

Autobiography as originally dictated.

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occasion of a constant facetiousness, but they never dared to go too far, they felt I was rather dangerous. I only once caught one of them scratching up a pair of hearts conjoined with Dick's initials and mine in the bathroom. I pushed him into the bath and turned the taps on. He told the others and they got hold of a manuscript notebook of mine that I had left on the table with some other books in the Monitor's Room. It had poems and bits of essays and things in it and they annotated it critically in blue chalk and all signed their initials except the House Captain who would have nothing to do with it and thought it rather low. I was simply furious when I found it and made a speech. I said that I wanted a signed apology from all the annotators. I said if I was not given the apology within an hour I would choose one of them as solely responsible and punish him. I said I would now have a bath and the first Monitor I met after my bath I would knock down. Whether by accident or whether because he thought his position made him secure, the first Monitor I ~~met~~ met was the Head Monitor and I did knock him down. It was the time of the House preparation which only the Monitors were free not to attend, but a junior happened to pass on the way to the lavatory just as this happened so it could not be hushed up, so the House Master sent for me. The House Master was an excitable elderly man who had some difficulty in controlling his spittle when he got angry. He made me sit down in a chair in his study, then he stood over me clenching his fists and said in his high falsetto voice, "Do you realise you have done a very brutal action?" His mouth was bubbling. I was as angry as he was and jumped up and put myself in a posture of defence, so he dropped his fists. Then I said I would do the same thing to anyone who, after scribbling facetious remarks on my private

Wednesdays were
Guest-nights ~~was Wednesday~~ when the married
officers who usually dined at home were expected to
attend and the Band ~~used to~~ ^{Gilbert & Sullivan music} played behind a curtain.
^{In the intervals the}
The [regimental harper gave solos - Welsh melodies
picked out rather uncertainly on a hand-harp ^{when} and
~~then it was over~~ ^{the programme was} the Bandmaster was invited to the
senior officers table for his complimentary glass of
light-or-rintage! When he was gone and the
junior officers had retired the pot went round
and round ~~and round~~ and the conversation, at first
very formal, became rambling and intimate. Once
I remember, ~~that~~ ^{a senior major} laid it down
^{axiomatically}
[that every so-called sportsman had at one time or
another committed a sin against sportsmanship. ^{When challenged he}
^{cross-examined}
~~interrogated~~ each of his neighbours in turn, putting
them on their honour to tell the truth. One of them
flushing, admitted that he had once shot grouse
two days before the ^{twelfth} ~~12th~~ August - "It was my

last chance before I rejoined the battalion in India."

Another ^{said that} when a public-schoolboy and old enough to know better ^{he} had killed a sitting pheasant with a stone. The next one had gone out with a

poacher ~~and~~ - in his Sandhurst days - and crumbled poison-berry into a trout-stream. An ^{even more} scandalous admission

came from ~~an old-school~~ ^{new-army} a ^{major}, ~~who was~~ ^{estate}

a gentleman-farmer, that his ^{land} had been overrun

with foxes ^{one year} ~~in the~~ ~~mountain-estate~~ ~~and had~~ ^{part of the country} ^{headquarters of the nearest hunt} ^{being thirty miles away} ~~been~~ ^{two} ~~years~~ ^{given} (permission ^{to his} ^{keeper} ^{to} ^{bailliff})

~~show~~ protect ^{the} hen-roosts with a gun. Finally

~~the question~~ ^{was put to a} ^{captain} ^{of the} ^{R.A.M.C.} ^{cross-examined.} ^{when I was a medical student at St Andrews}

(He said "Well, once ^a friend asked me to put

ten bob ^{for} him on a horse in the Lincolnshire.

^{couldn't find my bookmaker in time.} I ~~forgot~~ ^{to put it on} The horse lost and I

never returned the ten bob." At this one of the

guests, an officer in the Royal Scots, ~~and~~

King's Own Scottish Borders, became suddenly excited, ^{so} ^{scowling} ^{his} ^{clenched} ^{fists} jumped up and lent over the table,

"And was ^{not} the name of the horse Strategy?
And will you not pay me my ten shillings now
immediately?"

