

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Kipling Doyle Willis
Baum Henry Nietzsche Dumas Flaubert Turgenev Balzac
Leslie Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman Twain
Darwin Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato
Potter Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Harte
Kant London Descartes Cervantes Burton Hesse
Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Cooke
Hale James Hastings Shakespeare Irving
Bunner Richter Chambers Alcott
Doré Chekhov da Shaw Benedict Pushkin
Swift Dante Shaw Wodehouse Newton



tredition was established in 2006 by Sandra Latusseck and Soenke Schulz. Based in Hamburg, Germany, tredition offers publishing solutions to authors and publishing houses, combined with worldwide distribution of printed and digital book content. tredition is uniquely positioned to enable authors and publishing houses to create books on their own terms and without conventional manufacturing risks.

For more information please visit: www.tredition.com

TREDITION CLASSICS

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series. The creators of this series are united by passion for literature and driven by the intention of making all public domain books available in printed format again - worldwide. Most TREDITION CLASSICS titles have been out of print and off the bookstore shelves for decades. At tredition we believe that a great book never goes out of style and that its value is eternal. Several mostly non-profit literature projects provide content to tredition. To support their good work, tredition donates a portion of the proceeds from each sold copy. As a reader of a TREDITION CLASSICS book, you support our mission to save many of the amazing works of world literature from oblivion. See all available books at www.tredition.com.



Project Gutenberg

The content for this book has been graciously provided by Project Gutenberg. Project Gutenberg is a non-profit organization founded by Michael Hart in 1971 at the University of Illinois. The mission of Project Gutenberg is simple: To encourage the creation and distribution of eBooks. Project Gutenberg is the first and largest collection of public domain eBooks.

The Roll-Call

Arnold Bennett

Imprint

This book is part of TREDITION CLASSICS

Author: Arnold Bennett

Cover design: Buchgut, Berlin - Germany

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg - Germany

ISBN: 978-3-8424-4464-5

www.tredition.com

www.tredition.de

Copyright:

The content of this book is sourced from the public domain.

The intention of the TREDITION CLASSICS series is to make world literature in the public domain available in printed format. Literary enthusiasts and organizations, such as Project Gutenberg, worldwide have scanned and digitally edited the original texts. tredition has subsequently formatted and redesigned the content into a modern reading layout. Therefore, we cannot guarantee the exact reproduction of the original format of a particular historic edition. Please also note that no modifications have been made to the spelling, therefore it may differ from the orthography used today.

THE ROLL-CALL

BY

ARNOLD BENNETT

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

NOVELS

- A Man from the North
- Anna of the Five Towns
- Leonora
- A Great Man
- Sacred and Profane Love
- Whom God hath Joined
- Buried Alive
- The Old Wives' Tale
- The Glimpse
- Helen with the High Hand
- Clayhanger
- Hilda Lessways
- These Twain
- The Card
- The Regent
- The Price of Love
- The Lion's Share
- The Pretty Lady

FANTASIAS

- The Ghost
- The Grand Babylon Hotel
- The Gates of Wrath
- Teresa of Watling Street
- The Loot of Cities
- The City of Pleasure

SHORT STORIES

- Tales of the Five Towns
- The Grim Smile of the Five Towns
- The Matador of the Five Towns

THE ROLL-CALL

BY

ARNOLD BENNETT

THIRD EDITION

LONDON: HUTCHINSON & CO. PATERNOSTER ROW

NOTE

This novel was written before "The Pretty Lady", and is the first of the author's war-novels.

A.B.

CONTENTS

PART I

CHAP.

- I. THE NEW LODGING
- II. MARGUERITE
- III. THE CHARWOMAN
- IV. THE LUNCHEON
- V. THE TEA
- VI. THE DINNER
- VII. THE RUPTURE
- VIII. INSPIRATION
- IX. COMPETITION

PART II

- I. THE TRIUMPH
- II. THE ROLL-CALL
- III. IN THE MACHINE

[pg 1]

THE ROLL-CALL

PART I

CHAPTER I

THE NEW LODGING

I

In the pupils' room of the offices of Lucas & Enwright, architects, Russell Square, Bloomsbury, George Edwin Cannon, an artiled pupil, leaned over a large drawing-board and looked up at Mr. Enwright, the head of the firm, who with cigarette and stick was on his way out after what he called a good day's work. It was past six o'clock on an evening in early July 1901. To George's right was an open door leading to the principals' room, and to his left another open door leading to more rooms and to the staircase. The lofty chambers were full of lassitude; but round about George, who was working late, there floated the tonic vapour of conscious virtue. Haim, the factotum, could be seen and heard moving in his cubicle which guarded the offices from the stairs. In the rooms shortly to be deserted and locked up, and in the decline of the day, the three men were drawn together like survivors.

