

Intimate Diary of Margot Asquith

As I See Myself.



John Addington Symonds who dedicated a book of essays to Margot Tennant after she criticized it adversely.



Frank, Laura and Margot Tennant. From an Old Photograph in Mrs. Asquith's collection.



Arthur J. Balfour, whose writing Mrs. Asquith admires. He was at one time British high commissioner to United States. The photograph is an old one.

Mrs. Asquith with her son Anthony, who, with his father, she says has exerted the greatest influence in her life.

INSTALLMENT NO. 5.
BY MARGOT ASQUITH
(Note: In the last previous installment of her remarkable diary Mrs. Asquith told of the tragic loss of one of her infant children and of the suffering she endured to gain her way into the paradise which she says "lies at the feet of mothers." The installment presented her own writing in 1906 and is a striking piece of living literature portraying her innermost character. It is notable that she has not had to alter her self-estimate after a lapse of 14 years.)

I AM not pretty, and I do not know anything about my expression, although I observe it is this that is particularly dwelt upon if one is plain enough—but I hope when you feel as kindly towards your fellow creatures as I do that some of that warmth may modify an otherwise thin and rather knifty contour.

(Editor's note: In his famous poem, "The Woman with the Serpent's Tongue," William Watson has this to say about Mrs. Asquith's physical characteristics: "She is not old, she is not young, The woman with the serpent's tongue, The bazaar cheek, the humming eyes, The poisoned words that wildly fly, The fanned face, the fevered hand—")

My figure has remained the same: slight, well-balanced and active. Being socially courageous and not at all shy, I think I can come into a room as well as many people of more appearance and prestige, and I will have more to say about this later. I do not propose to treat myself like Mr. Bernard Shaw. No, I shall neither excuse myself from praise, nor shield myself from blame. . . . I shall put down the figures as accurately as I can and leave others to add them up. I think I have imagination—reading this you may be tempted to add "and not much sense of humor!" But I will explain what I mean. I have imagination born not of fancy but of feeling; a conception of the beautiful—not merely in poetry, music, nature and art, but in human beings—I have insight into human nature, derived not only from a courageous and Bohemian experience, but also from imagination; and I have a clear, though distant, vision down dark, long, and often divergent avenues of the ordered meaning of God.

I take this opportunity of saying my religion is a vibrating reality never away from me, and this is all I shall write upon the subject. It is difficult to describe what one means by "imagination," but I think it is greater than invention or fancy. I remember discussing the question with J. Addington Symonds and to give him a hasty illustration of what I meant, I said I thought naming Highland regiment "The Black Watch" showed a high degree of imagination. He was pleased with this and I may add that both he and Jowett told me I had imagination.

(Editor's note: Dr. Benjamin Jowett was master of Balliol college. Margot first met him at Lady Wemyss' country place at Gosford. She was improvising a dance at the request of Lord Wemyss when she caught her foot in her accordion skirt and fell at the feet of an elderly clergyman. "Damn said Margot, then seeing the clergyman as she sat on her feet, 'I am afraid I have shocked you.' 'Not at all,' he replied, 'I hope you will go on, I like your dancing extremely.' The clergyman was Benjamin Jowett.)

Love Leads to Criticism.
In an early love letter to me, Henry wrote:

Imaginative insight you have more than any I ever met.
I think I am deficient in one form of imagination—and Henry will agree with this—I do not always know what hurts my friends' feelings—friends and relations—never the feelings of strangers or acquaintances; these I impress favorably.
I have a great longing to help those I love—this leads me to intrepid personal criticism. I don't think I should mind anything that I have said to others being said to me, but one never can tell. I have taken adverse criticism pretty well all my life, and had a lot of it; but by some want in me I have not succeeded in making my friends take it well.
I have got a good, sound digestion and personally prefer knowing the truth. I am not vain or touchy; it takes a lot to offend me, but when I am hurt the scar remains. I am not ungenerous but I am not really forgiving. I feel different about people who have hurt me; my confidence has been shaken, my opinion changed.
Worldly people say that explanations are always a mistake; but hav-

ing it out is the only chance any one can have of retaining my love.
A great example of this in my own life was my friendship with Lady Wemyss. She was a great character without being a character part. She told me that she frightened people, which distressed her. As I am not easily frightened I was puzzled by this. After thinking it over, I was convinced that it was because she had a hard nut to crack within herself. She possessed a jealous, passionate, youthful temperament, a formidable standard of right and wrong, a distinguished and rather stern accent, a low, slow utterance and terrifying sincerity. She was the kind of person I had dreamt of meeting and never knew that God made.

