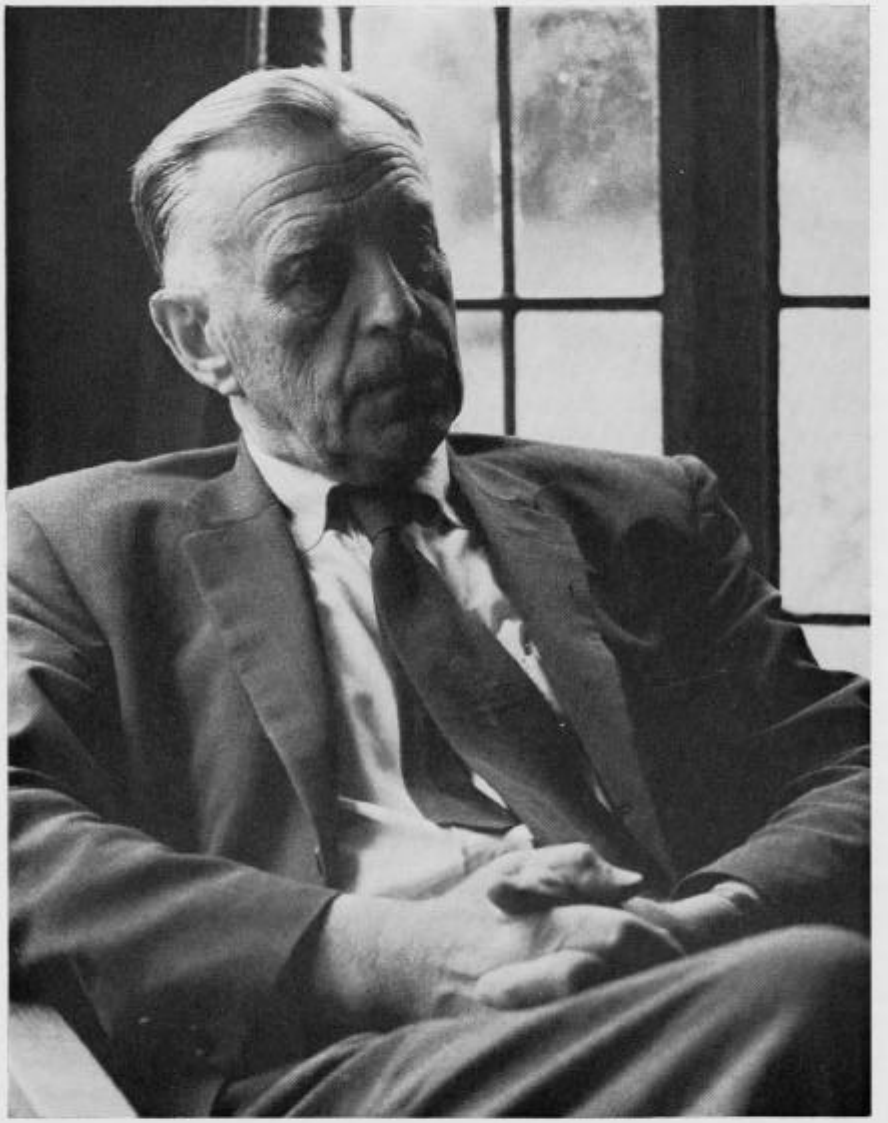
PLATE XXXIII



STANLEY BENNETT

HENRY STANLEY BENNETT

1889–1972

HENRY STANLEY BENNETT (known to his many friends everywhere as Stanley) was born on 15 January 1889, and died at the age of eighty-three, on 6 June 1972. It is well that his life-span was long, for, before he attained the academic prominence and wide recognition which we associate with his name, he had to go through an unusually hard and prolonged time of struggle. Indeed, he called the autobiographical notes which he jotted down near the end of his life (and which, by the kindness of his widow Joan Bennett, I am permitted to use here) 'Journey from Obscurity'. His life was truly a 'success story': the ultimate success being won not by accident or luck, but by sheer merit and hard work.

Stanley was the eldest of four, the children of a small shopkeeper in Hastings. Much of his early life was spent in a basement room, where round one table the family worked or played, with constant comings and goings. But though life was dingy and obscure it was not needy, and Stanley's early years were full of interests and simple joys. He was a bright, industrious lad, ready from the start to make the most of every opportunity that came his way, and aware—dimly at first, but ever more clearly as time went on—that reading would open the door to worlds as yet unrealized. He read everything he could lay hands on, beginning with *Chips*, *Comic Cuts*, and *Tit-Bits*, and going on to the *Boy's Own Paper*. By his sixth or seventh year he was absorbing Rider Haggard and Stanley Weyman, and he soon went on (using the Hastings public lending and reading libraries) to W. W. Jacobs, Conan Doyle, Kipling, Maurice Hewlett, and even (at the age of ten) Meredith's *Rhoda Fleming* and *The Egoist*. He also read his way into the poets (at first through that admirable anthology 'The Pageant of English Poetry'), and was familiar with about half of Shakespeare's plays by the time he was eighteen. His father's friend 'Uncle' Harry Harland was a sub-editor of *The Financial Times*; he lived in London, and had a good library there in which Stanley freely browsed.