"I gather you're going to change your abode," said Mr. Enwright, having stopped.

"Did Mr. Orgreave tell you, then?" George asked.

"Well, he didn't exactly tell me...."

John Orgreave was Mr. Enwright's junior partner; and for nearly two years, since his advent in London from the Five Towns, George had lived with Mr. and Mrs. Orgreave at Bedford Park. The Orgreaves, too, sprang from the Five Towns. John's people and George's people were closely entwined in the local annals.

Pupil and principal glanced discreetly at one another, exchanging in silence vague, malicious, unutterable critical verdicts upon both John Orgreave and his wife.

"Well, I am!" said George at length.

"Where are you going to?"

"Haven't settled a bit," said George. "I wish I could live in Paris."

"Paris wouldn't be much good to you yet," Mr. Enwright laughed benevolently.

"I suppose it wouldn't. Besides, of course — —"

George spoke in a tone of candid deferential acceptance, which flattered Mr. Enwright very much, for it was the final proof of the prestige which the grizzled and wrinkled and peculiar Fellow and Member of the Council of the Royal Institute of British Architects had acquired in the estimation of that extremely independent, tossing sprig, George Edwin Cannon. Mr. Enwright had recently been paying a visit to Paris, and George had been sitting for the Intermediate Examination. "You can join me here for a few days after the exam., if you care to," Mr. Enwright had sent over. It was George's introduction to the Continent, and the circumstances of it were almost ideal. For a week the deeply experienced connoisseur of all the arts had had the fine, eager, responsive virgin mind in his power. Day after day he had watched and guided it amid entirely new sensations. Never had Mr. Enwright enjoyed himself more purely, and at the close he knew with satisfaction that he had put Paris in a proper perspective for George, and perhaps saved the youth from years of groping misapprehension. As for George, all his preconceived notions about Paris had been destroyed or shaken. In the quadrangles of the Louvre, for example, Mr. Enwright, pointing to the under part of the stone bench that footed so much of the walls, had said: "Look at that curve." Nothing else. No ecstasies about the sculptures of Jean Goujon and Carpeaux, or about the marvellous harmony of the East facade! But a flick of the cane towards the half-hidden moulding! And George had felt with a thrill what an exquisite curve and what an original curve and what a modest curve that curve was. Suddenly and magically his eyes had been opened. Or it

might have been that a deceitful mist had rolled away and the real Louvre been revealed in its esoteric and sole authentic beauty....

"Why don't you try Chelsea?" said Mr. Enwright over his shoulder, proceeding towards the stairs.

"I was thinking of Chelsea."

" [pg 3] You were!" Mr. Enwright halted again for an instant. "It's the only place in London where the structure of society is anything like Paris. Why, dash it, in the King's Road the grocers know each other's business!" Mr. Enwright made the last strange remark to the outer door, and vanished.

"Funny cove!" George commented tolerantly to Mr. Haim, who passed through the room immediately afterwards to his nightly task of collecting and inspecting the scattered instruments on the principal's august drawing-board.

But Mr. Haim, though possibly he smiled ever so little, would not compromise himself by an endorsement of the criticism of his employer. George was a mere incident in the eternal career of Mr. Haim at Lucas & Enwright's.

When the factotum came back into the pupils' room, George stood up straight and smoothed his trousers and gazed admiringly at his elegant bright socks.

"Let me see," said George in a very friendly manner. " *You* live somewhere in Chelsea, don't you?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Haim.

"Whereabouts, if it isn't a rude question?"

"Well," said Mr. Haim, confidentially and benignantly, captivated by George's youthful charm, "it's near the Redcliffe Arms." He mentioned the Redcliffe Arms as he might have mentioned the Bank, Piccadilly Circus, or Gibraltar. "Alexandra Grove. No. 8. To tell you the truth, I own the house."

"The deuce you do!"

