<sup>author</sup> of Axels Castle).

There was once a bad poet called Clough  
Whom his friends did nothing but puff.  
But the Public, though dull,  
Had not quite such a skull  
As belonged to believers in Clough.

(Swinburne).

Such Notes as these are the rough material of pamphlets, for they are mostly Notes put down as a response to attack, or to clear up some persistent misunderstanding. But what is a 'pamphlet', as generally understood, but a political exercise, of one kind or another? Therefore in these articles I shall be found writing mainly about politics. But they shall not be the "politics" of those mirthless jokes still termed "politicians" for want of a better word - that odd class of persons, whose photographs repeatedly appear, in prominent positions, in the daily newspapers, getting in and out of railway trains, ~~airplanes~~, and other forms of conveyance - for they are always moving about - or grouped in earnest close-ups (with, invariably, mountain scenery in the background) in heart-to-heart talking-attitudes; those eminent old messenger-boys who spend their time between such great centres of national "government" as London, Paris, or Berlin, on the one hand, and such, by now, sinister-sounding Swiss cities as Lausanne, Locarno, Geneva, Bâle, on the other. (What a disturbing rôle the Republic of Switzerland is coming to play in the contemporary history of the earth. Soon there will be no town of any size in its breezy cantons which has not been responsible for some ghastly international joke!)

No, that sort of politics I should be sorry to have to say much about: the less said the soonest mended, say I. ↗

(The politics I am about to canvass is what I have named

politics of the intellect. It is the politics of the Republic of Letters. And whatever else may be said against it, there are no Locarnos or Lausannes in that little universe. It still enjoys practically feudal conditions, of open and unrelieved insecurity. Chronic banditry, baronial dictation, faction-fights, gang and guild mix-ups, piracy and the rest is a matter of routine with it. It does not set much of an example to the ordinary world, why blink the fact But at least no one with any claim to be an "artist" is compelled to affect to be anything but a plain thug, a drug-~~addict~~, garotter, ~~or~~<sup>or</sup> cut-purse. Indeed the faintest breath of suspicion breathed however lightly against his ~~name~~<sup>bad</sup> name is sufficient to compromise him perhaps forever.— So, although there are plenty of good honest wars, there are at least no deadly crusades. No 'war-to-end-war' has blackened the annals of the universe of 'polite letters'. It is a rough world, yes, there's no gainsaying that. But at least it aspires to nothing better. "Authors" or critics do not get together once a month in a Swiss hotel, with a view to dismounting all their critical batteries, scrapping bomb-carrying Pegasuses, abolishing literary vendettas, or submitting their disputes to arbitration, returning to their respective capitals on each occasion with ~~the~~ fat commissions for further armaments, and at least half-a-dozen fresh provocations to war. Let us give the devil his due.

To be perfectly truthful, I do not much relish writing about this sort of politics, either. But I am reluctantly compelled to do

so; otherwise I should not be allowed to write books at all - not ~~at~~ books like Childermass, Tarr, The Apes of God, The Wild Body, Snooty Baronet. You probably regard this as a sensational overstatement: which only shows how little you understand the world I am writing about, or perhaps how little ~~the~~ you want to understand it. No: today your artist~~#~~ has to carry a gun, make no mistake as to that - or at least the most peaceful pen must be adapted for use as a <sup>passable</sup> javelin. In consequence, to the casual observer, he must tend to look more like some irregular sort of soldiery, or a picturesque gunman, than a mere brain-worker or harmless craftsman. And the truer artist he is, and the more intensely he pursues that calling (threatened on every side in our mechanistic and big-business society~~#~~ - ~~our~~ Bankers' Olympus) the more he will look the free-booter or the bad-man or a dime-novel. <sup>What</sup> his inmost consciousness may be full of is the elaborate attractiveness of Swiss Cottages or Fascine Churches, or say the bulbs of mohamedan or byzantine bell-turrets, or some satisfactory fragment of fisbladder window-work. But what will be manifest upon his lips are the harsh accents of party-warfare. The clamour of controversy will echo down his armour-plated pen or rattle in the persussion of his typewriter, hammering away like a machine-gun nest to resist some wholly unprovoked attack. For how can he help himself? Before he can retire into a suitable corner ~~to~~ give himself up to contemplation for half-an-hour, he must during at least an hour-and-a-half, occupy himself relentlessly in establishing a clearing around his lonely artist's dwelling. This will take him from anything up to ~~ten~~

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ten times as long as the period he is able ever to secure to be the artist in, or the philosopher, and this is not counting in the time wasted in the breadwinning affair.

