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C S Forester (1899-1966)

C S Forester is back in fashion. 100 years after his birth the ITV serialisation of the Hornblower series has won new recruits to the enthralling tales of naval warfare in the Napoleonic wars. Fans know that Hornblower was only a small part of C S Forester's output of 35 novels, 2 plays, 5 biographies, 3 childrens books and histories, etc. Fans in and around Oxford wondered if there was enough interest to set up a C S Forester Society, and bring together those interested in his works, with collectors of his books, and provide a forum to broaden the knowledge of his life and writings.

Abridged from 'A Very Short Biography of C S Forester' by John Forester

CS Forester, born in August, 1899, was the fifth and last child of George Foster Smith and Sarah Medhurst Troughton. George Smith was an English school teacher in Cairo, Egypt, in a school set up by the British protectorate to give upper-class Egyptian boys a taste of English schooling. When Cecil was three, the family broke up, Sarah and the children returning to London so the children could attend English schools, while George remained teaching in Egypt, returning for one month a year. During his childhood Cecil developed a line of stories that made him out to be better than he was and got people to act as he desired. He adopted George and Florence Belcher, whose sons were his schoolmates, as surrogate parents. He was accepted at Guy's Medical School, using money that Geoff sent from his pay as an Army doctor in World War I, but lazed away his time instead of attending. It was not until he was aged 27 did he earn enough from his first writings to live on.

His first novel, A Pawn Among Kings, recalled his days playing Napoleonic war games. It is about a fictional woman

who causes Napoleon's recognised mistakes by upsetting his judgement at crucial moments. His first successful novel was Payment Deferred, a story "of grim horror almost unrelieved," about a man who is hanged for a murder he didn't commit because exonerating himself would prove the murder that he had committed. On the success of Payment Deferred, Cecil secretly married Kathleen Belcher, in whose parents' house he had spent much time. He wrote a series of novels with military and naval themes, include Brown on Resolution, Death of the French, The Gun, The African Queen, and The General. He had, from the first, used the pen name of CS Forester. Now nobody who met CSF even knew he was Cecil Smith, although those who had known Cecil Smith knew he was the famous novelist CSF. He was called to Hollywood to write a pirate film, working under Arthur Hornblow, in association with Niven Busch. However, before they had finished the script, another studio released Captain Blood, starring Errol Flynn, and using the same historical incidents that they had counted on. Rather than seeking another position, hounded by the prospect of a paternity suit from a fading opera singer, Cecil jumped aboard a freighted bound for home. Another passenger was the photographer Barbara Sutro. In the voyage, he took a one-day cruise around the Gulf of Fonseca in the ship's motor lifeboat, and by the end of the voyage he had a new novel worked out, The Happy Return, with its characters Hornblower, Bush, and Lady Barbara. Hornblower, with all his human indecisiveness and cross-grainedness, was Cecil as he wished he had the courage to be, and Cecil wrote about Hornblower again and again.

At the start of World War II Cecil persuaded the British government to let him come to America to write propaganda (news, film, short stories, and novels) to help keep America on Britain's side. His work brought him recognition by admirals, generals, and Prime ministers. His official home was Berkeley, California, for the rest of his working life. In 1943, he became partially crippled with atherosclerosis in his legs.

He and Kathleen were divorced in 1945. In 1947 he married, again secretly, another lady from the group of his youth, Dorothy Foster. In August, 1964 he had a disabling stroke, and he died in April, 1966. Cecil and Kathleen had two sons, John born in 1929, George in 1933. Cecil wrote an early autobiography, Long Before Forty but his most complete and

complex story was his own life.

Biography of C S Forester
'Novelist and Storyteller: The Life of C S Forester.' By John Forester.
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C. S. Forester, Storyteller

John Forester

A Very Popular Novelist

C. S. Forester was a popular storyteller of the middle third of the twentieth century. In terms of popularity, at the height of his fame his works were regularly bought by the organization paying the highest prices in the world, the Saturday Evening Post; of the films made from his novels, one was given a royal premier with Princess (later the Queen) Elizabeth (*Captain Horatio Hornblower*), the other was still playing at the end of the century on screens both big and small (*The African Queen*). One of his characters was so well known that President Carter (a former naval officer), referring in his renomination acceptance speech to the last great Democrat politician, Hubert Horatio Humphrey, mispronounced his name as Hubert Horatio Hornblower. While he wrote several mostly forgotten histories when he was young, two of his novels have been issued to military units by their commanders, Hitler to his officers in 1937 (*The General*), the commanding general of the United States Marines to his command in 1996 (*Death to the French*).

