EDWARD HERON-ALLEN

A TALK DELIVERED BY HIS GRANDSON

IVOR E. JONES

AT THE FIRST EDWARD HERON-ALLEN SYMPOSIUM, CHICHESTER, JULY 2001

Opusculum II

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Ivor E. Jones, at the First Heron-Allen Symposium,
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Ivor E. Jones

Cover Photo:
Granny Mint and Granddaddy
as I remember them.

EDWARD HERON-ALLEN

I last saw my grandfather, Edward Heron-Allen in June, 1940 when I was being evacuated to join my parents in the Isle of Man where my father was stationed as an R.N.V.R. officer. He arranged for my "transportation" with what appeared to me to be an elderly, but in fact a middle-aged lady, Iris Burton. We travelled from Chichester to Liverpool via Victoria and Euston, and to assist us on our journey E.H-A produced two fivers out of his wallet. These were the first £5 notes I'd ever seen and in those days a lot of money.

Professor Brian Harvey in his comprehensive book *The Violin Family and its Makers in the British Isles* writes "Heron-Allen was perhaps not quite a genius but it is time he was more generously given his due as one of the most brilliant and enigmatic polymaths of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in England, adding lustre and illumination to every area he touched."

E.H-A arranged for us to spend the night in London at an old family friend whom I knew as "Prince", one Gabrielle Enthoven who, I digress, had one of the finest collections of Shakespearean playbills which she left to the Victoria and Albert Museum with which she was closely associated. It was many years later that I discovered that her *nom de guerre* referred more to her sexual tendencies than any royal accolade—E.H-A. used to boast that he was the only man ever to see her naked!

It is largely due to Brian's prodding that I was stirred

into action to do what I had longed to do for most of my life—to bring E.H-A, Granddaddy or Ned as we as a family knew him, to life. I am truly delighted that this Society has been founded to bring the many facets of his life into focus.

It is not the object of this address, which will form Opusculum No. 2 of the Society (No. 1 being the biography of his life written by his *alter ego* Christopher Blayre) to talk about his achievements, but rather to try and build a picture of him as a person, husband, father and grandfather—in other words family man.

I cannot start better than by reading extracts from the only diary he ever kept.

He heads it "Hac (forsitan) olim meminisse juvabit codex rerum diurnanium, apud Edward Heron-Allen inceptus, die primo Decembris 1885."

My son, his great grandson, has translated this as "Perhaps one day this journal will help the remembering of the day to day affairs begun by Edward Heron-Allen on the 1st December 1885."

He was actually christened Edward Heron and it must have been at this time he hyphenated his name to the present Heron-Allen. He was known at Harrow School as Allen, E.H.

1st December 1885

*The first words of a diary: what will the last be? For the past four years I have kept a highly condensed pocket diary, in reality no more than an engagement book, in which I have recorded day by day in microscopic writing the principal events that occur in my life, but today I begin to keep a serious journal for two reasons. Firstly, because my bohemian and literary tastes have brought me at one time or another into the society of all the best known members of both of "le monde comme il faut" & "le monde comme il en faut" and it may be interesting at some future time either for myself or for someone else to see what my first impressions of these people were, & and secondly because today after having been admitted a solicitor for a year and a half, I have thrown up the law & devoted my time, & my talents such as they are to literature. Today therefore I begin the serious business of life: I am twenty four on the 17th of this month, I have extremely good health unbounded perseverance of things I like, no religious principles to speak of and, for my age a well known name in literature, and a widely spread reputation as a student of Musical Archaeology and Cheirosophy in the circles which take an interest in those perhaps somewhat contrasting studies. I start therefore with a certain amount of reading: unlimited enthusiasm and £150 a year which the Governor has paid into my account at the London & Westminster Bank monthly [*11 guineas*]. I live at home & am therefore free from the sordid worries of a literary beginner, is there any reason why I should not succeed. My two largest books "Violin-making as it was and is" (Ward Lock & Co. 1884) which has recently gone into a second edition, & "A Manual of Cheirosophy" (Ward Lock 1885) which has just lately appeared, are at any*

rate a start & an introduction to the notice of publishers, though having sold the copyrights I shall not get any more out of them. Avanti! then, I only hope I shall keep up my hopes as they are now kept up, & that the pages of this journal may record successes & not failures, oh! to be able for an instant to look into that future, which I firmly believe is pre-existent but veiled to our finite minds, for I do believe what Omar Kayyam says in his Rubaiyat