The most unusual charge ~~that~~ was against the
Regimental Goat-major (a corporal) : it was first
framed as 'lese-majesté', but this was later
reduced to 'Disrespect to an Officer' ^{§ 2} in that he
at Wrexham - on such and such a date - did
prostitute the Royal Goat, being the gift of His
Majesty the Colonel-in-Chief from His Royal bed
at Windsor, by offering his stud-services ~~to~~
to - - Esq, farmer and goat breeder, of Wrexham.

The goat-major pleaded that he ^{had done this because he} was sorry for
the goat, to which he was much attached. He
was reduced to the ranks and the charge of the
goat given to ~~a less tender-hearted soldier.~~
to another.

Can some of the details in Ch. VIII
be taken out, and the chapter
reduced by about 50% and
then be incorporated with ch. VII.

Notes on UP TO YESTERDAY.

We think there is very little to which exception can be taken, although of course it is impossible to give any definite assurance on the point in view of the wide interpretation potentially attaching to Lord Cockburn's definition of the word "obscene".

From this point of view, possibly it would be safer to delete the passage commencing at the bottom of page 151 and running to the greater part of page 152, and also to modify the wording of the incident at the foot of page 203.

modify
leave.

We agree that the sentence struck through in pencil on page 63 should be deleted.

Page 28. No doubt you refer to the Headmaster incident. If so, any action taken, would presumably be on the grounds of libel, and justification would be a complete answer to such an action.

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Pages 29 and 83. We do not think there is any occasion for deletion or modification.

Page 96. We presume that Williams is a disguised name. Otherwise the passage might be actionable.

Page 173. We see no objection.

In general you will appreciate that if, for any reason, action were to be taken under Lord Campbell's Act, Counsel for the Prosecution would have no difficulty in pointing to particular passages as having a tendency to corrupt persons whose minds are open to immoral influences, but this, as you are no doubt aware, would apply to most of the works published to-day, and in our view, the manuscript under review is definitely less provocative than ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT, the popularity of which precludes the likelihood of any action being taken against Mr. Graves' work.

Undoubtedly the most important point which arises for consideration is the reproduction of private letters which Mr. Graves has received, including the large number written by Mr. Siegfried Sassoon.

You are doubtless aware that under the Copyright Act the copyright of letters remains vested in the writer or his personal representative, and in our view it is accordingly essential that Mr. Graves should obtain consent to publication in each case.

Page 218. We think it might be desirable to modify the wording of the paragraph which we have indicated with a line in the margin.

Page 268. Similar remarks apply.

Page 324. As Mr. Becker is now dead this seems to be harmless.

Page 352. The allusion to the club secretary might be actionable. He might perhaps be described as "a club official".

We have given particular attention to the other pages to which you refer us, but in our judgment, subject to the remarks in our previous letter, nothing in them calls for modification.

French map showing the Cambrai - Curigy -
Vermelles trench sector in the summer of 1915.
Each square-side measures 500 yards and is
ticked off into fifty-yard units. Only the
German trench-system is shown in detail; a
broken pencil-line marks the approximate
course of the British front trench. The
mine-craters appear as stars in No Man's
Land. The brickstacks appear as minute squares
in the German line; those held by the British are
not marked. The intended line of advance of
the 19th Brigade on Sept 25th is shown in
pencil on this map which ~~was~~ ^{is} the one ^{that} I carried
on that day.

four years we were together. There were a number of familiar food and drink names in the school-list in my time and I suppose that such of them as survived the war are partners now in their fathers' firms. ~~Four~~ ^{Five} scholars have made names for themselves — Richard Hughes as a B.B.C playwright, Richard Goaden as an actor of old-man parts, Vincent Selipman as author of a propogandist life of Venizelos, Cyril Hartmann as an authority on historical French scandals, and my brother Charles as society gossip-writer on the middle page of The Daily Mail. Occasionally we see another name or two in the newspapers. There was one the other day — Mr. who was in the news for escaping from a private asylum.