Forester's forte was in telling stories that people believed, either with the willing suspension of disbelief when they knew the story was fictional, or actually believed when they thought that he was telling the truth. In the technical sense of persuading the reader to believe, Forester's greatest successes were his two autobiographical accounts (*Long Before Forty*, *The Hornblower Companion*), each of which contained some elements of truth that concealed the important facts. Horatio Hornblower, his literary character most remembered today, is that which is most similar to his own, as improved by careful storytelling of the same kind as went into his autobiographical works and his private life.

Creation of a Storyteller

How had Cecil become such a plausible storyteller? First, he wasn't C. S. Forester at all; that character was entirely invented. Cecil Louis Troughton (Harrington) Smith was born in Cairo, Egypt, 27 August, 1899, the fifth, and last, child of George and Sarah Smith. George Smith was a schoolteacher in one of the three preparatory schools that Britain had set up to prepare the upper levels of Egyptian society for further education in the English manner. George earned extra money by tutoring some boys privately. One of his students, Mahomed Pasha Mahmoud, became prime minister of Egypt in the 1920s.. He also wrote three textbooks for teaching English to Arabic speakers: *Talks With the Children* (George Philip & Sons), *Longman's Direct Composition Number One*, and *Longman's Direct Composition Number Two*, (Longman, Green & Co.)

Shortly after Cecil was born, George was transferred from Cairo to the third preparatory school in Alexandria. Cecil described Sarah to me as a very beautiful woman who didn't reach the social position to which her beauty might have admitted her. Sarah didn't like the change from the society of Cairo, and after a year or so in Alexandria, she and the children returned to England in 1903, leaving George to teach in Alexandria for most of each year, which he did until his retirement in the 1920s. British colonial families faced the education problem. They either left the children in care of relatives in England, or they sent the family back while the husband remained on the job. Cecil's two elder brothers had both been living in England with their uncles and aunts before Sarah returned to England, so in some respect the family was reunited rather than split.

The family was very poor after the move. George's income had dropped without his private tutoring, while expenses had risen. They found a house to rent on the edge of the London slums, but were unable to furnish the top floor. Cecil had spoken Arabic to the lower-class Egyptians and English to the Britons and the higher-class Egyptians. Upon arrival in England, he was astonished when workers spoke English. However, the family felt themselves to be markedly superior to their neighbors, for they were members of the professional class, far above the working class. Cecil had another reason to feel not quite at home in society. The other members of the family looked typically English, with fair hair and blue eyes, while Cecil had a darker skin that tanned easily, brown hair and eyes, and a nose that developed into a distinctive beak. This difference in looks, together with the facts that he was the last child in this family, and that his family broke up shortly after his birth, with really unfortunate consequences, were sufficient to suggest to a sensitive child that he was not the son of his mother's husband, but of someone from the previous Egyptian life.

Sarah, saddened by the conditions of her life in London, became an alcoholic. She managed the minimum of housekeeping, keeping the children fed by cooking early in the day and stacking the plates of food on the top of the hot coal stove. She spent the housekeeping money on drink. Some years later, when the second son, Hugh, was a bank clerk saving for his marriage, he arrived home to find the furniture being loaded into a cart for non-payment of loans. He paid off the loans with his marriage savings, and had to wait another year or so. The children knew that Sarah was an alcoholic, and they also knew the disrepute that they would fall into were the neighbors to discover this. So they lied, like many children in similar positions before and after them. They always had to have some explanation for whatever failure Sarah's way of life caused them. The best way was to be secretive, to hide everything possible, but when that failed, plausible explanations were required. That is the life in which Cecil grew up.

Growing Up

The Smith children all read a great deal. The older brothers had developed a war game that represented the Napoleonic wars, the most recent Great War at that time. They had cardboard models of the naval ships of the time and played out the strategies by which insular but naval Britain defeated Napoleon, the master of Europe and of the most powerful armies of the time. Because the top floor of the house was unfurnished, they had its use for these war games. Cecil joined in enthusiastically as soon as he was able.

Cecil first attended the local London County Council School, then, at the age of twelve, entered the private Alleyn's School within walking distance of his home, following the steps of his eldest brother, Geoff, who was ten years older than he. By that time Geoff had entered Guy's Medical School of the University of London, supported partly by scholarships and partly by loans from the father of a school friend, and was about to became a doctor at the age of twenty-two. Then, at George's advice, he went out to Egypt and was hired as a doctor with Shell Oil. At Alleyn's, Cecil was bullied for being both small and strange. Some of his school friends were the Belcher brothers, and they introduced him to their home, to their mother, Florence, and to their younger sister, Kathleen. The Belcher house became a second home to Cecil, far more enjoyable than his own.