It is not, then, exactly love for this debased form of literary exercise that causes me to indulge in it. And I daresay, if I am good at it, it is from exasperation with the sort of men, and the sort of society, that can find no place for the straight artist, upon his own terms, but rather condemns the 'artist-born' to a life not unlike that of the primitive hunter and trapper. So if you tell me, for instance, that my pamphlets are 'hastily-written', I can but say of course: far more 'hasty' sometimes than you would ever suppose. I do as little as possible of that: and if you tell me that I am an awfully good pamphleteer, on the other hand, and you jolly well wish I would not be an artist at all (because you want to be that, perhaps, who knows)- why, I can but reply that it is a good thing for ~~me~~ me that I am a pretty good pamphleteer: otherwise I could never have been an artist of any sort at all, and that's a fact! I should have been a mute inglorious Wyndham Lewis, I am afraid, like so many other poor fellows who could not toss off a quick pamphlet sufficiently to the point and enough charged with what is termed "vitriolic" matter. And this applies as much to being a painter, as to being a writer, in this time, and in this place. James MacNeil Whistler, that "gentle master of all that is flippant and fine in art," almost too perfectly the very type of 'the artist,' had to keep a park of verbal artillery at the pretorian gate of his embattled workshop, trained constantly towards "the enemy", in order to secure for himself the modicum of time he needed to paint his

mama, or the rugged features of Thomas Carlyle. What a society to be born into! We are all going savage, it is back to the jungle with us! And if you are an outsider with regard to the world of which I am treating, do not run away with the notion that the artist lives in a sheltered Eldorado. He is - obviously, I should think - at the mercy of the law of the jungle. For the jungle is not the place in which most good art has been produced.

Having to some extent, I hope, prepared the way for the sort of "politics" in which I have to deal, we will, with your permission, go forwards: and attempt to surprise the enemy, first, by a bit of sharp field-work among the "gangs" - that is what I am engaged in in this paper. Quite open talk about the literary "gangs" of London prevailed a year or two ago. It has died down, but not because the "gangs" have ceased to exist. The best way to stifle a scandal (if the guilty parties are powerful enough to survive exposure) is to expose it so fully that the will to protest becomes exhausted. So it has been with Stavisky, so it is with minor abuses. All the principal book-gangsters having genially referred to their racket in a hundred different places, the subject was no longer referred to - an unhealthy situation! I break this silence, but for a special purpose.

Dillinger, "shooting his way to hell", is a figure of schoolboy romance. As much cannot be said for the racketeer of the P.E.N. Still, the publicity given to the methods of those engaged in the mass-manufacture of books, while the spot-light functioned, enabled

people to perceive that gang-organisation is not confined to the criminal classes of North America. And as to "rackets", it occurred to them (however little interest they may generally take in the ~~techniques~~ technics of such matters) that the good old sleepy Trollopian or early Wellsian Book-trade has imperceptibly been turned into a thoroughly up-and-coming book-racket.

That "the puff" has always existed, and always must exist, where written speech occurs, is plain enough. The Puff is as old as the hills. "Puff me, Coleridge!" Robert Southey exhorted that sage in a letter dated February 1808; "If you love me, puff me! Puff a couple of hundreds into my pocket!" But that was an individualist transaction. It was a private matter, between Southey and Coleridge; <sup>it was</sup> not a gang, or <sup>it was</sup> the same thing, a big-business affair. What we are constrained to discuss here is something of an essentially different complexion; though often conducted, in detail, upon the footing of unorganised, and irresponsible, pacts of mutual assistance, in the disarming atmosphere of country-house or <sup>of London</sup> club.