57 | * "Why," said the cobbler, "what should I do? Will you have me to go in the king's wars and to be killed for my labour?"

"What, knave," said Skelton, "art thou a coward, having so great bones?"

"No," said the cobbler, "I am not afeared: it is good to sleep in a whole skin."

Merry Tales of Skelton
(Early 16th century.)

Memories of an Infantry Officer
Faber & Faber 7/6 Siegfried Sassoon

I am pleased to see how well Siegfried Sassoon has escaped from the false position in which he left himself at the end of his last book. It will be remembered that the Memories of a Foxhunter Plan was written anonymously - though he was forced to admit authorship very soon after publication - and that it was about two-thirds an autobiography and one third a novel of social satire. To be free to satirise the fox-hunter effectively - himself of course in an early aspect - he had to conceal his former or subsequent acquaintance with anything in life except "Reynardism"; so he omitted

for instance any mention of his self-education
as a poet, ^{and a person of social conscience,} a process that ran concurrently with
his self-education as a 'Reynardist'. When

therefore 'George Sherston', this single-strand
reason of the author, joined the Flintshire
or (Royal Welch) Fusiliers in France in 1915
and served with them for a few chapters it
was a great disappointment to me. These
records of an apprenticeship to trench-warfare

showed the inadequacy of the puppet-author,
(who ~~had much in common with~~ ^{was only saved himself from being} one of
P.G. Wodehouse's heroes by ~~the lack of~~
~~having to be~~ ^{ingenious} butler to do
~~extremely~~ ^{extremely} experiences;

justice to the real author's ^{extremely} experiences;

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The fact was that ^(and from of social conscience) the party in Siegfried
Lassoon began to dominate the Reynardist
as soon as he arrived in France. In my
own autobiography Goodbye to All That
I made a point of writing about my
brother - Fischer, whose story touched with
mine at several critical points, as
straightforwardly as I could. It was
a sort of protest against his realistic
distortion of good historical material.

This made him angry, so angry
indeed that he held up the first
issue of the ^{my} book when it was already

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being distributed, by insisting on the excision
~~omission~~ of a poem of his which I had
quoted without strict respect for the Copyright
Law. Later he wrote to me that the
violence of my book had been a Zeppelin
bomb to the restrained and delicately
written sequel that he was planning.

If, as seems probable, it was my
bomb that destroyed the inadequate
'Sherston' leaving Siegfried Sassoon no
course but to write unrestrained
autobiography, I think that I deserve

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a literary D.F.C.

It is still, ~~unfortunately~~, ^{of course} George Sheston
who is supposed to be writing and with the
same (rather thin) disguise of names —

'Captain ^{to} Dottrell' for Captain Cottrell,
'Bidie Mansfield' for Bidie Staropfield,
'Markington' for H.W. Mansingham and so
on — but the distortion has disappeared.

There are no composite characters
here as in the previous book, no
pretence of authorial infonnousness, no
least shirking of unpalatable truths: it
is Sassoon himself writing this time

and writing just as well as he knows how.
 The price that I am asked to pay for
 my violence — and I pay with an
 unconcealed grin — is to appear as
 'David Comlech' and to have my much
 more said about my grotesque knobby
 face with its crooked nose, my unsoldierlike
 appearance in uniform, my tactlessness,
 absentmindedness, bumptiousness, fidgeting, my
 habit of getting people's backs up and
 my 'nose for the nasty' than my
 importance as a character in the book

What shall I say? Let me say that
 really justifies. ~~For~~ Siegfried Sassoon

is a lion — his courage, aloofness,

for
 normal
 nature
 in reply

saragony,

L sudden rages, his leanness, his springy
walk, his nocturnal habits, his love
of the wilderness, his curious yellow
eyes that hate meeting ^{a direct gaze,} ~~any one's~~
the fatal attraction that perfumes ^{exercis} on him (do I speak in
riddles?) ~~and~~ all proclaim it. ~~But~~ And the

fidelity of this portrait of me; for the

lion ^{can be} as catfish as he is kingly. #

There is only one other character
~~was a~~

whom ~~he~~ he treats with greater severity,

and that is S. Sassoon himself - first

Sherston - Sassoon the military hero, then

Sherston - Sassoon the pacifist crusader.