But there were other pathways opening too, notably music. In the upstairs sitting-room there was a piano, and here, he says, 'I spent many dreary sessions . . . until I slowly emerged

able to play some pieces to my own satisfaction, and what was more important, able to play the accompaniments to the songs sung by my mother.' These songs were mostly the drawing-room ballads of the day: 'I hear you calling me', 'Thora', 'Four Indian Love Lyrics', or numbers from the current musical comedies. And there was the local theatre, to which Stanley often went with his mother to see not only the 'hits of the time'—'The Geisha', 'Our Miss Gibbs', 'The Belle of New York', 'The Sign of the Cross', 'Monsieur Beaucaire', etc.—but also Benson's Shakespeare company. Both in music and the drama the pattern is the same: from such beginnings Stanley's taste graduated steadily to a discriminating love of the very best. I may anticipate here to remark that many years later in Cambridge, when Stanley was a distinguished don, music was one of the bonds in our long friendship. There was a time when, every Friday evening, he used to come round to our house to play piano duets with me. He had not kept up his piano-playing into middle life, but he was always a good sight-reader, and we got through many a symphony of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, etc., with much enjoyment (to ourselves). Very rarely, he could even be persuaded to sing, which he did in a voice like his uncle Lou's—a thin, quavering tenor. I remember particularly his rendering of the old French song 'Bois épais'.

Stanley was sent to a 'Church School' some two miles from Hastings. Here the teaching was humdrum, but the headmaster was 'to put it bluntly . . . a gentleman', and the 'mixed aroma of Harris tweeds and tobacco' symbolized a set of standards 'quite foreign to our bourgeois outlook and upbringing'—standards which were unconsciously absorbed with educative effect. But Stanley's best teachers were the hills and heaths and cliffs of Sussex. His father too, besides being a shopkeeper was a bookish man; and Stanley, who was devoted to him, learnt from him the habit of wide reading. The father was also 'a coleopterist of considerable distinction', and Stanley often went with him, on foot and by bicycle, on collecting expeditions. In this way he formed a love of the countryside, and of cycling, which was of lasting benefit to him throughout his life. He was also summoned, and awakened, by the sight of the noble parks, manors, and medieval castles of Sussex. By these, and by his father's collection of books—Darwin, Huxley, Lecky, Winwood Reade, Henry Morley's editions, the Camelot Classics, etc.—he was given 'fugitive glimpses of something which neither school nor its teachers could give'. Of these widening influences

a visit to one of his father's fellow entomologists, a Sussex country rector, is typical. The boy was struck by the courtesy of the rector, and by his 'spacious rooms with their air of gracious living'. He felt 'out of his milieu', and was glad to escape back to the fields and woods; but he had been attracted, and never forgot that glimpse. To anticipate here once again, Stanley continued to be an inveterate cyclist (artificial foot and all) up to at least the age of eighty. One of the familiar Cambridge sights for half a century was that of Stanley on his high, old-fashioned bicycle, felt-hatted, plying deliberately between Park Terrace (or later, Church Rate Corner) and Emmanuel. And it was my privilege once, in the thirties, to go with him on a week's cycling tour in the Cotswolds and beyond. I cannot remember all that we did and saw, but it included Chipping Norton, Compton Wynyates, Malmesbury, Fairford, and Bath. Our object was to enjoy the country and Stanley never lectured me, from the heights of his great knowledge, on the medieval antiquities we visited. I was surprised when at the end he said 'Well, that was our £10 holiday!'—but I see now that this was a survival from the days when he had had to account for every penny spent. In his autobiography Stanley has recorded two 'spots of time' which retained a virtue for him through life: one, returning by boat at night from Bodiam Castle to Rye on the silent Rother; the other, being nearly benighted and cut off by the tide beneath the towering cliffs of Hastings. The important thing is that he was, and remained, open to such intimations.

When Stanley reached the (then) school-leaving-age of fourteen, it was decided that he should become an elementary-school teacher. For this purpose he had to spend the next three years training as a pupil-teacher, at an Elementary School on the hills nearly four miles north-east of Hastings. This meant leaving home at about 7 o'clock each morning, pushing his bicycle up the steep hill past the castle, and then a more level ride through what was then open country. 'I cannot overestimate the amount of memorizing I did as I rode those miles to school every morning'—Euclid, the dates of the kings and queens of England, of the Wars of the Roses, and of Marlborough's campaigns, and so on. Stanley and his colleagues thus settled down to 'an orgy of fact-grubbing and information-mongering . . . pathetic in its wrong-headedness'. But he, and the one friend who went on with him to further training, had an unshakeable determination to get to a Training College, and cheerfully accepted the exercises of memory which this entailed.

At the end of this apprenticeship, having passed the necessary exams, Stanley entered St. Mark's College, Chelsea (in 1907), to train for two years towards recognition as a fully qualified teacher. This meant a totally new kind of life for Stanley: hideous buildings, no privacy, spartan fare, drab routine, workhouse-like strictness of discipline, and, above all, town instead of country. However, amid all the Dickensian restraint and hardness of this near-prison, there was one mitigating circumstance: the lecturer on English Literature was A. W. Reed. Stanley's debt to Reed was immense; for two years he 'hung on his words', and learnt from him 'what literature could mean'.