But indeed the production of books has, for those daily engaged in such activities, long ago ceased to pretend to have anything to do with that classical abstraction, "literature", or "letters". A book is a sort of patent-medicine - an aphrodisiac, a tisane, a preparation of strychnine or solution of laughing-gas - designed "to keep a woman at bay" for a day, as the trade-phrase <sup>has it.</sup> ~~is~~. Any more serious intention in a book, or anything that links it to those fading, starry social systems of the classical past (in which



the idea of "art" or of "literature" was brought to birth and snobbishly fostered) causes it to be labelled "highbrow". It will not keep the dreaded "Miss Modern" at bay for the interval of time required - it will not keep her at bay at all!

So, it has come to pass that in the most unexpected places people are to be encountered who are perfectly familiar with the names and indeed nicknames of the more prominent "gangs" in the literary and artistic world. No young lady in the branches of a Lending Library worth her salt but is not able to inform a customer whether such and such a book, in addition to being by an author who has got this, that, or the other prize (Hawthornden, Femina, etc), is a member of the "Bloomsbury" faction, or of some other crowd, or a mere free-lance with no gang-backing (but for all that, she will whisper, not to be sniffed at - very hot!) "You musn't always go by the notices in the newspapers!")

At the time of the "book-gang" publicity, it was important, it seemed to me, that some impartial, non-party man like myself should come forward and supply a brief "Guide to the Gangs", or something of the kind, else the public (how could it help it?) would be getting hold of the wrong end of the stick. It would be detected attributing Bloomsbury affiliations, let us say, to Mr. Morgan of "The Fountain", or a Rainbow Tavern-backing to, say Mr. Peter Quennell. This was an obvious enough danger. And everything that has occurred since that time has gone to show that I was right. It is perhaps not too late to correct an error or two, however.

The first thing for the Man in the Street to realize, of course, is that there are no étanche compartments in this intricate book-selling gangdom of ours. You must be very careful ~~how~~ you use the term "Bloomsbury" for instance. It is a most treacherous and often misleading adjective. Often it is used very injudiciously by American writers, for instance - it was a quite safe word ten years ago (then no one outside London had so much as heard of it). But today it is a term which requires great caution and wide inside knowledge, if it is to be properly applied.

But let us plunge at once into the thick of this imbroglio, clippers in hand. - Is the present levitical outcropping of the Bloomsbury tradition in Cambridge - I refer to the books and magazines of the Leavis Gang - to be regarded as "Bloomsbury"?

*Let that be our first question.*  
 " " " In a sense it ~~is~~ certainly is. But the only true-blue Bloomsburies are the old original Bloomsburies - the Woolves, Keynes, Bella Stracheys, Rylands etc. With the death of Lytton Strachey, it's founder and principal prophet, Bloomsbury came to an end, in a sense. It is important to grasp this elementary fact, to start with.

Where, in an article <sup>perhaps a couple of years</sup> ~~a year or two~~ ago in a London Weekly, Mr. Edmund Wilson referred to Lytton Strachey as a "high-voiced old Bloomsbury gossip, gloating over the scandals of the past", he was really speaking of the last "Bloomsbury" - in the ~~historical~~ sense that "the last Christian died on the Cross." But, before he died, Lytton Strachey taught that high voice, those silences filled with quivering susceptibilities, that goggle-eyed gossipy

'gloating' over the faeces of the departed Great (and, towards any suspected of "Greatness" alive amongst us, an itch to unpick and to pull down - to suppress and to keep out) to a number of people of various sorts and conditions. And many more took a leaf out of the Bloomsbury book, hints conducive to the best intellectual deportment. They freely borrowed its stammers and its blinks - to endow with a defensive veneer an otherwise commonplace and perhaps vulgar exterior. Bloomsbury is dead: yet after a fashion Bloomsbury lives. "Lytton Strachey's Study of Elizabeth" (in Elizabeth and Essex) wrote Mr. Edmund Wilson, "... brings his character into clearer focus, but there is something distasteful about it: it marks so definitely the final surrender of Elizabethan to Bloomsbury England!"