She did not like her son Evan's friendship with me, because she adored him and thought I should make him unhappy. When she found that both the happiness and unhappiness might be mutual, she did not mind, and later on she told me that I was the best friend man, woman or child could ever have. After this wonderful compliment, we formed a deep attachment which lasted until her death.

The day before she died, she sent for me and told me to tell two of her men friends how much she loved them—Doll Liddell, who was Laura's dearest friend, and Blackie Hope—and then she asked me to promise never to give up my friendship with Evan; she said:

"My darling . . . Frank will send you back your letters to me; I have kept them all and everything you ever gave me. I thank you for your wonderful love. You must never give up your friendship with Evan. Be faithful to him as you have been to me."
I was kneeling by her bed, holding her long, fine hands in my lips. We both broke down when we kissed each other. I never saw her again. I gave the messages to her friends at once, but no one can carry out orders to retain friendship any more than posture, however, ardent, can put down suicide. Friendship can last by the mutual devotion and spontaneous agreement of two people; when one of the contracting parties withdraws, the alliance breaks.
Whenever I have lost a friend, I am

ROMEO AND JULIET IS MADE BRIEF, SNAPPY COMIC OPERA

Capulet Surprises Hero in Balcony Scene, and Stabs Him, Whereupon Juliet Dies—Mercutio Also Falls as Victim of Heroine's Father.



BY JAMES J. MONTAGUE.
They look to me for the comedy stuff To make the piece a go, So I'll pull this line: "For ten quarts of wine How much does Romy owe?"
But before he settles the check for booch, It will still be a bigger debt, For he'll have to pay when he goes away.
For everything July set.
(Enter Capulet.)
Capulet— Can the rough stuff, Merky, I know that you're a pal Of the fair-haired guy with the dark brown eyes That tried to steal me gal.
(Stabs Mercutio.)
Mercutio— So many a bright and witty gag I've had to interpolate, That I know the piece is bound to drag.

thankful to say that I have not been the first to withdraw; nor can I remember a single instance in any quarrel where I was not the first to say I was sorry, irrespective of whether I was right or wrong.
(Editor's note: Mrs. Asquith once said that Lady Wemyss, Dr. Jowett and her physician, Sir John Williams, after her husband and her son Anthony, have had more influence over her and her life than any other individuals in the world.)
There is no healer in time for me. I am not afraid of suffering too much in life, but much more afraid of feeling too little. One of my complaints against the shortness of life is that there is not time enough to feel pity and love for enough people. I am infinitely compassionate and moved to my foundations by other people's misfortunes.

As I said in a character-sketch sent to Dr. Jowett in 1888, truthfulness is hardly a virtue with me—the temptation lies all the other way. I cannot discriminate between truths that need, and those that need not be told. Want of courage is what makes so many people lie. It would be difficult for me to say exactly what I am afraid of. Physically and socially not much, morally, yes, I am afraid of a good many things—reprimanding servants, bargaining in shops; to turn to more serious things, the loss of my health, the children's or Henry's—I pray against these last possibilities in every recess of my thoughts.

A Few of My Faults.

With becoming modesty I have said that I am imaginative, loving and brave! What, then, are my faults? I am fundamentally nervous, impatient, irritable and restless. These may sound slight shortcomings but they go to the foundation of my nature, crippling some of my activity, lessening my influence, and preventing me achieving anything remarkable. I wear myself out in a hundred unnecessary ways, regretting the trifles I have not arranged and re-arranging what I have got to do, and what everyone else is going to do, till I can hardly eat or sleep. To be in one position for long or sit through meals is a positive punishment to me. I am tremendously energetic, orderly and industrious, but I am just a little

When they rub me off the slate, You folks will see what I am through That me exit had to be For even the author always knew He could never keep up with me.
(Dies)

SCENE II (Juliet on Balcony)

Juliet— Oh! Nurse dear please call the guard And quickly light a torch; I see a burglar in the yard Who's going to climb the porch. Romeo (from the garden)— Dear Juliet you don't think I'm A New York crook, I hope; I don't consider it a crime To ask you to elope.
Juliet— What would my mother say, If her dear little Juliet Were ever to run away With a man she had never met?
Romeo— As soon as we are wed, Although there'll be a ruction, If I am not killed dead I'll get an introduction.
Juliet and Romeo— We'll fly away together, love, Like birdlings to their roost; And when we roam to our happy home We'll be properly introduced.
(Enter Capulet)

Juliet— I see a sight that makes me sad; Too bad! Too bad! My dad is mad!
Romeo— Dear sir, I think you oughter Step through that gate and go; I've come to wed your daughter And you are quite de trop.
Capulet— When I run my dagger through your side Perhaps you'll become aware That my Juliet is the promised bride Of a Pittsburg millionaire.
Romeo— I hurt the lie right in your face, You rascally Capulet, For you are mentioning a place That is not discovered yet.
Juliet— Oh, Romeo, though you're all Aflame with passion's fire, really cannot let you call

too quick, I am driven along by my temperament till I tire myself and other people.
(Editor's Note: To quote Mr. Watson's poem again: "Burnt up within by that strange soul She cannot slave or yet control; Malignant lip'd, unkind, unswart; Fast all example indelicate; Hectic, and always overstrung— The Woman with the Serpent's Tongue.")