Nor was this regimented life without its joys and alleviations. Stanley, and his friend Arch from Hastings, walked hundreds of miles exploring London, visiting the South Kensington Museums, the Tate Gallery, and—especially—the Chelsea Public Library, where Stanley read voraciously. Most valued of all were the concerts and theatres—the latter almost beyond reach till the second year, when a late leave was allowed once a term. But Sunday after Sunday saw Stanley in the free standing room of the Albert Hall's top gallery, listening to first-class music under Sir Landon Ronald.

Disquiet broke in when, towards the end of the second year, it became clear that Stanley, though academically first-class, was not going to be a successful teacher. He started work, in August 1909, at a school in a very poor district of Paddington, and writing of this sixty years later he says 'I cannot contemplate it without horror'. The ordeal was over in eight weeks, after which he found himself back home in Hastings without a job and with a record of failure.

After a dreary time of waiting, the admirable A. W. Reed came to the rescue, and Stanley was appointed to a temporary post at the St. Mark's College School. This was an improvement on the Paddington School; the classes were smaller and the masters—mostly graduates—were kind. The salary was £100 a year, and out of this £1 a week went on lodgings and meals, leaving £1 for everything else (books, concerts, and theatres chiefly). But despite the Albert Hall and Covent Garden, where all cares could be forgotten, there was a constant feeling of insecurity. He knew by now that schoolmastering was not his vocation, and he remembered the parting advice of the Hastings headmaster: 'Try and get a degree.' So, undaunted as ever, he started work on French and Latin (hitherto unknown to him) for the London Matriculation. Meanwhile, he transferred to

a post at the Archbishop Temple's School, Lambeth. Here, 'the boys were drawn from the streets of Lambeth and Kennington, many of them poorly dressed and stunted in growth, and of mediocre intelligence'. But they were not deficient in riotousness, and it looked like being 'Paddington all over again'.

However, deliverance was not far off. He had already started evening classes (L.C.C. and Birkbeck College), when he discovered that he could enrol at King's College (London) for evening classes on English Literature, leading to a Diploma. Twice a week then, he would hurry over to the Strand, to sit spell-bound at the feet of Sir Israel Gollancz as he surveyed English literature from the beginnings to recent times. 'To come into his lecture room at the end of a gruelling day at school was to move into another world.' It was Stanley's first breath of the mountain-air of true scholarship, and he inhaled it deeply.

Soon another window was opened: this time into a world remote from books and schools. Since Archbishop Temple's School was a Church School it was often visited by clergymen; and one of the curates of St. Mary's, Lambeth, happened to ask Stanley to help his newly formed Boy Scout Troop. He agreed, and within a few months found himself an Assistant Scout-Master. This brought him companionship and friendship not only with the boys, but also with a group of men unlike any he had so far known: 'do-gooders' in the slums of south London —a parson, a doctor, an artist, and a medical student. It was a liberating if exacting experience.

Stanley was in Brittany with this clergyman only a few days before the 1914 war broke out, and heard in Dinant the tocsin calling Frenchmen to arms.

After a year of self-doubting, during which (on the advice of his Lambeth friends) he went on with his teaching, he joined the Inns of Court O.T.C. And after another year, spent in training, he was commissioned with the 24th London Regiment, and sent to France. For about five months his experiences were like those of most infantry subalterns, but almost immediately after going over the top at the battle of Messines Ridge on 11 June 1917, he was hit by a shell, and was sent home to England minus his right foot.

Stanley himself makes light of his war experience, and space compels us to pass it over now—though we must not minimize its importance in our thoughts. Intrinsically, the most significant thing that happened to him during those months in the trenches was his chancing to see, in a copy of *The Times*, the announcement

that an English Tripos had been set up in Cambridge. 'I remember turning to my Company Commander (an old Cambridge man) and saying "If I come out of this show safely I shall go up to Cambridge and read for the English Tripos".' He was invalided out in April 1918, and after spending many months getting used to the artificial foot, and taking the London Diploma, he entered Emmanuel College in October.

But first, through A. W. Reed, he had met Alfred Pollard at the British Museum, and had been fired with enthusiasm by Pollard's suggestion that he might collaborate in work on the evolution of the Shakespeare texts, and how they had been transmuted as they passed from actors to printers. He also paid a preliminary visit to Cambridge in June 1918 and—so far had the war taken 'degree' away—dined at High Table with the Master of Emmanuel (Peter Giles). More important still, he met H. M. Chadwick and Mansfield Forbes, who both welcomed this eager recruit and explained to him the scope of Sections 'B' and 'A' respectively. Both became first teachers and later personal friends. One must always remember that Stanley was nearly thirty when he came up; this accounts for the odd telescoping of his university career, whereby he was not only one of the first students in the new English School but also one of its earliest lecturers. He was also the last man to get a B.A. in English by a research thesis instead of by examination—an option which thereafter became obsolete. This he did on the advice of the man who counted for most of all in Stanley's Cambridge life: G. G. Coulton. In those days it often happened that young men reverenced true greatness, even in a professor; and in Stanley hero-worship was instinctive. Chadwick was his first academic hero; then 'Q'. Stanley says of 'Q': 'one of the anticipatory delights of coming up to Cambridge was the knowledge that Q was there . . . and that it would be possible to hear him lecture and perhaps even to meet him. . . . I frequently came away from his rooms feeling an inch higher in stature from contact with such a man.'