It will be seen from the above passage that Mr Wilson was regarding the present England as a Bloomsbury England - at least I assume that is what he meant. So, for this eminent American critic, it was the Bloomsbury gang, at the time <sup>at which</sup> he wrote, that dominated all the other British gangs. But perhaps Mr. Wilson had in mind the England of, say, six years ago. Certainly today that would be true no longer now was it even at the time of his article. Although Bloomsbury has a Queen (one rejoicing in the name of Virginia - homage to whom is regularly and promptly paid by a host of would-be subjects, acknowledging her sway, whenever she publishes a book or booklet) yet, with the passing of the great original bearded impersonification of all that was most Bloomsburyish, namely Lytton Strachey, Bloomsbury England, it was fated, must in it's

turn give way to some other England. And that I think will be, when it has taken shape, an England which will not bear the name of any particular gang. It may be much like Chicago after the fall of Capone. (By the way, which America was it that capitulated to the America of Edmund Wilson - Nathan - of Max Eastman and of Michael Gold - to leave <sup>Capone</sup> ~~Capone~~ out of the picture for once? Was it the America of the original pioneers, of the Conquistadores, or what? I have often intended to ask some American friend of mine what it is the American looks back to as "the Spacious Days" <sup>to discover</sup> - <sup>who</sup> who was the Elizabeth of Mr. Wilson's Virginia).

Well, what has been happening for half a decade to Bloomsbury has been <sup>this:</sup> ~~these~~ numbers of offshoots, or colonies, have been coming into being, many of which no longer curtsy to the present Queen of Bloomsbury even, and indeed affect a measure of complete detachment. They have borrowed all the tricks, but evade all the old responsibilities. I could not possibly enumerate for the enquiring reader all these various Bloomsburyizing, or merely Bloomsburyish, phalansteries and sects. This is not really a sketch for a guide-book though - I perhaps was a little misleading at the outset. I never even contemplated, at the height of the gang-talk, a true description of the literary "gangs" of London. Even if I knew them which I do not, I would not have taken on such a job. My object here is merely to provide a little information which may prove useful to the daring lone-hand reporter who shall eventually undertake to compile a much-needed Baedeker, and to the student of literary history, with regard to one gang only, nothing more.

Now in the first instance Bloomsbury was just the families of Stracheys, Stephens, Frys, Keyneses, and Bells, who were established in the West Central district east of the Tottenham Court Road. Leslie Stephens was a distinguished Victorian journalist, and the Stracheys a big family of Anglo-Indian officials - Thomas Carlyle in his Reminiscences has some delightful pages showing the Stracheys of the day in a sort of super-suburban splendour on the confines of the city. Roger Fry was the member of a Quaker family eminent in the chocolate and cocoa industry. These successful victorian journalists, angloindian officials and chocolate-kings enabled the original "Bloomsburies" to come to flower, to bloom in that "Only Yesterday" which Mr. T. S. Eliot neatly described as a "dusty/candle-end of Time" - to exist in a backwater, in modest affluence, above the melee, in the peaceful garden-squares of Victorian Bloomsbury, all in little 'rooms of their own'.

There is nothing to add to these names, except perhaps to isolate Bell, in the mind's eye, in retrospect - a hearty figure of great loquacity, noisily bursting into the charmed circle, equipped with "du poignon" (to be thoroughly vulgar and refer to the economic basis of all things in this world, and also to venture to employ the language of that gentleman's predilection) - the "Clive" who became the less serious of the two official-art-critics of the circle ("Roger" the other). That is all that "Bloomsbury" amounted to, with Duncan Grant as the painter-by-appointment, darling of the

of two art-critics of the circus; and then the founder of the publishing business, The Hogarth Press, and husband of Virginia Woolf. The numerous Bloomsburizing factions, the new blood, which has been gathered vaguely under this appellation since the War, has not even the genuine original Bloomsbury Status of Arthur Whaley, who, whether wholeheartedly accepted and incorporated, or not, before the War, at least is able to date his super-Bloomsbury manner from the days of the great flourishing of this peculiar sect - a sort of off-shoot of the "Nineties", due to the organizing ability and personal ambition of a single person, Lytton Strachey.