"Yes. The leasehold, that is, of course. No freeholds knocking about loose in that district!"

George saw a new and unsuspected Mr. Haim. He was impressed. And he was glad that he had never broken the office tradition of treating Mr. Haim with a respect not usually accorded to factotums. He saw a, property-owner, a tax-payer, and a human being behind the spectacles of the shuffling, rather shabby, ceremonious familiar that pervaded those rooms daily from before ten till after six. He grew curious about a living phenomenon that hitherto had never awakened his curiosity.

"Were you really looking for accommodation?" demanded Mr. Haim suavely.

George hesitated. "Yes."

"Perhaps I have something that might suit you."

Events, disguised as mere words, seemed to George to be pushing him forward.

"[pg 4] I should like to have a look at it," he said. He had to say it; there was no alternative.

Mr. Haim raised a hand. "Any evening that happens to be convenient."

"What about to-night, then?"

"Certainly," Mr. Haim agreed. For a moment George apprehended that Mr. Haim was going to invite him to dinner. But Mr. Haim was not going to invite him to dinner. "About nine, shall we say?" he suggested, with a courtliness softer even than usual.

Later, George said that he would lock up the office himself and leave the key with the housekeeper.

"You can't miss the place," said Mr. Haim on leaving. "It's between the Workhouse and the Redcliffe."

II

At the corner dominated by the Queen's Elm, which on the great route from Piccadilly Circus to Putney was a public-house and halt second only in importance to the Redcliffe Arms, night fell earlier than it ought to have done, owing to a vast rain-cloud over Chelsea. A few drops descended, but so warm and so gently that they were not like real rain, and sentimentalists could not believe that they would wet. People, arriving mysteriously out of darkness, gathered sparsely on the pavements, lingered a few moments, and were swallowed by omnibuses that bore them obscurely away. At intervals an individual got out of an omnibus and adventured hurriedly forth and was lost in the gloom. The omnibuses, all white, trotted on an inward curve to the pavement, stopped while the conductor, with hand raised to the bell-string, murmured apathetically the names of streets and of public-houses, and then they jerked off again on an outward curve to the impatient double ting of the bell. To the east was a high defile of hospitals, and to the west the Workhouse tower faintly imprinted itself on the sombre sky.

The drops of rain grew very large and heavy, and the travellers, instead of waiting on the kerb, withdrew to the shelter of the wall of the Queen's Elm. George was now among the group, precipitated like the rest, as it were, out of the solution of London. George was of the age which does not admit rain or which believes that it is immune from the usual consequences of exposure to rain. When advised, [pg 5] especially by women, to defend himself against the treacheries of the weather, he always protested confidently that he would 'be all right.' Thus with a stick and a straw hat he would affront terrible dangers. It was a species of valour which the event often justified. Indeed he generally was all right. But to-night, afoot on the way from South Kensington Station in a region quite unfamiliar to him, he was intimidated by the slapping menace of the big drops. Reality faced him. His scared thought ran: "Unless I do something at once I shall get wet through." Impossible to appear drenched at old Haim's! So he had abandoned all his pretensions to

a magical invulnerability, and rushed under the eave of the Queen's Elm to join the omnibus group.

He did not harmonize with the omnibus group, being both too elegant and too high-spirited. His proper rôle in the circumstances would have been to 'jump into a hansom'; but there were no empty hansoms, and moreover, for certain reasons of finance, he had sworn off hansoms until a given date. He regarded the situation as 'rather a lark,' and he somehow knew that the group understood and appreciated and perhaps resented his superior and tolerant attitude. An omnibus rolled palely into the radiance of the Queen's Elm lamp, the horses' flanks and the lofty driver's apron gleaming with rain. He sprang towards the vehicle; the whole group sprang. "Full inside!" snapped the conductor inexorably. Ting, ting! It was gone, glimmering with its enigmatic load into the distance. George turned again to the wall, humiliated. It seemed wrong that the conductor should have included him with the knot of common omnibus-travellers and late workers. The conductor ought to have differentiated.... He put out a hand. The rain had capriciously ceased! He departed gaily and triumphantly. He was re-endowed with the magical invulnerability.