He first heard Coulton lecture (on 'Literature, Life and Thought in the time of Chaucer and onwards') on the first lecture-day of his first term—an auspicious beginning, and one big with meaning for the future. But his first actual encounter with the great man is best recounted in his own words:

> On the 11th of November 1918 we were all expecting to hear that the War was at an end, but for some reason . . . we found ourselves in our various lecture rooms as if nothing unusual was to happen; and it

was to hear Coulton lecture on John Gower—not the most exciting of medieval poets—that we gathered . . . at 11 o'clock that morning. As he told me long afterwards, . . . Coulton knew that he had a difficult task before him to persuade his audience to take much interest . . . , and in his effort to keep our attention he was concentrating on his notes to such an extent that when . . . noises were heard in every direction [he alone remained unaware]. There was heavy stamping and clapping in the room above; the National Anthem broke out in various places, and at last the near-by bells of Great St. Mary's rang out. This was too much for Coulton. . . . He cried out in exasperation: 'I wish those bells would not make so much noise.' This was too much for me, and I cried out 'On the contrary, Sir, we wish that they could make even more noise.' Coulton was completely taken off balance for a moment, and then it all came back to him, and his wonderful blue eyes gleamed as he smiled and said 'I beg your pardon, all of you,' and the class broke up. The next day saw me in cap and gown making a formal call on him to apologize for brawling in his lecture room—and that was the beginning of a friendship that got ever closer and closer until the day of his death some thirty years later. . . .

Chadwick, Q and Coulton—these were the inestimable gifts that Cambridge bestowed on me after all those years of waiting.

'There can be few scholars', writes Derek Brewer, 'who are still receiving royalties from their B.A. thesis. That H. S. B. should still be doing so[1] marks not only the enduring interest of *The Pastons and their England* but the historical uniqueness of a career built on the enjoyment and service of books, that has combined great modesty with great persistence and success.' And here let me quote a passage kindly written for this Memoir by the Bishop of Ripon (Dr. J. R. H. Moorman) who is not only an Honorary Fellow of Stanley's college but also an eminent medieval historian:

When Stanley Bennett came up to Cambridge in 1918, the English school was only just coming into being, and there were still some who thought that the teaching of English literature should be included under the general heading of 'Medieval and Modern Languages'. In order to keep English literature in a historical setting, it had been agreed that each period should be studied in conjunction with the social life of the time in which it was produced.[2] G. G. Coulton was invited to compile a collection of extracts from medieval writings. This was published by the University Press in 1918 as *Social Life in England from the Conquest to the Reformation.*

[1] 1969, quoted by Dr. Brewer's permission from his Bibliography presented to H. S. B. on his eightieth birthday.

[2] See G. G. Coulton, *Fourscore Years*, p. 308.

Pleased with the success of this book Coulton launched a series which he called *Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought*, the first volume of which—Margaret Deanesly's *The Lollard Bible*—was published in 1920.

By this time Bennett was at Emmanuel, writing a thesis for his B.A. Coulton met him soon after he came to Cambridge, and must have recognised his ability, as he invited him straight away to write a book for this series. It is a sign of Coulton's complete faith in Bennett that he should have thought him capable, at this stage in his career, of writing a scholarly book which would stand comparison with works by well-known scholars such as Eileen Power, Margaret Deanesly and others.

It was Coulton who suggested to Stanley Bennett a subject which he thought might prove fruitful.[1] Coulton's first historical work had been a book called *From St Francis to Dante*, which was published in 1906. This book had been a success, and Coulton suggested to Bennett that he might write a somewhat similar book, using the *Paston Letters* as his main source. Here was a large collection of letters, written in the 15th century, illustrating the life and fortunes of a Norfolk family. Bennett studied these, and other material from the same period, much as Coulton had done with Salimbene's Chronicle, and wrote the book known as *The Pastons and their England*, which was published in the *Cambridge Studies* in 1922.[2]

Bennett's book is a very competent piece of work and a remarkable achievement for a man with no specialised training in medieval history. The title precisely describes the book, which tells us a good deal about the Paston family and about the England in which they lived. Bennett made the most of the letters, which are quoted or referred to on practically every page. But he managed also to provide enough general information about such things as Law, Education, Religion and Home Life to show the kind of world in which the Pastons lived.

To some extent the book had its own self-imposed limitations. It dealt with the fifteenth century and with one particular part of the country. It also portrayed the life and thought of a country family of some means. As soon, therefore, as Bennett had finished this he started straight away on a larger canvas, a study of life in England as seen, not by the gentry but by the peasant.[3] For this he chose an earlier period, 1150–1400, ending just about where the Pastons came in. There had been considerable studies by such men as Maitland and Vinogradoff of medieval law and administration, and of the working of the manorial

[1] Bennett tells this in the preface to *The Pastons and their England*, p. x.