The Hogarth Press and the publishing house of Chatto and Windus have been the two official outlets for Bloomsbury Literary ambition. The Nation was their official organ, with Keynes as proprietor: and Desmond Macarthy has always been the publicist most closely connected with their interests. Their organization in the Press (that is the number of newspapers, reviews, or columns they could rely upon for not necessarily very critical, but for very fervent support) was really remarkable.

*no draft*

These are the bare facts of the case merely; and the heart of the Bloomsbury mystery is not to be sought in these bare facts. For the combined original talent of the founders of "Bloomsbury" was of a volume and quality that was, to say the least, modest and on the thin side: their worldly goods were not of such an imposing order, it seems, as to suggest that a solution for the riddle of their success is to be looked for entirely in their bank-balances (though in a time where art has no natural outlet, money an artist must have). So where was it, in fact, to be sought? A definition of that would be a really valuable contribution ~~to~~ contemporary literary history. And, provided with the definition of the secret of the original Bloomsbury success, it would then be possible, and very useful, to track the expansion of this popular recipe of the select, outwards into the more general fields of its activity.

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For, really, a sort of patent intellectual-man was invented by the ingenious Mr. Lytton Strachey. He built up in his pallid laboratory a kind of shrinking, simpering, stammering, blinking, wide-eyed and moist-lipped robot. That was Model No. I. That is of no use at all today. It has been modified, <sup>until it has become</sup> ~~something~~ something almost normal. But the original eccentric structure is still apparent. It peeps through every fresh bowdlerisation, now very ghostly, but still intact.

But - and this is my ~~present~~ argument - nothing <sup>in</sup> the world could be more dissimilar at heart than the original 'Bloomsbury', Strachey, and the group-type of 'Bloomsbury', Model 1934. And that model, its purposes and its pretensions, is what I will scrutinize (its

~~favourite word is "Scrutiny" it affects to "scrutinize" with a lefty detachment, everything, by right of this speciality~~

favourite word is "Scrutiny" it affects to "scrutinize" with a lofty detachment, everything, by right of this spoof patent) in my next section.



THE ROBOT-SNEER THAT IS LEFT.

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13"

The last ~~chapter~~<sup>section</sup> closed with a promise to 'scrutinize' the pretentious purveyors of 'Scrutinies.' But these are small and rather impalpable fry - true filter-passers, to borrow an image from the neighbouring science of bacteriology. I would not on account of their insignificant scale give them the go-by, believe me. I am thoroughly imbued with the spirit of bacteriological research - I do not regard the big-game hunter as a better man than Pasteur, in fine, nor do I tend - as I cannot help remarking is the case with most people - to underrate the deadly power of numbers of low-grade organisms. And to-day we are dealing always with numbers - quantity, not quality - with mechanised sub-men rather than persons. And this holds true in the field of intellect as much as elsewhere.

But people will take some time to get used to this novel technique, as applied to men, not bacillæ. They accept the reports from the laboratory and clinic: but they still persist in thinking in individualist terms, when dealing with human aggregates. As they accept as important those robots of the great financial interest ~~of~~<sup>in</sup> our Banker's Republic - Macdonald, Chamberlain, Thomas, Churchill (otherwise would it be worth Mr. David Low's or Mr. Auden's while to lavish their facile satiric powers upon such palpable dummies - for whom you would have thought that no one to-day would still be found to pay a penny, to see the stuffing knocked out of all over again - monotonously, time after time) so they persist in believing that everything that ~~happens~~ happens to them is the result of the personal failure, or personal malevolence, of something advertized above life-size upon every

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hoarding - something that they can see. Yet, would they only appl  
the lessons of b<sup>a</sup>teriology to politics, they would be far nearer  
the truth.

