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H. E. BATES
looks at the man
they banned . . .

de MAUPASSANT

...WHO WROTE
THE TRUTH
ABOUT PEOPLE

IN 1850, Henri Rene Albert Guy de Maupassant was born in France, in the department of Seine Inferieure, 20 years before the Franco-Prussian war was to disrupt his native country.

Incidentally, it provided him with material for some of the most celebrated and masterly of his stories, notably *Boule de Suif*, which struck the literary world of Paris in 1880.

During the intervening years the young de Maupassant had fallen much under the influence and tutorial guidance of Gustave Flaubert, author of the then notorious and banned *Madame Bovary*. There can be little doubt that the astonishing maturity of de Maupassant's early masterpiece was in large part due to the influence of the older master.

In many ways all of de Maupassant is contained in *Boule de Suif*. It is a story of a group of people banded together by adversity and their treatment of an unfortunate woman.

The story is set during the Franco-Prussian War. The group, a coach party, are without food—only Mademoiselle Rousset, whom the others treat with undisguised contempt, has provided herself



with plenty, which she shares with them.

Then the party is captured and the Prussian officer, learning Mlle. Rousset's profession, makes her surrender to him the price of their freedom.

But Mlle. Rousset hates Prussians—and refuses.

It is here that de Maupassant starts his withering and ironic exposure of the rest of his characters. At first they are merely annoyed, then outraged and finally furious that a girl who takes men to bed for a living will not perform a similar service to set them free.

France in the 1880's is the setting for ITV's new series of plays based on the tales by the first master of the short story, Guy de Maupassant. Each week, three or four of his stories will be linked by a common theme. The first instalment, *Wives and Lovers*, at 9.45 p.m. on Thursday, consists of a society comedy, an ironic tragedy and a bourgeois farce. The distillation of de Maupassant's particular skills of observation are here presented by H. E. Bates, noted novelist and short story writer.

It is simply monstrous that she could be so selfish.

Finally she gives in and the coach goes on. With admirable forethought the passengers this time have packed plenty of provisions. It is only Boule de Suif, crushed and humiliated by her revolting experience, who has neglected to bring any food.

And soon, for the second time, the passengers grow hungry. But as they swill and gorge, it is Boule de Suif who once again sits ignored and ostracised, left cold and hungry by those who have sacrificed her.

This, then, is de Maupassant. To him all human beings, whether they are counts or countesses, prostitutes or Sisters of Mercy, society hostesses or farm girls—his very fine *The Story of a Farm Girl* is one of the stories to be tele-

vised in the coming series—clerks or men about town, peasants or parsons are all, simply, people.

He presents and exposes them with an astonishingly accurate and incisive power of observation that is wholly truthful, frequently merciless, sad, constantly ironic and tragic and in the greatest of the stories also touched with poetry.

De Maupassant has no moral lessons or messages to offer and it is undoubtedly this objective and frankly naturalistic approach that brought down on his head charges of indecency from an earlier generation and even led to *Une Vie*, probably one of the cruellest and saddest portraits of a woman ever written, being banned.

The answer to such charges is simple. It is not the business of a writer of fiction to try to



Thorley Walters and Moira Redmond appear in "A New Year's Gift"

reform his characters or to whitewash them if they happen to be bad. He is not writing evangelical tracts. In the words of de Maupassant's great Russian contemporary, Tchechov:

"No literature can outdo real life in its cynicism. To a chemist nothing on earth is unclean. A writer must be as objective as a chemist, he must lay aside his personal subjective standpoint and must understand that muck-heaps play a very respectable part in the landscape and that inherent bad passions are as inherent as the good ones."

This is the way de Maupassant works and he achieves his effects with a style that is spare, simple, straightforward and unflowery. Like all good short story writers he offers us only the essential essentials.

His stories have an impact that is vivid and graphic and it is this quality, I think, that will make them such admirable and challenging material for television.

Finally, a word about the man himself. His life, like that of the painter, Toulouse Lautrec, was brilliant but tragic; he consorted with the lowest of society and paid the bitterest of penalties.

But whereas Lautrec's tragedy stemmed largely from his pitiful deformity, that of

de Maupassant arose in part from the splendid nature of his physique and hence is the crueller of the two.

As a young man he delighted in strenuous exercise and loved boating, swimming and yachting. Together with all this went a passion for women.

But there also seems to have been in him a streak of that avarice he was so quick to note and expose in many of his characters and there is a story that whenever he went to the

bank to pay in a large cheque for a story, he always took good care to expose it so that all around him could see and envy the amount.

Whether this is true or not, it is certain that in 1891 he tried to commit suicide, and that early in 1892 he was taken away in a strait-jacket, raving mad, to die in an asylum eighteen months later.

The story of his life, in fact, is one that he might well have written himself.



Derek Francis (left), Kenneth Griffith and Gwen Watford will be seen in "Decorated"



Geoffrey Bayldon (left), Vivien Merchant and Philip Locke in a scene from "Monsieur Parent"

SUNDAY SESSION

A weekly hour of information and instruction for young adults

Citizenship

Motor traffic has been blamed for the congestion of our city centres, but it is a symptom of the trouble, not its cause.

In one form or another, road or rail, steam, motor or horse, these problems have been with us for a century or more; there were traffic jams in Victorian London before the first car appeared on the streets.

Massive engineering works—new streets, suburban railways, urban motorways—have been in hand since the 1860's in a series of attempts to deal with the threatened paralysis of our cities.

Motor cars have become a problem recently because the number of them in big cities has about doubled in the last ten years, while the amount of road space remains almost exactly the same.

The answer is not necessarily the obvious one of doubling the amount of road . . . we have to consider alternatives like improved urban railways, or even the re-arrangement of the whole pattern of traffic circulation by moving work-places out to the fringe of the town to reduce the amount of traffic in the centre.

Since people come into London from places as far away as Brighton and southern Northamptonshire, the re-arrangement of traffic may have to cover most of South East England. Traffic, like so many other problems today, has become a matter of regional planning.

Clear thinking

In the 1840's, two books published by English mathematicians started a revolution in the subject. It was soon clear that the traditional doctrine of Aristotle, which had been reverently treated as a complete system of logic, covered only a rather small selection of the rules of inference that are actually employed in human thinking.

The most imposing presentation of modern logic is the *Principia Mathematica* of Bertrand Russell and A. N. Whitehead, whose first volume appeared in 1910. The theory of the syllogism, with certain modifications, occupies a modest place in their system. But the foundation or starting-point of modern logic is the theory of compound statements.

There are five main kinds of compound statement.

FIRST: negations, of the form *not-p*, which are true when *p* is false.

SECOND: conjunctions, of the form *p and q*, true when both *p* and *q* are true and false otherwise.

THIRD: disjunctions, of the form *p or q*, which are false when *p* and *q* are both false and true otherwise.

FOURTH: conditionals, of the form *if p then q*, which are false when *p* is true and *q* is false but are true otherwise.

FIFTH: biconditionals, of the form *p if and only if q*, which are true if *p* and *q* are both true or both false but are false if one of *p* and *q* is true and the other is false.

Some of the rules of inference for compound statements are so

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