"The poem is a portrait of the physical characteristics of Mrs. Asquith," said Mr. Watson in a signed statement which closed the doors of many clubs to him in America as well as England where his good taste and honor were called in question for writing the verses and the statement.
I did not marry till I was 30 and knew neither London nor society till I was 28. This luckily gave me time to read. I collected nearly a thousand books of my own before I married. If I had had real application—as all the Asquiths have—I should by now be a well-educated woman, but this I never had. I am not at all dull, never bored or stale, but I don't seem to be able to grind at ungenial things. I have a good memory for books and conversations, but bad for poetry and dates—wonderful for faces and pitiful for names.
Physically, I have done pretty well. I ride better than most women and have spent or wasted more time on it than any woman of intellect ought to. I have broken both collar bones, all my ribs and my knee cap, dislocated my jaw, fractured my skull, gashed my nose and had five concussions of the brain, but though I sold my horses, it was not because I had lost my nerve.
I dance, drive and skate well; I do not skate very well, but I dance really well.
I have a talent for drawing and am intensely musical, playing the piano with a touch of the real thing, but have neglected both these accomplishments. I may say here in self-defense, that marriage and five babies, five step-children and a husband in high politics have all contributed to

Always a Collector.

From my earliest age I have been a collector—not of anything particularly valuable, but of letters, old photographs of the family, famous people and odds and ends. I don't lose things. Our cigarette ash trays are plates from my dolls' dinner service. I have got china, books, whips, knives, matchboxes and clocks given me since I was a small child. I have kept our early copy books with all the family signatures in them, and trifling landmarks of nursery life, milestones in my intellectual development.
I am punctual, tidy and methodical; detesting indecision, change of plans and the egotism that this involves. I am a little stern and severe except with children; for these I have end-

My dear old dad a liar. Capulet— No, no, my heart's delight, No more he will worry you. You'll find he'll be quite all right As soon as I run him through.
(Stabs Romeo)

Menace Comes From the Air.

London Chronicle.
The mad exploit of a mysterious aviator, who amused himself a few days ago in chasing people in the open field with his machine, is being investigated by the military and police at Marseilles.
Two shepherds noticed an airplane coming from the direction of Istres, where there is a big school of aviation.
The airplane came toward the shepherds, and, dashing down, passed a few yards from them. The shepherds became alarmed when they saw the aviator make another dash past them. Again the machine missed them by a few yards only.
It next went for a priest and a woman and her husband, who were crossing a large field. They ran for their lives, and finally lay knocked on the grass to escape being knocked down by the machine.
The aviator 16 times flew close to the three terrified people and then disappeared.

Vancouver Harbor Proves Busy. VANCOUVER, B. C.—Two million tons of cargo were handled in and out of this port, deep sea and coastwise, in the period from September 1, 1919, to September 1, 1920.

World War Rouses Church to Tremendous Effort.

Methodist Bishop Urges Progress in Religious Endeavor.

BUFFALO, N. Y., March 12.—The world war has awakened the church to its tremendous resources, Bishop Thomas Nicholson told the delegates to the annual meeting of the Methodist Episcopal council of cities held here last week.
"The latest figures give the direct and indirect costs of the world war to be \$348,000,000,000 in money and 42,000,000 in lives," he said. "It is within the power of the church to make impossible another such world catastrophe."
Bishop Nicholson pleaded for a development of progress and modern business methods in the church. "We must have faith in ourselves," he said, "and in our ability to do and to give, and we must be willing to bring the methods of work of the modern church up on a scale commensurate with the progress and development of modern business methods."
"The demand of the hour is for more spiritual power. Not long since I was on the Great Lakes. I saw one of the largest steamers afloat. The owner was aboard and with pride he showed me over the great engines. Then he showed me how they had duplicated engines so that if anything went wrong with the machinery on one part they had an entirely new set of boilers and engines to carry the ship through. They burned hundreds of tons of coal a day, but they could make time in the face of the greatest storm which could be anticipated on the lakes."
"A few days later I was on a little old boat built 25 years ago, with its sputtering engine. It is as useless to try to run the big ocean liner with the steam power of that little boat as it is to run the modern church with the degree of spiritual power we have had in the past. The power of God is unlimited. The greatest need of the hour is the development of moral and spiritual power which will match the commercial and industrial masterpieces of our age."