Cecil read whatever was available at the local public library. Upon reading the lives of the Roman emperors, probably aged about eight, he deduced that if there were no God and no police, one could do anything one liked. For Cecil, God did not exist. As for the police, it was a matter of attaining one's desires without committing actual crimes. As for society, one did what one desired while concealing, behind plausible explanations, those actions of which society disapproved.

One afternoon in his early teens, Cecil returned home minus hat and walking stick. He offered the story that he had been walking along the street, twirling his stick by its handle, in the approved manner for young gentlemen, when the stick had slipped out of his fingers on the upward arc and flown into a tree. He had climbed the tree to retrieve his stick, but before he had reached it a policeman had seen him and chased him away. A bit odd, that story, but it passed. The truth was that he had seen a young woman changing her clothes in her upstairs bedroom, had climbed the tree for a better look, had been discovered and, naturally, had been chased.

Cecil took up a series of affairs with older women, some spinsterly, some merely missing the older men who were away fighting, or already killed, in World War I. One of them was the daughter of one of his schoolmasters. Again, these affairs called for secrecy, which consequently required storytelling. However, he didn't ignore the schoolgirls, either. He persuaded Kathleen Belcher to carry a note from him to one of her schoolmates at the girl's school corresponding to Alleyn's. Kathleen, when she couldn't find the addressee, suspecting nothing, left the note with the teacher of that girl's next class. The note was obviously indiscreet, for there was a scandal for which the girl was expelled from school, and for which Cecil obviously suffered some punishment.

Upon graduating from Alleyn's, Cecil had a year (1917-1918) at Dulwich College (originally part of the same educational institution as Alleyn's, but recently converted to a Public School [in the British sense]) before going on to Guy's Medical School. Dulwich College was entirely different from Alleyn's. Alleyn's had taught what passed for modern science; Dulwich taught the classical curriculum in preparation for university and a place in the church. In Cecil's opinion, the students were ignorant, prejudiced, and brutal, fitted only for the meanest of jobs, another new society for Cecil that ran on lines he had not before met. In *Long Before Forty* he cannot decide whether the Public School System terminology) is good or bad.

World War I

World War I had still not finished. From his war-gaming days, Cecil was skeptical about the war reports and became cynical about the war, long before that attitude became fashionable ten years later. Cecil then should have been taken for the Army, but at the examination he was rejected for what the doctors thought was probably fatal heart trouble. He eventually died from atherosclerosis, but between 1918 and 1943 he lived a physically active life without any signs of circulatory trouble. I wonder whether he had figured out how to fool the doctors.

Geoff, working as a doctor for Shell Oil in Egypt, was earning more money than the rest of the family put together. At the outbreak of World War I, he financed a new home for the family, in Dulwich, and Cecil's education at Dulwich and Guy's Medical School. Geoff became an army doctor in the Middle Eastern region for most of the war. The father, George Smith, became a bimbashi in the Egyptian Coast Guard, commanding a troop of horsemen who patrolled the coast against enemy spies and smugglers, reported drifting mines, and the like. George's uniform had an Eastern splendor, and he was often mistaken for an officer of much higher rank. Cecil showed such photographs to his Alleyn's and Dulwich schoolmates, letting them conclude that his father was a colonel or even a general. The second son, Hugh, who in peacetime had become a bank clerk and a member of the Territorial Army (National Guard), became a machine-gun officer on the Western Front. He served well, was wounded, and after recovery became an instructor in machine-gun tactics. Three cousins, named Senior, had been pre-war lower-rank soldiers, being musicians and quartermasters, continued serving as such, and survived the war. Cecil later described these three as the "innumerable cousins who were all soldiers, many of them since before the war." (*Long Before Forty*, p65)

Shortly before the end of the war, Cecil went on to Guy's Medical School, financed by his brother, Geoff. He did a little work, and then dropped out while pretending to continue. When Geoff returned to London after the war, before taking up a new position with Shell in Borneo, he naturally went up to Guy's to inquire how his brother was doing. He was rather astonished to discover that Cecil hadn't been attending for a very long time.

Cecil had continued to spend considerable time at the Belcher home. While there, he met a ballet dancer named Pally Summers, and followed her on a trip to France, later describing this adventure as if he had met his premier danseuse by being a member of the artistic elite. While at the Belcher's home, he also kissed and petted young Kathleen Belcher.