The background of his mind was variegated. The incidents of the tremendous motor-car race from Paris to Berlin, which had finished nearly a week earlier, still glowed on it. And the fact that King Edward VII had driven in a car from Pall Mall to Windsor Castle in sixty minutes was beautifully present. Then, he was slightly worried concerning the Mediterranean Fleet. He knew nothing about it, but as a good citizen he suspected in idle moments, like a number of other good citizens, that all was not quite well with the Mediterranean Fleet. As for the war, he had only begun to be interested in the war within the last six months, and [pg 6] already he was sick of it. He knew that the Boers had just wrecked a British military train, and his attitude towards such methods of fighting was rather severe and scornful; he did not regard them as 'war.' However, the apparent permanence of the war was splendidly compensated by the victory of the brothers Doherty over the American lawn-tennis champions in the Gentlemen's Doubles at Wimbledon. Who could have expected the brothers to win after the defeat of R.H. by Mr. Gore in the Singles? George had most painfully feared that the

Americans would conquer, and their overthrowing by the twin brothers indicated to George, who took himself for a serious student of affairs, that Britain was continuing to exist, and that the new national self-depreciative, yearning for efficiency might possibly be rather absurd after all.

In the midst of these and similar thoughts, and of innumerable minor thoughts about himself, in the very centre of his mind and occupying nearly the whole of it, was the vast thought, the obsession, of his own potential power and its fulfilment. George's egotism was terrific, and as right as any other natural phenomenon. He had to get on. Much money was included in his scheme, but simply as a by-product. He had to be a great architect, and—equally important—he had to be publicly recognized as a great architect, and recognition could not come without money. For him, the entire created universe was the means to his end. He would not use it unlawfully, but he would use it. He was using it, as well as he yet knew how, and with an independence that was as complete as it was unconscious. In regard to matters upon which his instinct had not suggested a course of action, George was always ready enough to be taught; indeed his respect for an expert was truly deferential. But when his instinct had begun to operate he would consult nobody and consider nobody, being deeply sure that infallible wisdom had been granted to him. (Nor did experience seem to teach him.) Thus, in the affair of a London lodging, though he was still two years from his majority and had no resources save the purse of his stepfather, Edwin Clayhanger, he had decided to leave the Orgraveas without asking or even informing his parents. In his next letter home he would no doubt inform them, casually, of what he meant to do or actually had done, and if objections followed he would honestly resent them.

A characteristic example of his independence had happened [pg 7] when at the unripe age of seventeen he left the Five Towns for London. Upon his mother's marriage to Edwin Clayhanger his own name had been informally changed for him to Clayhanger. But a few days before the day of departure he had announced that, as Clayhanger was not his own name and that he preferred his own name, he should henceforth be known as 'Cannon,' his father's name. He did not invite discussion. Mr. Clayhanger had thereupon

said to him privately and as one man of the world to another: "But you aren't really entitled to the name Cannon, sonny." "Why?" "Because your father was what's commonly known as a bigamist, and his marriage with your mother was not legal. I thought I'd take this opportunity of telling you. You needn't say anything to your mother—unless of course you feel you must." To which George had replied: "No, I won't. But if Cannon was my father's name I think I'll have it all the same." And he did have it. The bigamy of his father did not apparently affect him. Upon further inquiry he learnt that his father might be alive or might be dead, but that if alive he was in America.

The few words from Mr. Enwright about Chelsea had sufficed to turn Chelsea into Elysium, Paradise, almost into Paris. No other quarter of London was inhabitable by a rising architect. As soon as Haim had gone George had begun to look up Chelsea in the office library, and as Mr. Enwright happened to be an active member of the Society for the Survey of the Memorials of Greater London, the library served him well. In an hour and a half he had absorbed something of the historical topography of Chelsea. He knew that the Fulham Road upon which he was now walking was a boundary of Chelsea. He knew that the Queen's Elm public-house had its name from the tradition that Elizabeth had once sheltered from a shower beneath an elm tree which stood at that very corner. He knew that Chelsea had been a 'village of palaces,' and what was the function of the Thames in the magnificent life of that village. The secret residence of Turner in Chelsea, under the strange *alias* of Admiral Booth, excited George's admiration; he liked the idea of hidden retreats and splendid, fanciful pseudonyms. But the master-figure of Chelsea for George was Sir Thomas More. He could see Sir Thomas More walking in his majestic garden by the river with the King's arm round his neck, and Holbein close by, and respectful august prelates and a nagging wife in the background. And he could see Sir Thomas More [pg 8] taking his barge for the last journey to the Tower, and Sir Thomas More's daughter coming back in the same barge with her father's head on board. Curious! He envied Sir Thomas More.