[2] Later in the same year Eileen Power's *Medieval English Nunneries* appeared in the same series. Bennett, although busy with his own book, very kindly compiled the index to this long book, filled with much detail. Op. cit., p. vii.

[3] Coulton, writing in 1925 the Preface to his book, *The Medieval Village* (p. xi), says that Mr. H. S. Bennett was then carrying out researches in the field of peasant life in England in the Middle Ages.

system; but, so far, little attention had been paid to the day-to-day life of the English peasant. 'Our present knowledge', wrote Bennett, 'of the legal position far outweighs our vague conception of the economic and social life in those thousands of English villages and hamlets scattered up and down the countryside. This is the disproportion which I am striving to reduce in the following pages.'[1] But there was plenty of material. On an earlier occasion Bennett had written of the 'incredibly numerous masses of documents', and said that 'the medieval records preserved in the Public Record Office and in the great Libraries are at once the pride and the despair of the social historian'.[2]

If Bennett had already started work on this study in 1925, then it took him something like twelve years to complete his work, though, on the way, he published two books, *England from Chaucer to Caxton* in 1928 and *The Jew of Malta and the Massacre at Paris* in 1931 (edited by him for the Arden Edition). *Life on the English Manor* was published by the Cambridge University Press as another of the volumes of Coulton's Studies, in 1937. Bennett took the period of 1150 to 1400 as the basis of his study and explored a great many sources in order to get a picture of how the English peasant lived, what he did, and (so far as possible) what he thought. Although Bennett did not make much use of unpublished material, he went systematically through the printed sources, including the literature of the period, wills, cartularies and chronicles, sermons and legal documents, from which he built up a convincing picture of the life of the peasant during this period of two and half centuries.

In both his books—on the Pastons and on the Manor—there is no doubt that Bennett owed a great deal to Coulton, whom he described as 'my friend and master'. Like Coulton he worked methodically through masses of literature, collecting little bits of information which he used to paint the picture which he wished to portray. Like Coulton, also, he took a fairly long period—250 years—and treated it as a single whole, not paying very much attention to changes which were inevitably taking place. Perhaps also, like Coulton, he tended to be rather over-critical of the medieval Church.

Bennett was essentially a social historian. There is little reference in his books to political or military history. What interested him was the life and work of the ordinary man—in the *Pastons* this meant the country squire and his family, in the *Manor* it meant the peasant, whether serf or freeman—and, as a result of his work, our knowledge of life in England in the Middle Ages has been greatly enriched.

The Cambridge English Tripos, as 'Q' and the other founding fathers always insisted, was to be what it said, and not merely a literature Tripos. Hence the sacred phrase 'Literature Life and Thought' which appeared for many years in the rubrics. This was what gave Coulton his chance, and Stanley too—men

[1] H. S. Bennett, *Life on the English Manor* (1937), p. vii.

[2] H. S. Bennett, *England from Chaucer to Caxton* (1928), p. v.

whose interests lay on the borderline between history and literature, and who may indeed be called social historians rather than literary critics. They were interested in literature, but less for its own sake than as one illustration of the way in which men had lived and thought. This human approach fitted Stanley peculiarly well to lecture and teach on medieval subjects, and on Shakespeare, as he did throughout a long and busy Cambridge life; and it gave the special quality to his main literary production, *Chaucer and the Fifteenth Century* (1947, vol. 2, part 1 of the Oxford History of English Literature).

It also permeated every aspect of his life and work, public and private. 'Cambridge', he wrote (these are the concluding words of his autographical fragment) 'brought me not only a Degree, but a Wife.' His marriage (1920) to Joan Frankau ('a member of a talented literary and artistic family')[1] whom he met when they were both students, was an ideal union. Stanley and Joan complemented and completed each other wonderfully: Stanley practical, learned, and down-to-earth; Joan brilliant and theoretical, a discriminating critic, and an able disputant. Their partnership not only produced a happy family life but also a valuable element in Cambridge English teaching. Lucky indeed were those undergraduates (and there were many) who were supervised by both the Bennetts. Dr. D. S. Brewer of Emmanuel College, a University Lecturer in English who specializes in medieval studies, contributes the following estimate of Stanley's literary scholarship:

HSB's scholarly writing falls into two broad categories; first, and earlier, social history of a descriptive kind; and second the bibliographical aspects of literary history (or the literary aspects of bibliography). The second category includes, besides minor editions and other notes, a series of articles on a subject he made his own—book production in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—and a number of important books on literary and publishing history in these centuries. The social history is that of a literary man, rather than 'historian's' history—particular and concrete rather than generalising, descriptive rather than analytical; and the very wide range of reading all informed with a humane sympathy for individual lives, based on common-sense and his own experience. Equally, the bibliographical labours, which were very considerable, were guided by interest in what the general run of books must constitute for a variety of people. He was interested in the broad yet various flow of literary culture, rather than in the refinements and anguishments of literary 'criticism', especially of criticism in the form that has become so closely associated with Cambridge. Yet his interest

[1] Her mother was Julia Frankau, 'Frank Danby'.

in literature as connected with 'life and thought' is no less characteristic of Cambridge. To sum up, his social history has the advantage of a literary mind and knowledge, while his literary history has the advantage of a social interest in the diffusion of books and the constitution of the audience. The total achievement has its own unity in its sense of common humanity.