Cecil still lived at home for free, and supported himself with odd jobs. He assisted at trade shows, he escorted an older woman, he was a professional bridge player in a cardroom operated by Marjorie Manus (his brother Geoff had taught him bridge before 1912), and he held a job as an advertising copywriter for four weeks before being fired for misconduct.Then he became partner in a fantastic scheme to corner the market in prime London newspaper advertising space, which naturally failed. He got involved in ghost-writing the memoirs of a peculiar man, who didn't pay him. He got involved with the pseudo-artistic salon of the heiress to the Singer sewing machine fortune, tried to convert that entree into a game of social success for money, and ended up cynical about bohemian artistic pretensions. He tried to promote the gift of a cruising motorboat, on the grounds that he could praise it mightily in articles about the rivers and canals of Europe. He applied for a professorship in English literature at one of the new regional colleges. Astonishing, that, considering his lack of education.

During this period, Cecil had a heart-wrenching affair with a woman in his group whose later married name was Lillian Artesani. For whatever reasons, Cecil's and Lillian's psyches both matched and exacerbated each other. Lillian's letters to Kathleen, describing Cecil, written years later, provide another insight into Cecil's character. It turned out that Cecil had kept Kathleen away from Lillian, after Lillian's marriage, by the expedient of telling Kathleen that Lillian's husband was a borderline psychotic (and foreign as well) who must be protected from emotional strain.

Early Writing

Meanwhile, Forester had written his first four novels and four histories. The first novel was rejected and disappeared completely. The second was a series of connected short stories about rather astonishing reminiscences. (*The Paid Piper*, 1924) The third was about a fictional, seductively powerful woman whose influence had caused Napoleon to make his several famous mistakes. (*A Pawn Among Kings*, 1924) Naturally, that drew on Cecil's knowledge of the Napoleonic wars learned from his childhood war-gaming. The first two histories were Napoleonic, got because he had written a Napoleonic novel and his publisher had no Napoleonic histories in print. (*Napoleon and his Court*, 1924; *Empress Josephine*, 1925) The third history was of *Louis XIV* (1928). The fourth history was about the of Italy, a subject about which Cecil knew nothing and cared nothing. (*Victor Emmanuel and the Unification of Italy*, 1927) These writings brought Cecil pocket money, nothing more, but then he was still living at home.

Creation of C. S. Forester

These were all published under the name of C. S. Forester. When the first was ready for a publisher, Cecil needed a new name that would allow him to escape being a Smith. Cecil's letters of the time show that he despised his family. He had continuously lied about them, concealing their faults, making them grander than they were, and, I deduce, was both troubled and cheered by the thought that his real father

was some grand Egyptian. He made sure that his pen name would allow him to shed being a Smith and become this grander person. However, he hadn't invented a name. The neighbor girl who had typed his manuscripts suggested Cecil Forrester, probably remembering a character from the Sherlock Holmes stories, and he became C(ecil) S (not for Smith, for nothing) Forester.

Forester's fourth novel was *Payment Deferred* (1926), a grim story of murder, disillusion, death, suicide, and the revenge of fate. William Marble is a feckless, married, somewhat alcoholic and debt-ridden bank clerk, living just the kind of life that Forester could describe from close acquaintance. He murders for money, but the consequences of having that money while concealing the murder that was its source, money which he amplifies with foreign exchange trading, bring the departure of his daughter, the death of his son, the suicide of his wife, which the authorities believe to be a murder that he had committed, and he cannot explain why she committed suicide without implicating himself in his original murder. *Payment Deferred,* a most appropriate title, became a play that made Charles Laughton a star, first on the London stage, and then in Hollywood.

Secret Marriage

Meanwhile, Forester had secretly married Kathleen Belcher. Florence and George Belcher had purchased a group of army tents and camp equipment at the end of the war, and set up a summer camp at Winchelsea on the south coast. The Belchers cycled down each summer, and Cecil had sometimes walked and sometimes cycled the fifty miles from London. Kathleen had had her first serious love affair with a young man named A. G. West, who had contracted tuberculosis and had died in two years. When she was getting over the death, Cecil had resumed courting her (although he had not terminated the relationship with Lillian), and they had sealed their love by intercourse among the yellow gorse bushes below Camber Castle, not far from Winchelsea. Kathleen had then become a teacher of gymnastics and massage, with a first appointment 100 miles to the west of London.

