

# **POT-BOILERS**

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Pot-boilers by Clive Bell

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**CLIVE BELL**

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*POT-BOILERS*

BY

CLIVE BELL

LONDON

CHATTO & WINDUS

MCMXVIII

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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD	I
MONTAIGNE IN FACSIMILE	17
IBSEN	28
MISS COLERIDGE	41
PEACOCK	50
BOSWELL'S LETTERS	74
CARLYLE'S LOVES AND LOVE-LETTERS	82
THE LYSISTRATA	99
TRELAWNY'S LETTERS	115
SOPHOCLES IN LONDON	126
THE FLIGHT OF THE DRAGON	135
WILLIAM MORRIS	146
PERSIAN MINIATURES	156
COUNTERCHECK QUARRELSOME	165
PICTURE SHOWS :	
I. THE LONDON SALON	174

	PAGE
PICTURE SHOWS :	
II. ENGLISH POST-IMPRESSIONISTS	179
III. AN EXPENSIVE " MASTERPIECE "	188
IV. MARCHAND	194
V. THE MANSARD GALLERY	199
CONTEMPORARY ART IN ENGLAND	209
ART AND WAR	231
BEFORE THE WAR	247



## FOREWORD

DEAR GEOFFREY WHITWORTH,—Considering for how many ages how many clever people have been complaining of their publishers, you might have supposed that no device for getting one of them into a scrape could have been left untried. Yet, so far as I can remember, no author has had the bright idea of denouncing his publisher, particularly, and by name, as accessory before the fact. I am willing to suspect my memory rather than my profession of being at fault in this matter; but that the practice is uncommon is most certain and that, surely, is very strange. No author thinks twice of saddling his friend, his wife, his mother, or even his mistress with the responsibility of having been the onlie begetter of some feckless cub or monstrous abortion; but on his publisher, the very man he should wish to injure, who ever thought of fastening the offence? Yet you cannot deny, my dear Whitworth, that this book is your fault. I was all for abandoning the project after I had read Mr. Arnold Bennett's volume and recognized

how much more readable his journalism was than mine: your reader, I suspect, was of like mind: it was you, and you alone, who, by enlisting my vanity, conquered my pride.

Of course in the end my vanity might have triumphed without you: it is not often or easily beaten.

“Obliged by hunger and request of friends,”

I can imagine myself printing under that classic excuse, which has the merit of being in the grand literary tradition and as disingenuous as another; for in these days an author is not more hungry than every one else, and my friends would have been the first to pardon my silence. You may take it for certain, by the way, that when a man says he is publishing at the instance of two or three friends he means that he is offering the public what he knows that the public could have done perfectly well without. He means that he is printing neither to persuade nor to inform nor yet to express the truth that is in him, but simply to gratify an itch for such notoriety as the careless attention of a few thousand readers may be supposed to give. If I now contrive to escape the consequences of my own axiom it is thanks to you, My Publisher—or Publisher’s representative must I say? (You are so very modest, my dear Whitworth, and so exact.)

Naturally, by so obliging me you have made me your friend for life. But that was *ex post facto*.

I said just now that when I read Mr. Bennett's "Books and Persons," I was for abandoning a project about which, you will do me the justice of remembering, I was lukewarm from the first. I enjoyed immensely his lively papers and I felt pretty sure that no one would so enjoy mine. Your reader was good enough to point out some reasons, besides the obvious one, why this must be so; and in self-defence I am going to remind you of them. When Mr. Bennett wrote for the *New Age* he was a famous and full-grown author, very much at his ease, very much at his liberty, well aware that if he said what he pleased as he pleased his editor would be only too happy to print it. When I wrote most of the reviews reprinted in this volume I was commencing journalism, and I wrote them for the *Athenæum*.

The *Athenæum*, the editor of which I take this opportunity of thanking for permission to reprint my articles, is a paper, was, at any rate, a paper with ancient and peculiar customs; and of these customs perhaps the most peculiar was that, while allowing its contributors extraordinary liberty in some matters, it sustained what may perhaps be described as a literary policy. Like other