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the nineteenth century robbed the colours of much of their customary softness and delicacy. At the same time they are far removed from the crude specimens of the Victorian epoch which exhibit wholesale deterioration both in colour and modelling.

Nothing in the world of antiques has been "faked" so extensively, so unblushingly, as the Toby jug. Every diabolical device to deceive has been employed—buried in earth, treated with acids, filled with simmering beer, chipped, crackled, papered—anything which might conduce to the appearance of age.

Never purchase a "Toby" unless you can trust your judgment. Go to a reliable dealer, who will have no objection to giving you a guarantee, or get a friend who knows, to make sure you are not defrauded. Thousands of these spurious imitations have been poured into this country from the Continent.

Above all, beware of the old lady in the humble cottage who has a "Toby" for which the dealers have offered "pounds and pounds," and who is sure the jug must be valuable because it came from "up at the Hall."



THE CONVERSATIONAL BALL

Good talk should be a hotch-potch of wit, fun, nonsense, logic, sense. It should be impromptu, and the wit unexpected. The great pianist Liszt, calling on Rossini, played him a funeral march he had composed for the death of Meyerbeer. Rossini said, "Would it not have been better if you had died and Meyerbeer had written the march?" Much better is the reply of "Saki," when he was asked how he knew it was dawn: "The grass looks as though it had been out all night."

JAMES AGATE.

My County— Right or Wrong!

Northamptonshire

By H. E. Bates

AUTHORS should leave home at a tender age in order to know the pleasure of going back and discovering their birthright.

Northamptonshire, into which I was born just too late to see the bonfires for Mafeking burning on the cobbles of the paraffin-lit market-places, more or less depressed me for exactly a quarter of a century. I left it with great relief for what was and still is and will probably always be a richer and far more beautiful county, and went back only periodically, to discover that my eyes had been opened very wide by that deliberate dissociation.

The trouble was exactly that which D. H. Lawrence, a little earlier, had found himself facing in Nottinghamshire. He saw some of the most beautiful pastoral and hill country of England being desecrated by an industrial era which knew nothing of town-planning and posterity, and cared less; he saw tiny villages transformed in a decade into gawky and hideous towns that each year exchanged a few more streets, a few more chapels and pubs, a few more factories and mine-shafts, for a few more acres of wood and grass and corn.

This, though in a rather less aggravated way, was my own case. Northamptonshire was essentially a pastoral county of broad central river-valleys, of rolling uplands in north and south, of great elm parks and splendid spires. It stays in my mind as a green county, as part of the great east-central English plain, as part of the greater central European plain: a land of energy and fertility. . . . Some of its grazing pastures, in the

Welland valley area, are the fattest in England. You could go for many miles, and I hope still can, without seeing these green pastures anywhere broken by the plough.

But across the county, north to south, from the Leicestershire to the Bedfordshire borders, there lies a fifteen-mile-wide strip of industrialism: boots and shoes, leather and heels, tanneries and factories, with all the characteristic town development in raw red brick. This is a growth of fifty or sixty years, in which time small villages (my own, for example) increased their populations from 400 to 14,000 without producing a single notable street, house, or public building, and without apparently ever being aware of the deficiency.

Existence swung between religion and booze, between the sewing-meeting tea and the free-for-all, with politics and the debating platform, love and scandal, as almost the only other means of letting off superfluous steam.

The result was a strange conglomeration of religious devotion and pettiness, small-town respectability and small-town vulturism preying on reputations, drunken brawling such as English provincial life rarely knows to-day, an admirable radical tendency in politics, and a determined and downright sense of independence which is still a feature of Northamptonshire manners.

I was born as this narrow and gloomy period of social development was ending. Social life was strict. Chapel and church were steel vices into which a man or woman was put for judgment. Chapel-folk and church-folk were the salt of the earth, yet "on the booze" was still a term of everyday usage. The factories had at last killed the old-fashioned shoemaker, who boozed all day and poached all night and worked more or less when he felt like it, letting off the rest of his energy by celebrating Ladysmith and Mafeking with public bonfires or knocking the old woman downstairs.