The books are naturally not a type of modern intellectual literary sociology. There are no grand generalisations about 'cultural identity', 'the human condition (or predicament)', 'the crisis of the age'. They are cautious and empirical. Yet they have served long and well, and will surely continue to serve our need to re-imagine the past in its own identity and predicaments, with knowledge, sympathy, and delight.

His first book, still in print after fifty years, *The Pastons and their England*, 1922, follows the inspiration of his admired teacher and friend, G. G. Coulton (whose obituary notice for the *Proceedings of the British Academy* for 1947 he wrote), and at once established his reputation and the socio-literary nature (to use an expression he might have shuddered at) of his interests. For over half a century it has provided an admirable introduction to fifteenth-century England for many thousands of readers, nor does its usefulness yet seem exhausted. The book also marks the neglected fifteenth century as the chronological centre of Bennett's scholarly interests. Much of our present knowledge of and interest in the diffusion of literary culture in that baffling period, wandering, as it may seem to us, between two worlds, one passing, one struggling to be born, is owing to his pioneering work.

More immediately, however, he turned to more purely historical studies in a slightly earlier period with his article 'The Reeve and the Manor in the Fourteenth Century' (*EHR* 41 (1926), 358–65), though he also edited a selection of poems from Gower's *Confessio Amantis* of the fourteenth century in 1927, and volume 3 of an edition of Marlowe's plays in 1931 which still has much of value. The fifteenth century had also, for the time being, been served by a collection of literary texts, culled from his always wide range of reading, illustrating English life in *England from Chaucer to Caxton*, 1928. The main effort however of these years culminated in *Life on the English Manor; a Study of Peasant Conditions, 1150–1400*, 1937, since reprinted seven times. This is a remarkably inclusive survey directed to an evocation of 'what life was like' for the ordinary man of the period. Bennett aptly and modestly deploys the secondary literature (to which his debt is generously acknowledged), controlling it by his intimate direct acquaintance with the mass of difficult documentary material, accounts, court-rolls, etc., which record the practical conduct (or misconduct) of life at the time. Other features which distinguish the book from traditional history writing are the successfully imaginative venture in the Prologue to describe 'A faire felde ful of folke' (the literary quotation is significant) 'on a June morning, 1320'; and the comparisons with medieval survivals of rustic life taken from his own travels in Europe, especially the Alps, of which

the most notable occurs in chapter IX, 'Everyday Life'. Such passages are significant of the general tone of the book, humane, genial without sentimentality, imaginative yet unspeculative, grounded in the solid particularities of usual existence. Doubtless no 'pure' historian would have dared to include them. The underlying warmth for the underdog, the underprivileged, is that of the old Victorian radical, yet there is no intemperate and unhistorical resentment against those of Church and nobility who were also the product of historical forces.

The same characteristics are to be observed in the technical bibliographical work, and in the examination of the broad tastes of the literary audience which principally occupied Bennett during the remainder of a long life of scholarship and literary appreciation. Apart from the British Academy Lecture 'Shakespeare's Audience' (*Proc. Brit. Acad.* xxx) for 1944, his specialist articles may be subsumed in the books he wrote. The volume of the *Oxford History of English Literature* that he undertook (and which he used humorously to declare was the greatest mistake of his life) shared the fifteenth century with another volume by Sir Edmund Chambers. He accepted the strange division, which deprived him of all the major works of literary interest in the fifteenth century, with characteristic good humour, and turned *Chaucer and the Fifteenth Century* into a most successful book, many times reprinted, the revision of whose bibliography he happily completed a few months before his death. The account of Chaucer is full and genial, though Bennett lacked something of the sharpness we now see in Chaucer, and was writing before the modern explosion of especially American criticism which has so transformed our modern concept of Chaucer. Yet there is a truth and sanity in Bennett's more traditional view which needs to be held on to. What is new is the account of the fifteenth century audience and of fifteenth century writing (apart from Malory, drama and lyric). This is fresh and informative. The material here, painstakingly gathered, is easily carried and most agreeably imparted. It is a foundation work of literary scholarship of the period, whose judgments may come to be questioned as always in literary study, but whose material will always be valued.

Even more should this be said of the three books so aptly entitled to sum up Bennett's major life-time interest—'English Books and Readers'; *English Books and Readers 1475–1557*, appeared in 1952, 2nd edn. 1969, followed by the volume for the period *1558–1603* in 1965, and that for *1603–1640* in 1970. These offer a basis and much more than that for any further survey of English literary culture over the first two centuries of printing in England. Their value for literary history it will take long to exhaust. Their whole point is to survey the general process of book-production from the inception of the book to the payment for it by the reader, as affected by printing requirements and promoted by patronage, the publisher's own taste, interest and acumen, and the needs and wishes of many ordinary people. Literary criticism is deliberately eschewed, but the significance, for our understanding of

literature, of the vast quantity of information so modestly and clearly deployed is very great. One in a sense obvious yet original line of investigation was to take seriously the remarks made in the dedications of books. Many hundreds of these were read—not, of course, without a healthy scepticism—and when digested presented a new view of the hopes and fears of authors, and of the expectation of readers. There is much solid information of benefit to scholars in the substantial classified lists of publishers at the end of the first volume of the series, while important deductions about literary interest in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are made in all volumes—deductions which, unlike so many literary judgments, are placed on a basis of verifiable fact. Many topics concerned with practical publishing, usually neglected by literary critics, are discussed and clarified, and no doubt the long years as Syndic and Chairman of the Syndics of the University Press bore part of their fruit in these pages. Once again an empirical, patient, sympathetic mind is seen at work. Analysis and broader generalisation might follow as other scholars took up the tale. But a pioneering map has been drawn for literary culture in these centuries, in terms of a practical, genial wise humanity.