With Earths first clay He did the last man knead,
And of the last harvest sowed the seed.
And the first morning of creation wrote
What the last dawn of reckoning shall read.

So much for my prefatory excursion—no wonder I am nervous, doesn't Shakespeare continually point out the fact that "Excursions & alarms" are always concomitant? My journal must of necessity be retrospective so I needn't begin it with a kind of Autobiography up to date.

Here is the first gap in his life from leaving school, joining the firm, apprenticing himself and publishing his first two books.

This morning I went up to 17 Carlisle St (the office) for the last time, heaped my various belongings together for removal at the first time the carriage goes up to town, dictated my last attendances & went to Marlborough St. Police Court to make a last declaration "in the matter of H.J. Bell deceased". This done I said "good bye" to the faithful Rich & proceeded to the British Museum to make the notes for the article on Hand superstitions which inaugurates "My literary life" & which will serve as the

basis for my lecture on the subject which has to be delivered on the fourth before the Odd Volumes. This took me from 11.30 till 4 & I found time to look through Leigh Hunt's Life of Lord Byron in search of a description of the poet's hand, which I found about half way through. The whole work is a bitter and ungrateful snarl on the part of Leigh Hunt (who would seem to have been a most mean-spirited hound), at a man who, in every way his superior appears to have befriended him through thick and thin, & at times actually to have supported him entirely. Every friendly letter of Byron is reproduced & snarled at & every kind action is attributed to some low motive, altogether an unpleasant book to read [already he was a man of firm convictions].

Almost the first person I met in the reading-room was J. Fitzgerald-Molloy the Novelist, & on my telling him of my determination to take up literature as a profession he warmly congratulated me: he is a most charming man although his photograph... makes him look like a dissipated Russian Count!... I had long known him by sight & one day James Mew the Orientalist, came & told me that J. F-M wanted to know me & asked me to let him introduce me to him. It was shortly after the appearance of my first book written jointly with Henry Frith "Chiromancy or the Science of Palmistry" Routledge 1883) & I found that Molloy was an ardent student of all matters savouring of the occult so we struck up a firm friendship at once.

When I got home I had time to play a little on the viola [his?] *before going to dress for dinner & the play at the Court theatre for which I was late, however we saw the second and third acts of "The Magistrate" an immensely funny but very vulgar piece. Sweet simpatico Marion Terry played an odious frivolous girl, Clayton a low comedy old officer & Arthur Cecil a weak-minded magistrate. A young*

man named Eversfield played extremely well, he has I should think a brilliant future before him

2nd December. David Schloss once expressed his opinion to the effect that for all literary work one ought to be paid three times, first as a lecture, next as a magazine article and lastly as a book, an excellent plan and one which I should like to carry Out to the letter. [Then follows two pages on Marchesa Macchetta d'Allegri who was Blanche Roosevelt of that American family with whom he was obviously smitten.]

He then delivers his lecture to the Odd Volumes on 4th December which takes him twenty minutes—perhaps this should serve as a bench mark for this Society?

4th December. I received this morning a glorious review of my book "A Manual of Cheirosophy" from the Manchester Examiner of the 1st inst., during the course of which the reviewer says "Mr Heron-Allen is a writer whose opinions on any ordinary subject no worthy critic or reader would think of treating with disrespect. He is a man of learning, & also of that all round culture in which some men of learning are deficient; a man too, of clear & robust intelligence, who has devoted years of study to the subject of which this volume treats, & in whose mind study has led to firm and unalterable conviction of the truth of the opinions here set forth", & a lot of other equally pretty things. I only hope they will do the book a great deal of good.

