

MY DIARIES

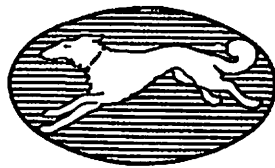
Being a Personal Narrative of Events 1888-1914

By

WILFRID SCAWEN BLUNT 1840-1922

With a Foreword by Lady Gregory

PART TWO
[1900-1914]



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"5th May.—Anne writes from Egypt announcing somewhat enigmatically that Cromer has had a final quarrel with the Khedive and is trying to depose him. I think this not unlikely, but it would be difficult for him to do unless the Great Powers were to decide to divide the Mohammedan States between them. This is nearly certain to happen some day. I suppose France will be given Morocco; Italy, Tripoli; England, Egypt; Germany, Syria and Asia Minor; Austria, Constantinople; and Russia, Persia. [Compare Secret Treaties of 1916.]

"6th May.—Lunched with Ralph. He has decided at last to publish the great Byron Secret, and has drawn up the case against Byron and Mrs. Leigh in the form of a book called 'Astarte.' This is very ably done, but to my mind is marred by an introduction violently attacking Murray, the publisher, with whom he has quarrelled over Murray's recent edition of Byron's Works. I shall endeavour to get him to modify this; indeed, I think the whole thing might without much injustice to Lady Byron's memory be let sleep. It is an ugly story, however told.

"10th May.—Anne has returned from Egypt. I met her at Charing Cross and gave her breakfast here in Chapel Street and saw her off to Newbuildings, I being obliged to go to Ockham for Sunday with Cockerell, where Ralph is to consult us about 'Astarte' and its form of publication.

"11th May (Sunday).—At Ockham. Cockerell and I have spent the day trying to persuade Lovelace to omit his attacks on Murray, which are really undignified, and also, we think, unjust in so far as they concern the present representative of the firm.

"18th May (Sunday).—I have sent in my letter to Lord Salisbury. It went last night to Hatfield with a private note inside to Schomberg McDonnell explaining that I hoped Lord Salisbury would read it himself. It is a big venture as I am attacking Cromer personally, but in big game shooting it is safest to leave the antelopes alone and go straight for the rhinoceros. It being holiday time makes it a favourable moment.

"21st May.—My bomb against Cromer has exploded with a real bang. The 'Daily News' gives it a leading article, the 'Standard' a whole column, the 'Morning Post' printed my letter to the Editor and a *résumé*, the 'Chronicle' and 'Daily Mail' are also good, only the 'Times' and 'Telegraph' fail us. It could hardly have made a bigger noise."

The great publicity obtained on this occasion in the Press made it unnecessary for me to pursue it further, and it was agreed not to bring it forward in Parliament. There was, of course, not the smallest chance of obliging the Foreign Office to publish the correspondence,

though severe, is not uncharitable, and speaks of Tyrrell politely, even in a friendly tone, and should have been replied to if at all in the same polite spirit, but Tyrrell is needlessly aggressive. Thus, while scoring in argument, he loses in effect, but the truth is both he and the Cardinal are fighting a battle which neither side can possibly win, and where the plain unbeliever will remain the *tertium gaudens*. It is inconceivable that the uncompromising attitude of what Tyrrell calls Mediævalism, can maintain itself for ever against the logic of science, and it is equally inconceivable that scientific people will go on trying to believe in a divine relation on Church lines. In his heart Father Tyrrell has already lost faith in it, and must be driven into open rejection of *Roman* Catholicism just as Dollinger was, indeed much farther than Dollinger, for Tyrrell is logically a materialist, no less than I am; however, the book interests me extremely.

"31st Aug.—Princess Hélène writes telling of her travels in Somali-land, where she has shot a rhinoceros. She says: 'Mon voyage m'a fait un bien énorme, je n'ai qu'un rêve, retourner dans ces pays là. Plus je vis, plus j'ai en horreur ce qu'on appelle la civilisation qui n'est que corruption et méchanceté humaine. Si je n'avais pas un mari et des enfants j'irai m'établir là-bas.'