And my critical microscope would tell them far more of what  
is going on inside their heads, as a result of infection by  
virulent human toxins,

*No brake*

than, I say it in all modesty, any orthodox textbook they may consult is likely to do.

Returning to the filter-passers of sub-Bloomsbury: it will be essential to descend into the intellectual slums, and to pick our way about in tortuous side-streets that are none too clean. If you are prepared for squalor, let us proceed! I am not supplying a full-dress analysis of "Bloomsbury" here. But, <sup>this of course is</sup> for the benefit of the foreigner, Bloomsbury is merely a district of London, England, like Greenwich Village or the Montparnasse Quarter in Paris. The London wards whose names are associated with art and letters are two <sup>(1)</sup>Chelsea and <sup>(2)</sup>Bloomsbury. The former stands for what is here called 'black and white art' and is the quarter where the Royal Academy artists live - walking up annually in grey top hats to the Royal Garden Party. The latter stands for the dilettante literary author, the particular type that English life threw up in succession to the 'Nineties' - and it is, I am convinced, the last effort in that kind of futility on the part of England. The Englishman has changed very much, since England experienced the pang of that discreditable parturition.

If "Bloomsbury England has vanquished Elizabethan England" once and for all, as <sup>the eminent American critic has stated,</sup> ~~it has been said~~, it is now dying itself with the disintegration of its original founders. The next stage will be a universal ~~British~~ healthy disintegration and chaos <sup>in the literary field</sup> - which if anything will be a bit more like Elizabeth, than Victoria or Virginia: we can but hope for the best.

"Bloomsbury" is a name which would never have been heard of ~~by the outer world if Lytton Strachey had not lived and died - it would not have mattered, but this is a matter of~~

by the outer world if Lytton Strachey had not lived and died - it would not have ~~altered the sun's course,~~ <sup>altered the sun's course,</sup> but this is a matter of history. Now about eight or nine years ago a few (a dozen or more) writers took up their quarters in Bloomsbury: and although they certainly would never have received a patent from the very-particular 'Lytton', ~~(and had never set eyes on him or any other sommité of old Bloomsbury for that matter)~~ they did let themselves be known - I will not say gave themselves out - to an inattentive and not-at-all-particular world, as 'Bloomsburies.' It was an upstart usurpation: but it was of such a squalid and unworthy type that no one of the inner ring of the true-blues, among the male and female bluestockings of this exclusive literary cénacle, took any notice of the impudent misnomer at the time. Indeed, they could not. Technically, any one of the ten thousand householders in whose midst they dwelt, might, had it occurred to them to do so, have described themselves without fear of contradiction as 'Bloomsburies,' ~~just / could describe myself as~~ <sup>just / could describe myself as</sup> ~~a Paddingtonian. This is nasty~~ little infiltration, this handful of emigrants - this careless use in the Press and in literary magazines of the jealously-guarded terminology - was the first blot on the scutcheon. And indeed, <sup>it</sup> proved to be the beginning of the end. After that almost any Australian bushranger or sundowner, with a strepitant intonation to awaken the dead and scandalise Seven Dials, any provincial Jew (who had not been to Eton, but had only been polished up in a Putney night-class) who cared to rent a room for a pound a week in the W.C. district, and put a comic description of a sporting event or a Power-house into bad blank

verse, and dress untidily in what then were called 'Oxford bags', could become <sup>to</sup> a Bloomsbury".

It was soon but <sup>too</sup> evident to everybody who really cared, that Bloomsbury was no longer Bloomsbury. A public house called "The Plough" perhaps gave the coup de grace to all this delicate lavender

-scented legend. No self-respecting person any longer wanted to be known as "a Bloomsbury." All the advertisement-value of that title went out of it at a breath. - It is impossible to speculate as to what passed within the troubled consciousness of the girl<sup>ish</sup> and bearded patriarch, Strachey - and it would not I suppose be proper ~~to~~ so much as to suggest that anything passed at all in the mind of the lady to whom I have referred as the Queen of Bloomsbury. But, however this may be, "Bloomsbury" as "Bloomsbury" faded into the light of <sup>a very</sup> common day indeed. And shortly afterwards it's founder appropriately died. The dream of domination in a tea cup was over. The war had done all this to Bloomsbury, who can doubt it, as it had done so many other things, both wicked and charitable.