December 5th 1885 Wrote several letters this morning, two to the Editors of the New York Times *and the* Manchester Guardian *offering my services as special*

correspondent in the east. [Perhaps we are fortunate he was not accepted.] *In the evening I went up to call on Mme Macchetta and got home late, I found her seedy I am sorry to say: she told me a beautiful story about Oscar Wilde & Isidore de Lara, the former had written some intensely erotic verses, & de Lara proposed to put them to a drowsy voluptuous melody "Ah! my dear Isidore" replied Oscar "do so by all means, together we will wreck families"!!*

We don't know when he first met the Wilde's but from letters we know they were in correspondence in January 1885 when Oscar acknowledged receipt of his violin book.

December 6th 1885 Sunday. This done I felt so utterly done up that I went upstairs & wrapping myself, in my maud [a Scottish shepherd's woollen plaid] *went fast to sleep until 6 when I got up came down & talked to the family who were dining, (we dine at the ghastly hour of 5.30 on Sunday)* [I remember my mother quoting him "we dine six nights a week & have supper on Sundays"] *after which I went up & dressed & went up to town by the 7.17 train to dine with Sir George Errington at the Reform Club... after which we adjourned to the Lyric Club where a smoking concert was going on. I left at 1.30 very late but my nap in the afternoon prevented my being tired.*

December 7th 1885 ...after dinner we discussed psychical phenomena & books until 11.30 (pm) when we broke up in astonishment at the hour I to catch the last train from Waterloo where I met Frank Lewis, to my mind a curiously objectionable boy.

11th December 1885. Four days since the last entry: work and play combined have left me not a moment in which to write my journal. I finished my article "Nicolo Paganini & his Guarnerius" writing this article has brought back to me all my adventures in Genoa with the most startling fidelity & I have good reason to thank the idea which first made me keep my diaries of foreign travel in the way I do, that is as follows:—I take with me paper this size (8" x 10") & record every day on the spot, minutely the events which befall me in the form of a letter. When two sheets are full I fold them up address them to myself at home on the back, & post them home; anyone who wants to know what I am doing can open them, & when I return I collect them & mount them in a book, in this way I get my freshest impressions of places with the stamps & so on of the place whence I post them.

This is from the first bound volume I have, stamped Vol. I and complete to Vol. XXVIII covering the years 1881 to 1937 and they could well afford the material for a future Opusculum. My daughter has paid many visits to Achill Island, Co Mayo, reference his visit there "Clare Island Survey August 1911" Vol. XV and it proved most useful—the place had hardly changed, though the prices have as it has become a popular place for summer holidays. All are very readable; in the one where he meets his second wife he describes his feelings for her in ancient Persian script (so they must have been strong).

13th December 1885. An interesting & busy day. Sunday ... in the afternoon I went to call on Mrs Oscar Wilde. Oscar is away in Edinburgh, but his charming wife kills time pretty satisfactorily by herself how picturesque she is! & how dignified. She was a Miss Constance Lloyd, very aesthetic & poetic of course & devotedly attached to Oscar, rather small with a pretty sedate little face & deep thrilling eyes thrown into relief by masses of glorious black-brown hair which frames her face in artistic confusion. [Then follows a detailed description of the drawing room.].

Entries of people met for 14th, 15th & 16th then on

17 December 1885. My birthday. No one remembered it this morning save one girl who hates me whom I mesmerised in Scotland two years ago. She can't bear the sight of me but cannot help attending to what I say.

18th December 1885. This morning I spent writing letters: my correspondence is perfectly dreadful in its magnitude, I receive & write on average... a total of 2920 in a year so that postage stamps are rather an item in my expenditure. [then £12. 3s 4d., now £554.80 pence]

19th December 1885. [here he quotes Whistler's famous remark to Oscar Wilde "Never mind Oscar you will". He goes on to write] *Oscar repeats other peoples remarks as his own sometimes I am sorry to say.*

20th December 1885. [Here he quotes a miserable Oscar saying] *"that life since he was twenty had been spent attending the funeral of his youth"; a remark borrowed I think from Beranger.*

Entries for 21st 22nd 23rd & 24th December of people he met.