"1st Sept.—Mohammed Bedr, Egyptian President of the Islamic Society of Edinburgh, came here (Newbuildings) on his way to Egypt. He is a very superior young man, a disciple of Mohammed Abdu, and a strong Nationalist. I asked him the truth about the Mohammedan attitude in India, and he assured me that though certain leaders like Husseyn Bilgrymi and the Agha Khan supported the British régime, the great mass of Indian Mohammedans were in sympathy with the Hindoo Nationalists. He believes now in the revival of Asia, and the maintenance of its independence against Europe. He asked my opinion about the prospects of Constitutionalism in Egypt. I told him the thing to aim at was not so much *legislative* power as the right of the Chamber to control the *executive*, that is to say that the choice of a Ministry should rest with them and not with the Khedive. Unless they obtained this right, the other would be useless, and the Khedive will at any moment be able to revoke the Constitution, with the aid of an army officered by foreigners. He asked what should be their plan of action? I said, 'You must get together a society of young men of sufficient means to be independent of Government employment, and send them round to the country towns and large villages to give lectures, and instruct the fellahin in the duty of patriotism. When you have accomplished this you will be ready at any time to take advantage of circumstances to demonstrate effectively against the British Occupation. This had been done in Ireland, where the strength of Nationalism had been found in the peasantry through a propaganda of this kind.'

He is himself, he said, member of a wealthy landowning family in the Sherkieh Province, and would try what could be done.

"4th Sept.—Eddy Hamilton is dead. This would have meant a great deal to me twenty-five years ago, but he has long been practically defunct, paralysed, and mentally decrepit. Sackville also has dropped out at the ripe age of eighty-one, a thoroughly good fellow, with whom I was never intimate, but always friends. He had a hale old age, a quiet, good man, whom I should regret more were I not myself among the dead.

"7th Sept.—E. V. Lucas and his wife were here to-day with Dr. Philpot, and Belloc in the afternoon. Lucas tells me that Harmsworth now controls the whole policy and writing of the 'Times.' A copy of the 'Times' is annotated by him, with remarks, every morning. His sole object now is to restore its character for respectability. This was just what I recommended six months and more ago, when Eddy Tennant was interested in it.

"11th Sept.—The Poet Laureate (Alfred Austin) arrived from Swinford to-day, and we have had much talk about politics and religion. He is sensible enough when one gets him alone. We discussed Modernism and the Eucharistic Congress, his position towards the Church being much the same as mine. He has never renounced Catholicism, he says, though he does not believe in any religion, but he has leanings once more towards it now he is getting old. For me, as I get older I care less. Austin is seventy-five. We first met about the year '58, or it may be a little later, when he was reading law in London. A little cock sparrow of a man, he was already with an ambition of becoming Poet Laureate; it is astonishing he should have won to it. His uncle left him some money, enough to live upon, and he abandoned the Law after making once the Northern Circuit. Then he travelled in Italy, became interested in Garibaldi, and married in 1865. In 1870, being at Berlin during the war, the 'Standard' took him on as its correspondent, and he followed the German army to Versailles as such. He had a chance interview with Bismarck which made his journalistic fortune, and from that time was kept on as leader writer on the paper for its foreign affairs. This brought him into connection with Lord Salisbury who eventually made him Laureate. So are poets made, *fit non nascitur*, but he takes himself very seriously now, attributes Bismarck's confidences to a poem of his the great man had read in praise of Prussia, and Salisbury's choice of him to his acknowledged position at the head of English literature.

"12th Sept.—To London for the Winston-Clementine wedding. It was quite a popular demonstration. Lord Hugh Cecil Winston's best man, and the great crowd of relations, not only the Church [St. Margaret's] full, but all Victoria Street, though that may have partly