As this lusty and downright figure passed—bowler hat, neckerchief, red nose-rag, little dog, clay pipe, long black coat fitted with poaching pockets—the life of industry became a thing of time-clocks, fixed hours, and, as the Great War came on, money-grabbing. This last development, by which considerable overnight fortunes were made, often went hand in hand with either religion or easy virtue, and chapel and club accordingly benefited; culture not at all.

What it certainly never seemed to be allied with was an impression that architecture might mean something more than four brick walls and a slate roof, or that towns might be broadly and beautifully planned, as things of interest to posterity. So that when I looked round me, as a young man, I saw scarcely a building except the twelfth-century church that was not a pain on the eyes. From this local impression I got the broader impression that the whole county was the same.

It was a sad mistake. I have been rectifying it as often and as eagerly as I can for ten years. For if this central industrial strip of Northamptonshire is cut out, two remarkably fine pieces of country remain, the one running into Oxfordshire in the south-west, the other into Rutland in the north-east. These, joined up, will be seen as a direct continuation of the Cotswolds, more in the architecture than the landscape, and as having much the same kind of beauty as the great diagonal limestone belt running north-eastward from Somerset right across England.

In fact I would go farther than that. My conviction is that the extreme north-eastern corner of Northamptonshire, the rough triangle from Thrapston to Rockingham and up to Stamford, seriously challenge the Cotswolds. Certainly there is no single town in the Cotswolds—setting aside Campden as a museum piece—which is so impressive a collection of stone architec-

ture as Stamford (three-quarters officially in Lincolnshire, the rest Northamptonshire), with all its Regency splendour untouched, so that in many ways it resembles Bath.

Few Cotswold village-towns are pleasanter than Oundle; and stone by stone such villages as Rockingham, Collyweston, Cotterstock, Elton, Fotheringhay, Apethorpe, Deane, and Kingscliffe will compete with many Cotswold villages that have become almost places of pilgrimage. The same stone that makes these places makes the magnificent great houses, the mansions such as Lilford, Apethorpe, Burghley, Broughton, Drayton, Kirby, the unfinished ruin at Lyveden. It is a stone in which there is warmth and sturdiness; the touch of cream, broken often by the burnt brown of ironstone decoration, is lovely against the dark summer elms of the parklands, against grass, or, as at Lilford, above water.

Whatever other part of the county is wrong—and it is fair to say that industrialism is at its mildest even in the worst of Northamptonshire—this part of the county is incontestably right.

It is untouched.

Industrialism, money-grabbers, jerry-builders, have all rushed past it, only a dozen miles away, and have left it much as it must have been a hundred years ago. You will hear it said that England is overpopulated, that you cannot move, that you cannot get away. To anyone feeling that this is true I would urge a journey through the field-gates to the long since abandoned mansion of Lyveden, left unfinished, looking magnificent, nearly four hundred and fifty years ago. He can stand by this solitary and splendid ruin, with its corner stones as sharp-edged as on the day they were put up, and see nothing about him but a country of hawthorn and grass, a sky broken by a hovering kestrel or a

trainer-bomber, and feel that England is still big enough for any man.

And hawthorn reminds me that there is something left to the whole county which industrialism has not yet killed. Many of the woods have gone, many of the delightful stone houses, but every year the great hedges of hawthorn, more especially perhaps in the south of the county, are renewed. The south of England, in my experience, has nothing to show as glorious as these tall cream-spilling hedges of may that light up the green land of both uplands and valleys everywhere.

And the people? Cobbett admired the shoemakers; and later they were famous, and in fact there are villages which are still famous, for a fierce radicalism, exemplified, of course, by Bradlaugh. Industrialism has wiped out the pure type. Yet the legacy of it remains, and to this day a Northamptonshire man will argue your head off, independent as hell.

And of that breed I am, when all is said and done, proud to be an example.



The Ministry of Information has become the supreme Aunt Sally of the war. The latest is to the effect that, whereas in other Government departments the visitor goes from pillar to post, in the Ministry of Information he is passed from peer to peer. War is not an affair of gentlemen, nor are gentlemen going to win this one. Hence the more journalists and the fewer gentlemen in the Ministry, the better.

C. E. M. JOAD.



Speaking broadly, the people of this country attach greater importance to the quality of their conduct than to the quality of their thinking.

THE RT. HON. R. G. MENZIES.