

THE GINGER-JAR

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649156627

The Ginger-Jar by Oliver Sandys

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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OLIVER SANDYS

THE GINGER-JAR

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The Ginger-Jar

BY
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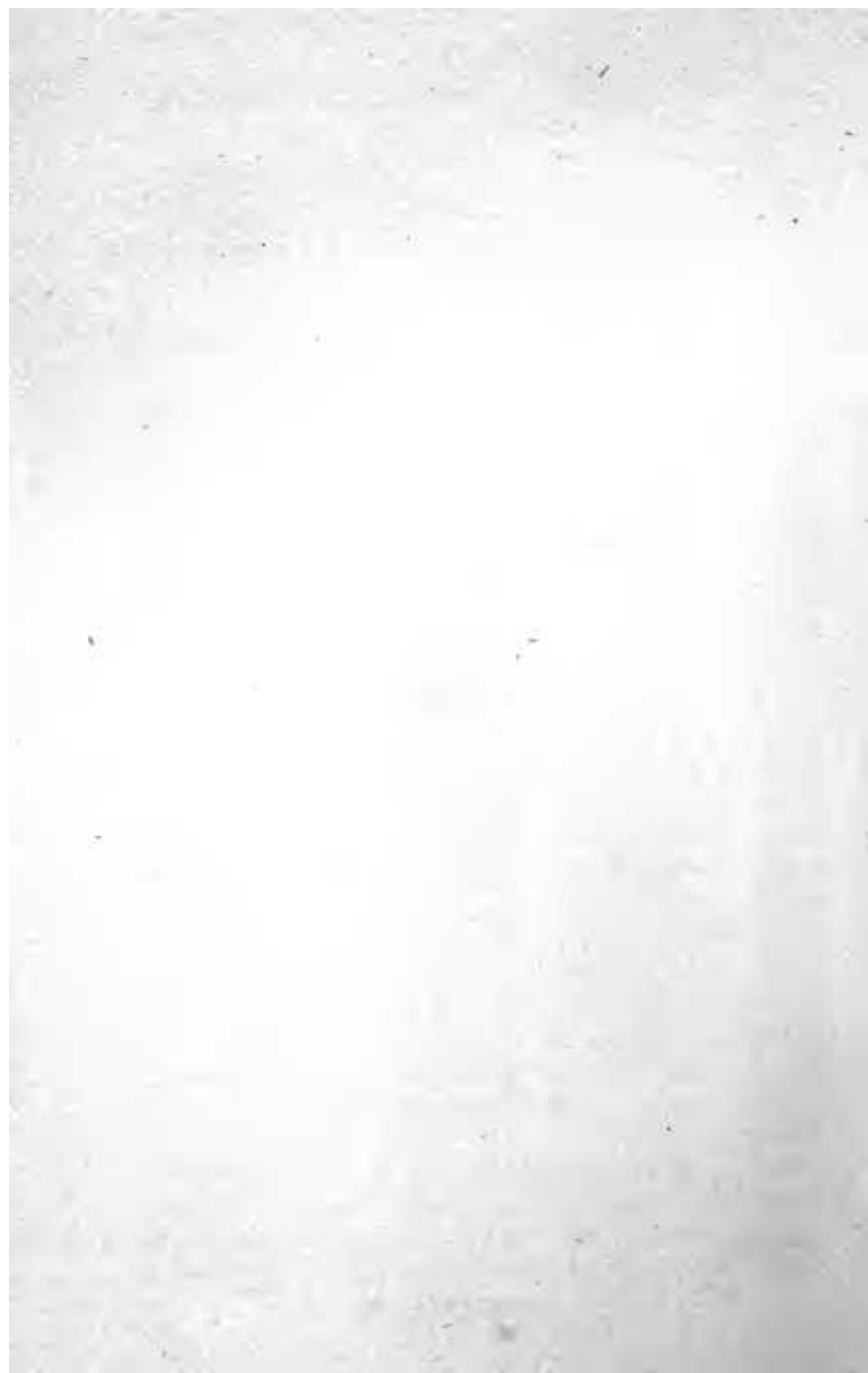
SIXTH EDITION

LONDON :
HURST & BLACKETT, LTD.
PATERNOSTER ROW

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY JARROLD AND SONS LTD, NORWICH

TO
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THE GINGER-JAR

I

HOT in London. Very hot.

In a small bed that was a series of humps and bumps, but which nevertheless did not seem to trouble the depth of her young repose in the very least, a girl lay sleeping, her dark brown hair tumbling over the pillow, one bare arm flung over the coverlet, part of a white and shapely leg revealed by the slipping of the same—a girl who, distinctly at variance with the drab and dingy bedroom, was exceedingly good to look upon.

When she was asleep was about the only time Patsy's vivacious features were ever completely in repose. In sleep they took on a happy aspect of serenity that was really the keynote to a peculiarly buoyant temperament—a temperament not without depth, of extraordinary courage in times of stress and of superabundant high spirits for every other day in the week. Patsy was charming to behold, awake. She was also—and this is very much more rare—equally beautiful to gaze upon asleep.

A beam of sunlight streaming in through the window fell full upon her face, revealing the fine grain of a perfect complexion, which neither the cheap face-powder she used so lavishly by day nor nineteen years of a hand-to-mouth existence, ten of them spent upon the stage, had done anything to impair.

She slumbered on. The hot stream of sunlight did not disturb her, neither did the penetrating cries of a rag-and-bone merchant vociferously pursuing his calling in the street. She slept serenely, like a child, her dark lashes

lying like painted fans upon the roses and lilies of her cheeks.

The minute hand of the cheap clock on the mantelpiece ticked briskly on, but the one that should have recorded the hour had fallen off, and Patsy had not the wherewithal to have it mended. Her finances were always in a dwindling or minus condition. She had never in the whole of her life possessed more than three pounds—the highest salary she had ever received—for more than five whole minutes together. But even if she was in want she never worried. Something or other always turned up. At least, that was her optimistic creed.

Considering her abundant looks, too, she was extraordinarily simple-minded, for she never marketed her beauty, as other girls frequently did. She was worldly-wise, as any girl who had been familiarised with the careless conditions of the stage since early childhood would be; but, in spite of that, her outlook on life was generous, unspoilt and exuberant. Bad examples—and there were many of them—never affected her. Temptations such as come the way of all girls at different times scarcely influenced her. She pursued a sociable, lively, yet somewhat lonely course, in full possession of her head and heart, rather despising the hangers-on and the flatterers of her world, completely indifferent to their siege or advances.

Her attitude as regards men was mainly indifferent. As a sex, she did not admire them. In her experience, they often promised but seldom performed. They loved and ran away. Up to the present, Patsy's tolerant, good-humoured but almost contemptuous attitude to the opposite sex had been one of her principal safeguards. She had had her pursuers and her presents—crowds of satellites she could not count, the inevitable, typical