And since he was a notoriously
successful and bloody fighting-man (as

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well as a notoriously courageous pacifist,
he has ~~been~~ had to be particularly nasty
about himself to make it quite clear that
he is not really boasting. His self-satire,
in one passage at least, ^{hurts others than himself:} ~~does others an~~

injustice: he is describing the Hindenburg
Trench fighting ^{and tells} how a company of the
First Cameronians ran away from a
captured position, alleging a bomb-shortage.
He mocks his own hysterical & egotistical
heroism in retrieving the situation ~~at~~
with a handful of Welshmen and a
large quantity of bombs which, let us
say, the Cameronians had short.

sightedly overlooked; and in continuing to
kill Germans even after being severely
wounded in the neck & shoulder. The

facetiousness of the passage ~~is an injustice~~ to
ST

the ^{admirable} Cameronian corporal who also occurs
in it. That he stayed behind in the

trench, alone, dedicating himself to a
stricter ideal of military behaviour than
his comrades & officers seem to have

held, suggests an egotism & fatuous
sentimentality exceeding even Sherston-

Sassoon's. Sassoon, by the way, does
not mention being recommended for the

Victoria Cross on this occasion, nor¹⁰
being refused it on the ground that
"no awards would be granted for an operation
which ended unsuccessfully" — for
the Cameronians, almost immediately after,
discovered another bomb shortage and
retired once more.

The last chapters concern Sherston-
Sessoon the pacifist. When home on
sick leave he suddenly realised the
futility of the war and with the
moral support of "Thornton Tyrrell"
(Hon. Bertrand Russell) "Markington"

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(H.W. Messingham) and "an M.P." (~~Right Hon~~)

The present Post-Master General) tried to
call public attention to it by refusing to fight
further and ~~inviting~~ ^{inviting} a court-martial for
mutiny. He tells how David Cromlech,
who agreed about the futility, nevertheless
decided to side-track his plans, refusing
to let him, in his shattered nervous
condition, make a martyr of himself to
no purpose; how I swore that I had
consulted the War Office authorities
and had been informed that no
publicity would be given to the protest

and that if he persisted he would be put,
 not into the witness-box but ^{into} the padded
 room of an asylum. He believes that I lied
 but says ^{it} with some generosity that
 had the positions been reversed he would
^{no doubt} have done the same for me.

Let me state ^{here} that David Cromlech
 did not lie, except ^{perhaps} to present an
 unofficial though authoritative hint as an
 official warning. I had satisfied
 myself by discreet enquiries that
 the authorities could not afford to
 court-martial a man of his magnitude

war-record, for fear of the anti-war publicity
 that it would cause, and that his
 neurasthenic condition — complicated at the
 time by actual hallucinations — would ~~be~~
 an ^{justify them} ~~obvious~~ help to them in representing him
 as a mental case. If I had not found
 this out, and if I had not been convinced
 that the protest would not end the war
 by as much as five minutes even if it
 came to a court-martial, and if ~~leaving~~
 I had not been scared of the padded room
 myself (for I had to evacuate myself from
 hospital to deal with the situation or
 was in an advanced neurasthenic state
~~myself~~) I would no doubt have signed

my name to the protest alongside his. As it

was, I forced him to take a medical

board. He was ^{under my escort,} sent to a convalescent

home. ~~It~~ ^{At this point,} his book ends. His

re-emergence a few months later

officially 'cured' to rejoin the ^{regiment} ~~battalion~~

in France and ~~to kill~~ incidentally to

kill more Germans is ~~material for the~~

~~the concluding volume of this another~~

story. It is, let me repeat,

~~This is~~ a very good book ^{indeed} and, even for
the fun of an injunction for libel, I find that I
cannot make myself ^{feel really} angry about it.

~~though I am assured that an injunction
might be obtained but I would not~~

Robert Graves