25th December 1885 Christmas Day! What changes in the family since last Christmas, George married (3rd Jan) & Archie married (13th October) & I no longer a solicitor (thank God!). I wonder what will happen before next Christmas, Ciel! If one could only look forward. [And so on, the final entry being]—*driving home and arriving at exactly twelve, father opening the door to let in the new year, admitted me! Absit Omen.*

So now we are at the end of the year! & what a year ...what changes will 1886 bring us—if one could only look into the future.

MDCCCLXXXVI

1st January 1886. [He meets various people including] *to Oakley Street where I meet Prince Malcolm Khan & after a most delightful talk to him came home to dinner. He told us about the Shah's visit to Europe which he arranged, & which seems to have been attended with great difficulties & dangers: he is certainly a wonderful man & is deeply versed in the mysteries of occult science. I must cultivate him and learn something about the Oriental mysticism from him: he is a short grey wizened up oriental but dresses in European costume excepting on State occasions when Solomon in all his glory was a fool to him. Frank Allen dined with us & gave us an account of the bribery necessary at the War Office before one can do anything there. He seems to have been concerned in some bullet making scheme, & had to manage the officials very deftly to get it through.*

2nd January to 6th January. [Describes meeting various people at various functions including W.S. Gilbert, Mrs

Beerbohm-Tree and H. M Stanley the African Explorer whom he describes as]—*"a small man, very quiet not to say taciturn & dull with a somewhat queer desiccated appearance."* [The only other entry of note is on 5th] *In the afternoon Blanche Roosevelt came out & we spent the afternoon together laying the plot of a novel that we are to collaborate together, an American-Byzantine quasi-historic story to be entitled "Une Nuit du Ramadan" or its English equivalent.*

I wonder if it was ever completed as the last diary entry is "7th January 1886".

Christmas Day 1889. At the above point, by a merciful dispensation of the Providence that orders all things for our good I appear to have got tired of keeping a journal, & a great deal of utterly useless MSS have [sic] *been spared the pains of existence. Those who regret the non-continuance of my confessions are referred to George Moore's "Confessions of a Young Man" Paul Bourget's "Confessions de Claude"; Alfred de Mussel's "Confessions d'un Enfant du Siecle," J.J. Rousseau's "Confessions" & "Le Journal des Goncourt"—why should I swell the list with a feeble & inferior imitation?—as for incidents the same things happen to every man, whether he writes about them or no.*

Edward Heron-Allen 25 Dec 89

As his Grandson I wish he had written more but I hope these brief extracts give us some idea of the self confidence he had as a young man & the depth of his already multiple interests.

oooOooo

Granddaddy was married twice, first on 1st July 1891 to Henrietta Marianna Frederika Lehmann who sadly died, we believe, of consumption, ten & a half years later; he met his second wife, my grandmother two years later on the Nile and fell in love with her little brown feet.

Prior to my evacuation I spent two holidays at Large Acres and it is largely from the memory of a ten year-old (enhanced by mind joggers of my family) that the following snippets are culled.

At breakfast the cook would present herself to discuss the menu for the day and the chauffeur would appear at the window to receive his instructions which included which lawns needed to be mowed and the lessons the "young master" (me) would require on his bicycle up and down the archery ground. All through breakfast (despite his hate of Germans & the Bosch) his dachshund (named Schmidt), seated in a chair beside him would receive suitable portions of his breakfast. At dinner Granny Mint would demand the cork of any wine bottle opened and threw it out of the window (specially opened) declaring "once its been opened it won't keep." (Flanders & Swan at the Fortune theatre many years later.)