"Darned bad tower for a village of palaces!" he thought, not of the Tower of London, but of the tower of the Workhouse which he was

now approaching. He thought he could design an incomparably better tower than that. And he saw himself in the future, the architect of vast monuments, strolling in a grand garden of his own at evening with other distinguished and witty persons.

But there were high-sounding names in the history of Chelsea besides those of More and Turner. Not names of people! Cremorne and Ranelagh! Cremorne to the west and Ranelagh to the east. The legend of these vanished resorts of pleasure and vice stirred his longings and his sense of romantic beauty—especially Ranelagh with its Rotunda. (He wanted, when the time came, to be finely vicious, as he wanted to be everything. An architect could not be great without being everything.) He projected himself into the Rotunda, with its sixty windows, its countless refreshment-boxes, its huge paintings, and the orchestra in the middle, and the expensive and naughty crowd walking round and round and round on the matting, and the muffled footsteps and the swish of trains on the matting, and the specious smiles and whispers, and the blare of the band and the smell of the lamps and candles.... Earl's Court was a poor, tawdry, unsightly thing after that.

When he had passed under the Workhouse tower he came to a side street which, according to Haim's description of the neighbourhood, ought to have been Alexandra Grove. The large lamp on the corner, however, gave no indication, nor in the darkness could any sign be seen on the blind wall of either of the corner houses in Fulham Road. Doubtless in daytime the street had a visible label, but the borough authorities evidently believed that night endowed the stranger with powers of divination. George turned hesitant down the mysterious gorge, which had two dim lamps of its own, and which ended in a high wall, whereat could be descried unattainable trees—possibly the grove of Alexandra. Silence and a charmed stillness held the gorge, while in Fulham Road not a hundred yards away omnibuses and an occasional hansom rattled along in an ordinary world. George soon decided that he was not in Alexandra Grove, [pg 9] on account of the size of the houses. He could not conceive Mr. Haim owning one of them. They stood lofty in the gloom, in pairs, secluded from the pavement by a stucco garden-wall and low bushes. They were double-fronted, and their doors were at the summits of flights of blanched steps that showed

through the bars of iron gates. They had three stories above a basement. Still, he looked for No. 8. But just as the street had no name, so the houses had no numbers. No. 16 alone could be distinguished; it had figures on its faintly illuminated fanlight. He walked back, idly counting.

Then, amid the curtained and shuttered facades, he saw, across the road, a bright beam from a basement. He crossed and peeped through a gate, and an interior was suddenly revealed to him. Near the window of a room sat a young woman bending over a table. A gas-jet on a bracket in the wall, a few inches higher than her head and a foot distant from it, threw a strong radiance on her face and hair. The luminous living picture, framed by the window in blackness, instantly entranced him. All the splendid images of the past faded and were confuted and invalidated and destroyed by this intense reality so present and so near to him. (Nevertheless, for a moment he thought of her as the daughter of Sir Thomas More.) She was drawing. She was drawing with her whole mind and heart. At intervals, scarcely moving her head, she would glance aside at a paper to her left on the table.... She seemed to search it, to drag some secret out of it, and then she would resume her drawing. She was neither dark nor fair; she was comely, perhaps beautiful; she had beautiful lips, and her nose, behind the nostrils, joined the cheek in a lovely contour, like a tiny bulb. Yes, she was superb. But what mastered him was less her fresh physical charm than the rapt and extreme vitality of her existing.... He knew from her gestures and the tools on the table that she could be no amateur. She was a professional. He thought: Chelsea!... Marvellous place, Chelsea! He ought to have found that out long ago. He imagined Chelsea full of such pictures – the only true home of beauty and romance.

Then the impact of a single idea startled his blood. He went hot. He flushed. He had tingling sensations all down his back, and in his legs and in his arms. It was as though he had been caught in a dubious situation. Though he was utterly innocent, he felt as though he had something to be [pg 10] ashamed of. The idea was: she resembled old Haim, facially! Ridiculous idea! But she did resemble old Haim, particularly in the lobal termination of the nose. And in the lips too. And there was a vague, general resemblance. Absurd! It was a fancy.... He would not have cared for anybody to be watching