But now that everybody was "a Bloomsbury" more or less, whether they lived in Bloomsbury or not (it <sup>had become</sup> ~~was~~ merely another way of saying, rather nicely, "high brow") a new development occurred. <sup>Almost</sup> before the onlookers were aware of it, a new something was there. Groups of little brain-trusts had formed an offensive alliance. Their banner was, undoubtedly, the old battered standard, wool-worked <sup>by the very same spider-like fingers of</sup> ~~the same old mother~~ old mother 'Lytton'.

Amongst all the great crowd of "Bloomsburies" a certain restricted number had perhaps been at Cambridge (Cambridge and "Bloomsbury" are indissolubly wedded as expressions, for the purposes of the careful historian: between that university and the W.C. district there has always been the closest connection -

it would have been impossible to predict of any young man who formerly went up to Cambridge that he would not become "a Bloomsbury" before he was through, and some were presented at court, <sup>literary</sup> introduced to the king and queen). If I said that these persons were not of the same fine and moon-dipped chinaware as was exacted by the first founders, I should indeed be absurdly understating the case! They were, and are, nothing, if you understand me; in fact of such a wretched and shoddy order that I can quite imagine the unfortunate Lytton just giving up the ghost in extreme disgust, and determining to pass out of this world into a better, since such a parody of what he had intended had now par le temps qui court (and how it ran to be accepted, <sup>and countenanced,</sup> as in some sort followers of his fastidious original cult.

This historical sketch has, I fear, occupied a good deal of space, and I must now hasten to the dénouement. Strachey had, as I began by saying, put on the market a patent, a receipt, rather, guaranteed to produce a very passable highbrow robot; <sup>a robot</sup> who could affect all the outward mannerisms of a super-sensitive artist-nature, without however being able to do anything at all - in the matter of art. Indeed it was essential that he should not do anything in that line, for that would be to descend into the disgusting pupping and spawning state of the "creative" person, or the extremely vulgar perspirational state of mind and body of the mere efficient executant. And anyway he was a robot! (This last stipulation made it far easier to guarantee success).

This was however put on the market by Strachey only in the sense that, in the process of advertising - and Bloomsburies have



always had a great itch for the footlights <sup>and</sup> (breathlessly shrinking away but at the same time greedily creeping forward)—in the course of this busy self-advertisement their methods of initiation and their code of aesthetic behaviour became widely-known and talked about. And I am acquainted personally with several gentlemen (whom I could name if I wished) who without ever having been admitted to, or even <sup>been</sup> put-up for, "Bloomsbury", have to perfection the stammering and halting, blinking and blushing habits of a B. to the manner-born.

But what is old-fashioned, to be like that: these externals, so important in the pre-war model, are today neglected. What is there left? Simply the time-honoured technique of social superiority, but put to the uses of intellectual superiority. To be socially-snobbish about the possession of taste: to be socially-snobbish (and demonstrating it in the manner that some snobbish victorian <sup>clergyman</sup> would affect to convey his social eminence) about being "a genius" - that would seem, at first sight, a rather complex operation. Yet it was that that the robot imagined by Strachey performed, it was one of the first mechanical tests.

But that robot-sneer is, physically, no longer present - not even that is left. Only the sneer in the mind, as it were, remains. The original typical tea-party in the still-victorian surroundings was, again, an extremely sentimental affair. These ladies and gentlemen had the minds of schoolchildren - and as they had stepped into the shoes of the "Naughty Nineties", they were of course naughty schoolchildren. They played at being "geniuses" with each other. But it was a tremulously exciting impersonation: for the "Genius" aimed at was the heavily-sentimental and perfectly