My mother, Ianthe Theodora Heron-Allen was born on 9th September, 1904. She had these impossible Christian names so that she would not be called them but by the acronym of ITHA which name she used all her life.

In 1906 E.H-A wrote that it had "been proved to us that our daughter Itha was happier and in better health at the seaside". So on September 5th of that year he bought a 5 acre plot in Selsey called Large Acres for £735 and other properties. The foundation stone was laid on 5th January, 1907 and on 13th July they moved in.

My mother, she admitted herself, was a very fussy feeder and so to get her to eat anything at all she had to be told stories. This was the origin of some of the extraordinary nick-names and *nom-de-plumes* relatives & friends of the family had heaped on them.

To quote: his wife Edith Emily was the Lady of Light—in Persian Nour-i-mah—so to Ned she was always Nour but to persuade the ingestion of food to Itha she came up with "My name is Araminta Arethusa Woodhouse and I'm a woodlouse". This was rapidly reduced to "Mint" and to all of us thus was she known (to us Granny Mint).

Itha's two cousins Marjorie Helen Hinchcliffe and Winifred Kathleen Wells rapidly became Marne, Peggy, Peg or Unchpin depending on the mood for the former and Foxee with an indefinite number of "e's" at the end, again depending upon the mood or the story. Friends likewise suffered; Veronica Gotch (one time 1st viola in the D'Oyly Carte orchestra) became Nicola or Beak (she had a very prominent nose), Gabrielle Enthoven, Prince (although this accolade had been passed on her earlier); the local doctor Perky (he was a bit like a sparrow), but the one that my sister Pat and I liked best was that for Barbara J. Hardcastle; belle ami joi the Sausage Queen, which was rapidly reduced by us to Bellamy Jane the Sausage Queen, and so on. He was very careful not to let any names be applied to him other than Ned, which both Itha & Amorel, her sister born 15th June, 1908, called him. I think this gives a picture of a well-knit family.

When Large Acres was built a comprehensive visitors book was started into which reluctant or enthusiastic week-end visitors had to inscribe their feelings. Amongst the more famous there are entries from John & Val

Geilgud, Ivor Novello, Lady Baden-Powell, Weedon Grossmith, Sir Archibald Hamilton, Vyvyan Holland (son of Oscar Wilde) and Lord Walsingham. My mother, after her marriage to my father wrote "In the old days I always thanked my lucky stars I'd never have to write in 'The Book'—I spoke too soon. I left single and returned double to find this for me though! I'm not a guest. P.s. I'll never write in it again!!!" The book in itself could be source of another opusculum.

It's my mother who told me during a wild 20's party in the Library (about 30 yards from the main house) that Granddaddy appeared on the scene to remonstrate about the noise to be greeted by one of the guests asking who the old buffer was to which he got the reply "I am merely the owner of this caravanserai."

I don't know why but apparently he and GBS didn't see eye to eye which perhaps explains the line in Pygmalion when Professor Higgins asks one of the costermongers how his people are down in Selsey.

In the library amid the ten thousand books—one case was kept locked, Case A, containing all the Victorian pornographic literature to which his Will specified very precise disposal instructions. Also in the library were a host of Victorian children's toys, a Mummy, the two violins he made and a secret room known in the family as the Scrut.

After supper in the evening he would prepare a cigar & fill 3 pipes with Afrikander Smoking mixture. When these were all smoked he would go to bed but he saved all the dottles which he would mix up with next day's allotment of tobacco; a custom we all thought revolting.

Every Christmas I and my sisters got a mint set of the coins of the year and sadly immediately spent them. I

also remember we were allowed to choose the menu for Sunday lunches (roast chicken & bananas in syrup with us having the Kings and Queens).

I am sure he was not a plagiarist and I consider the following to some of his original quotes.

A filthy mind is a continual feast.

When handed a small child to admire "Now isn't that a baby." (It covers a multitude of errors and usually satisfies the doting parent.)

I like a manly man, a womanly woman a girlish girl but I can't abide a boily boy.

I liked and admired him.