

"...all this, and heaven too"

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Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Der Kreis : eine Monatsschrift = Le Cercle : revue mensuelle**

Band (Jahr): **22 (1954)**

Heft 7

PDF erstellt am: **22.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-569849>

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included a decided feminine strain, he could not do without them 'though' it was only in his relationship with *men* that the more romantic and idealistic side . . . was allowed to emerge. Among men alone did he recognize his equals.»

In 1824, the year of his lonely death, he remembered his first love and wrote: «My dearest Clare . . . I hope that you do not forget that I always regard you as my dearest friend, and *love* you as when we were Harrow boys together.»

Beuno

« . . . all this, and Heaven too »

by R. Young

Sometimes I hate the very sight of him. When Clive comes into my room and I see his tall, lanky figure and the irresistible grin which spreads slowly over his features, I'd like nothing better than to throttle him for shattering merely by his presence the peace of my mind so utterly. Poor boy, it isn't his fault that my heart misses a beat when he bends his long body over my easy chair, gripping its arms with his hands and saying in his slightly blurred voice, «Hallo, Uncle Pat, how are you this evening?» How can he perceive what a disturbance he creates in my mind when his body is so close to my own? It's not his fault that I'm a fool. Twenty-five years his senior I ought to know better and yet — —.

There was a time when I thought I had got over it all. But fate stepped in when he heard that a room in the flat was to be let. I couldn't say I don't want you here because I love you and having you next-door would be unbearable. It's something you can only think but never say. All I did say was, 'Of course, I'll be delighted to have you in the flat, my dear boy.' Which was even true, as at that time I felt myself no longer in danger of being hurt by his mere presence. So he came, and the boy I had known for a long time became part of my life to such an extent that it shocked me often to think of the part he played in my thoughts. Being completely normal as he was, sentence of utter silence was passed on me. Never for a moment did I entertain the thought of trying to make the boy respond to any of my own feelings for him. I'd have felt a cad if I had ever done so.

Subsequently he became engaged and I can still remember the relief felt when he told me the news and the even greater relief when he introduced his fiancée. This relief, however, was short-lived and I was back where I had started. But now it was worse, as all my love for him, consciously suppressed for months, came with re-doubled power to the surface again. Nothing availed me, even although youths of his age never had held any attraction for me. Was it the realization of my loneliness or fear of old age that had driven me so deeply into this maze?

Life became well regulated after his engagement, and I saw more of him, but usually with Celia. The girl came frequently in the evenings. When I was still furiously banging away at my typewriter, Clive often invited me to share their night-cap. There we would sit, the fire would burn brightly in the open fire-place; Celia would sit on the floor and

Clive bury his head in her lap. Their joy together was delightful to watch and they let me feel they revered my presence. Sometimes Celia would bury her head in Clive's lap; whilst she played incessantly with his hands, showing by every movement how deeply she loved him, Clive would sometimes throw me a glance of mock-despair, indicating 'These Women!'

Both often visited me to hear my gramophone-records. One evening we all silently listened to Mozart's magical notes. The two lovers lay comfortably stretched out on the carpet and I sat smoking in my favourite chair, moving only to change the records. Suddenly I became aware of tension. Looking down at the lovers I discovered how tight their embrace had become. Just at that very moment Clive freed himself from Celia and turned away, a deep sigh escaped him involuntarily. Mozart had stirred them to a lovers' intense passion which struck an unhappy chord. Immediately I sensed a need to unburden this passion, and I put on one of my Blues records. The first bars of that syncopated rhythm brought them back to earth and a minute later they rolled on the floor kicking playfully with carefree abandon. In the end they were exhausted by their fight. Clive rose and said, «You see, Uncle Pat, it helps a lot to work off one's feelings that way.» We all three laughed and the tension had disappeared.

But one small part of Clive's day was exclusively my own. One evening we met in the bathroom. As he shaved, clad only in his pyjama-trousers, I could not refrain against my will to admire his young, virile body. «Look here, I should like to ask you something,» Clive said when he had finished. «Lately I seem never to be able to get up in the mornings; and as you're such a regular early riser I wondered whether you would mind coming in to wake me each morning.» I promised faithfully never to fail him.

It was still Winter when this started. I sat on his bed and looked down on the mass of curly hair and on what was discernible of his features in the dawn. Morning after morning I have sat watching this peaceful sleep, the sleep of youthful innocence. Perhaps this was the only time I felt happy. The next step, full of delight, was to wake him. Slowly my hands gripped his shoulders and shook him gently. «Clive, it's time.» He woke quickly and immediately his smile greeted me. «Nasty old man,» was his usual first remark, but his smile gave the lie to his words. He returned to life and consciousness easily; night which held no nightmares for him, vanished in an instant. I stood up, pulled his hair very hard or tore the bed-clothes away from him. Either action compelled me to leave the room quickly to escape his youthful revenge, and curb my desire to cherish him.

Perhaps, dear reader, you will be disappointed with my story, for my love for Clive has no happy climax, but that which I only know and feel is reward enough and I give thanks to God for the gift of Clive's friendship. Love manifests itself in many ways. There is no need to recall Philip Henry's famous five words, written centuries ago. The daily hurts, the incompleteness of it all, the utter hopelessness, the throbbing pain, the exquisite torture, yes, it was «...all this, and Heaven too.»