Stanley always gave the impression of inward happiness and security. There was about him a calm enjoyment, streaked with irony, which spread over everything he did and made one feel safe with him. This was probably the secret of his remarkable success as a college and university administrator. Let me briefly recount some of his chief activities of this kind, and then quote the words of some who served with him.

He was a member of the Council of the Senate from 1943 to 1950, but will be remembered best for his services with the University Library and Press Syndicates—especially the latter, of which he was Chairman during the vital years 1952–64. As Chairman of the Faculty Board of English he was very effective in a difficult task (I can testify at first hand for I served under him as Secretary). Outside Cambridge his influence and reputation also spread: he was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1956, and was soon serving on its Council and for one year as Vice-President. He was President of the Bibliographical Society from 1958 to 1960. In later years he was many times at Chicago as Visiting Professor and received there the Honorary Degree of D.H.L. As Frank Stubbings put it in his Popean couplets:[1]

> Not Cambridge only; there is no *Embargo*
> On learned Visitors at learn'd *Chicago*;
> Professors there who know and love their betters
> Have dubb'd him *Doctor of Humaner Letters.*

[1] Written for Stanley's eightieth birthday party at Emmanuel.

Returning to Cambridge, I add that the English Faculty made him a Reader in 1947; and that in 1951 he was Sandars Lecturer in Bibliography, when he gave the lectures 'Books and Printers in Early Tudor England', which grew into what some regard as his best work, a work which formed the main task of his later years, *English Books and Readers*. At Emmanuel, he became a Fellow in 1933, and Life Fellow on retirement; and for twenty-five years served to notable effect as College Librarian.

Let me quote first Frank Stubbings, Stanley's successor as Librarian at Emmanuel:

> Stanley was most conscientious both in attendance at College meetings and in conning the agenda papers beforehand. He did not in my time intervene much in actual discussion, but when he did it was the more apparent that his remarks proceeded from real convictions about the matter at issue. He had—and it went of course with his special studies—a strong sense of history, and of the continuity and traditions of the College. Its activities and purposes might have changed, and I think he would have said they should continue gradually to do so, but if one could bring back our predecessors he would have been quick to find even in those whose Weltanschauung he least shared the common factors of disinterested learning and tolerant humanity. Perhaps he was a Parlour man more than a Governing Body man; over the after-dinner wine (of which he was a connoisseur, and a valued member therefore of the Parlour wine committee)—he talked and reminisced easily and happily, with a pleasant and never acid touch of banter. Of course he had his antipathies—who hasn't? but he knew where to keep them.
>
> His biggest work for the College was as College Librarian. He held that post for about thirty years, until he retired from it at the statutory age of seventy. As Librarian he found himself, particularly in the earlier years of his office, de facto College historian and archivist as well, and he enjoyed the adventitious work of answering enquiries from outside about persons and events in our past. Several articles on the College buildings, in the College magazine, also illustrate his activity in this quarter. When he gave up being Librarian he voluntarily spent many hours—indeed months—sorting and classifying books and papers that had over the years been shed, as they ceased to be in current use, by the various college offices. These, as well as the older order books, account books, minute books, lists of members, statutes, and so on, are much the easier of access now; and his inchoate index of subjects, written painfully by hand before the 'palsy' (as he called it) forced him to take to a typewriter, is a challenge to someone to find time and enterprise to go further. I ought to mention too how he found the College charters cavalierly rolled up in a box and had them professionally smoothed out and housed in a cabinet built for the purpose, so that our successors too will inherit them rather than their mere

fragments. All this was done before the College gave him in retirement the title of Honorary Archivist. He also made a study of the history of the College Library, written up for the most part in several articles in the College magazine.

As his successor as Librarian I owe a great deal to him. He never showed any tendency to direct or even suggest the way things should be carried on; but he was always most ready with information and advice when asked; and this was just as true in the few years I was assistant librarian before he retired as later. What I learned from him I mostly learned in happy half-hours of chat (or just listening) over after-lunch coffee.

Of his bibliographical work, his son-in-law Dr. Philip Gaskell (Librarian of Trinity College) writes:

It is immediately apparent from a list of his publications that the greater, and certainly the more important, part of his bibliographical work was done late in his life. Of the first twenty items (up to his OHEL volume) only two are bibliographical; whereas of the second twenty, plus the additional item which appeared after the list was made, fourteen are primarily bibliographical. I say primarily bibliographical, because Stanley's bibliography was nearly always much concerned with literary, social and intellectual history; just as much of his primarily literary and historical work had a bookish, or at least documentary, slant.