less elasticity. Many of my faults are physical. If I could have chosen my life—more in the hills and less in the traffic—I should have slept better and might have been less overwrought and disturtable. But after all I am on a man-of-war (as Evan Charteris once said to me when I was prospecting my future married life), which is better than being on a pirate ship, and is a profession in itself.
Well, I have finished. I have tried to relate of my manners, mores, talents, defects, temptations, and appearance as faithfully as I can, and I think there is nothing more to be said. If I had to confess and expose one opinion of myself which might differentiate me a little from other people, I should say it was my power of love coupled with my power of criticism. What I lack most is what Henry possesses above all men, equality, sweetness, self-control, and the authority that comes from moderation and a perfect sense of proportion. I can only pray that I am not too old or too stationary to acquire these.

This is my second attempt to write about myself. I am not at all sure that my old character-sketch of 1888 is not the better of the two. It is more external—but, after all, what can one say of one's inner self that corresponds with what one really is, or what one's friends think one is? Just now I am within eight or nine weeks of my baby's birth and I am tempted to take a gloomy view—I am inclined to sum up my life in this way:
"Unfettered childhood and triumphant youth; a lot of love-making and a little abuse; a little fame and more abuse; a real man and a great happiness; the love of children and seventh heaven; an early death and a crowded memorial service."
As I have hinted, physically, mentally and temperamentally I am quite different from my husband. The thoughtfulness, forbearing and, above all, the love he has shown for me pass understanding.
(Editor's note: Many in England

ascribe much of the political antagonism to Asquith to enemies made by his wife's unconventional conduct which frequently shocked, if it did not positively offend British society.) Henry acquired his high position through loyalty, hard work and steadfastness.
After my husband's first marriage he made money by writing, lecturing and examining at Oxford. When he was called to the bar success did not come to him at once.
It was said that Gladstone only promoted people by seniority and never before knowing what they were like. It was not so in my husband's case—Henry's political rise was unique.
He had no rich patron, and no one to push him forward. He had made for himself a great Oxford reputation; he was a fine scholar and lawyer, but socially was not known to a large circle. It was through deviling the affirmation bill for Lord James of Hereford—the then attorney-general—that my husband became acquainted with Gladstone, and from that moment both the attorney-general and the prime minister marked him out for distinction.
From being a bench member of parliament he became, without the intermediate step of an under-secretaryship, a cabinet minister.
When we were married in 1894 he was home secretary in the liberal government and had already made his reputation as a speaker.
I am an expert listener to public speaking, having heard everyone from William Ewart Gladstone to Woodrow Wilson, and I am not very susceptible to rhetoric. There are men who are life-size imitations of orators but who never really rise above the level of the highest journalism; there are others who in spite of logic and cogency leave you chilly or dusty; and there are some who seem unable to choose between their many perorations at what moment to sit down—but my husband's speaking has seldom failed him or his hearers.
The intellectual fitness that makes you a scholar, and the forensic concentration that makes you a lawyer would in most cases prevent your becoming a demagogue, but Henry's speaking never had any turn that way; no one has played up with more freedom and conscience to high political standards throughout his public life than he has. If his speaking is somewhat wanting in fire it never lacks light and weight, and when he leaves the ground his strength of wing takes his audience with him.
I think Lord Buckmaster and Mr. Lloyd George are probably the best platform speakers in this country, but I have not heard the prime minister for so many years that I do not know if he fills the gaps between his own and his audience's demonstrations. Perorated opinions expressed with fire and gesture, however indistinctly they may link you to your listeners, will not carry conviction unless they are backed by something else; and the momentary magic which fills people with excitement and emotion does not go home with you. I have come to the definite conclusion after hearing every famous orator since 1880, that however wonderfully a man may speak, unless eloquence conveys character and is accompanied by action it is as "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal."
Lord Buckmaster is a great artist. He is a man of feeling, courage and cultivation; and when you get this combined with softness, sincerity, and a fastidious choice of words—you find true oratory; he has "fire in his belly," as Carlyle expressed it. It is when the kind of speaking I like best—Lord Hugh Cecil has white fire and is more brilliant and more elevated, but the president has a quality of his own which is impossible to put on paper. His refined, erudite, quiet, thin, slightly sensual mouth, and race, thin, slightly sensual mouth, and quiet but thrilling voice add to his uniqueness.
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(Another installment next Sunday.)