Though interested in the technicalities of bibliographical research, Stanley did not often venture into its intricacies; rightly, because he did not naturally command the extreme, pedantic accuracy that bibliography demands.

His great merit as a bibliographer was that he was able to bring the authors, printers and readers of the past alive in the same inspiring way as he interpreted the social and literary history of the late middle ages. The three volumes of *English Books and Readers* is unquestionably his major work of bibliography, equal I think to his other major achievement, *Life on the English Manor*. They are learned, they are readable, they are far and away the best treatment of their subject, and the minor slips are unimportant. The style of his scholarship was that of half a century ago, but it is one that has lasted extraordinarily well; and I believe that his best work will remain current for some decades yet.

Mr. R. J. L. Kingsford, who for years was Secretary to the University Press Syndics, writes as follows of Stanley's services to the Press:

From 1952 to 1964 H. S. B. was Chairman of the Syndics of the C.U.P., a board of academics directing an international business organization, with offices in London and New York as well as the headquarters and the Printing House in Cambridge.

He was elected to the Syndicate at the close of the war and his bibliographical interests, which were to lead later to his studies of *English Books and Readers* of the 16th and 17th centuries, gave him an immediate background to the complexities of the book trade in the 20th. Both Oxford and Cambridge contrive to enrol as Delegates and Syndics dons who, although primarily qualified as approvers of the books to be published, have also business acumen and soon develop a near professional knowledge of publishing; and Stanley B. was one of these. When the chairmanship of the Syndicate became vacant in 1952, although he was not the head of a College as traditionally the Vice-Chancellor's Deputy as Chairman had always been, he was the natural choice; and by his single-minded devotion to the Press, his human understanding and his ready command of the happy phrase in a sticky situation he quickly won the confidence and the affection of the Syndics and their staff. As Chairman he could be searchingly critical, but he gave whole-hearted support to the officers when they had earned it, and he had a clear conception of the respective functions of the Syndics and the officers as Directors and Managers. Among the major problems which faced the Syndics under his leadership was the planning and financing of the new Printing House. He will be remembered as a wise, courageous, and humane Chairman and as one who understood and cared for the welfare of the human beings of the Press—not least in the New York office which his visits to Chicago and the Folger Library enabled him to see from the inside.

In all H. S. B.'s active connection with the C.U.P. lasted for more than 40 years, from the publication of *The Pastons and their England* in 1922 until he retired from the Syndicate in 1964; and the book no less than the man was still very much alive at the end of the time. I like to remember that *The Pastons* was one of the first books with which I had something to do when I joined the Press in 1922 and that Stanley was my much loved Chairman when I retired in 1963.

Finally, here is the testimony of one who knew him on the University Library side, Mr. J. C. T. Oates (Reader, The University Library). It was written for the December 1971 issue of *The Library*, and is reproduced here by Mr. Oates's kind permission:

The obituarist in *The Times* wrote of Stanley Bennett that he 'cherished his friendships with affectionate loyalty', but did not add that those whose friendships Stanley thus cherished likewise cherished his. I knew him almost exclusively within the context of the Cambridge University Library, where for many years he was given the freedom of the *S.T.C.* shelves, and as we got to know each other better he formed the habit of dropping in to my room in the Library, there to exchange the bibliographical news of the day, whenever he wanted a few minutes' break from his work. The approaching tread was unmistakeable—there was

a heaviness (and a squeak) in the right foot, which was artificial—and never once did I feel tempted to take evasive action, as I have often done at the sound of some other equally recognisable footsteps.

Stanley was above all a man of integrity and of honesty of purpose, with a modest pride in the work he had done but without any hint of intellectual arrogance, and the honesty of purpose was matched by honesty of endeavour. He got together the material for the three volumes of his *English Books and Readers* simply by reading solidly along the shelves (the Library's principal *S.T.C.* collections being arranged in chronological order), copying out passages that seemed likely to be useful. He used to call this operation 'getting the bricks and mortar to the site', and he found it easy enough (it demanded, after all, no more than a few years' incessant labour) compared with its arrangement (which he would call 'constructing the edifice').

The last of the three volumes appeared in 1970, and most men would have felt that they had done enough. Stanley felt otherwise; he had no more books to write, he told me (a month or so before his eighty-second birthday); but could I not think of something useful for him to do, he asked, something which he could work away at, taking it up or putting it down as weather and health allowed? So I suggested that he might like to read through the Library's Main Catalogue noting the class-marks in an interleaved *S.T.C.*—an exercise which, I suggested, might be completed in a year. This proposal he accepted with enthusiasm and (though he deemed it something of a weakness in himself that he felt unable to cope with large headings such as *England* or *Liturgies*) set off from *A* and arrived just within the twelvemonth at *Zwingli*.

There were many days when he did not feel well enough to come into the Library (but we found a way to ensure that the weekends should not be unfruitful) and many more when he could hardly control a pencil (he suffered from some circulatory disorder, so that his fingers were often purple and painful to see); but he finished the work within the limitations he had set himself and then gave it to the Library 'in recognition of over 50 years of happiness spent among the collections'—a characteristic memorial of a man who wanted none save in the memories of his friends.

BASIL WILLEY

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