Cecil wrote about a page a day to Kathleen; these letters provide detailed knowledge of Cecil's thoughts and acts over this period, both before and after their secret marriage. Cecil is obsessed with secrecy. He fears that his mother and two sisters will read his mail. Therefore, he keeps opened letters in his jacket pocket until, when he is alone, he can burn them in the open coal fire. He addresses his letters to Kathleen in different handwritings, lest the other teachers learn that she is receiving many letters from one source. He insists that Kathleen burn his letters as soon as she has read them (which she didn't). The secret marriage did not prevent Cecil from having at least flirtations, possibly more serious affairs, with various women.

Cecil's normal circle is very restricted, being the former school friends at the Alleyn's Old Boys Club (with both male and female members), with its tennis courts, bridge tables, and dances; the Belchers; and his brothers and sisters. (Geoff returned from Borneo with sufficient money to buy a practice in Southend, near the mouth of the Thames.) They were all very short of money and led restricted lives in consequence, with big events being a weekend on the River Thames in rented camping punts. Cecil does research at the local public library and at the British Museum Library. He does his writing at home, sometimes on the living-room table, other times in his room upstairs.

With the recognition of *Payment Deferred*, and Kathleen's change of employment to the London area, Cecil and Kathleen decide to announce their marriage. All of Cecil's family had warned Kathleen that Cecil would make an unsuitable husband, but she thought that she could handle him. She liked helping people, and liked people who needed help, as Cecil obviously did. Cecil and Kathleen tell Kathleen's parents of the marriage, but not his own. Then they and Kathleen's parents go up to London, ostensibly to get married in a civil ceremony, but actually to have coffee at a Lyon's restaurant, just to satisfy the

proprieties. Cecil and Kathleen first live with the Belchers, then with the Smiths. Kathleen said that living with the Smiths was a pretty grim time, particularly in winter in an unheated garret.

In 1928, Cecil and Kathleen had just enough money to buy a fifteen-foot open outboard motor boat with a canvas camping cover. They named it *Annie Marble*, for the fictional character whose death provided the money. They spent the summer of 1928 cruising the French rivers and canals, and the summer of 1929 doing the same in Germany, with Cecil writing travel articles as they went. This also resulted in two travel books, *The Voyage of the Annie Marble* (1929) and *The Annie Marble in Germany* (1930). Two months after their return from Germany, their first son, John (that's me) was born in October, 1929.

Toward Maturity: Military and Naval Novels

After the success of *Payment Deferred*, Forester wrote three light social novels about young couples in what he would like people to think was his own social circle. These didn't sell very well, and when the time came to list Forester's works in the front matter of the uniform edition, they were ignored. (*Love Lies Dreaming* (1927), *The Wonderful Week* (1927), *The Shadow of the Hawk* (1928)) He also wrote another history, *Nelson* (1929), the only one in which he was really interested.

At this time (1930), Forester also wrote a curious volume called *Long Before Forty*, his autobiography that was not to be published until after his death. The volume is curious for what it doesn't say. The reading public believes that this is the intimate portrait of the development of a literary artist. However, the reader doesn't learn Forester's name, the profession of his father, anything about his family life, where he lived, where he went to school, how he met his future wife, or even the circumstances in which he wrote his first successful novel. In addition, the reader is systematically misled about many things: his father's status, his father's rank in war, the family's financial status, the family's military connections, even about the age at which his brother earned his M.D.

If one is going to publish an autobiography when young, there is certainly incentive to puff oneself, to exaggerate the good and conceal the bad. But if one is going to publish this many years later, and after one's death, then why not tell the truth? One suggestion is that Forester wanted to get his reputation secured by writing what biographers would rely on. I disagree. Forester didn't give a damn about reputation after death, nor about the reputation of his family. All he cared about was to stay out of scrutiny during his lifetime, so that he could continue living as he desired, a life that would have been disreputable had it been known. I think that *Long Before Forty* started out as an account (possibly lest he forget and contradict himself) of the stories that Forester had been putting out about himself, particularly in the publicity campaign that accompanied the publication of *Payment Deferred*. He had initially refused that campaign, because he wanted to maintain secrecy about his life, but relented when he figured out the lies that would conceal the truth while appearing to be the intimate truth. After all, that is what he had been doing for twenty years already.

In *Nelson*, Forester asserts that, as a novelist, he is more concerned with people than with maritime affairs. However, he does the reverse. He traces the formative influences and actions that produced a great admiral, a task at which other biographers have not done so well, while producing only a shallow portrait of the man within. Forester's next novel, *Brown on Resolution* (1929), covers much the same subject at the other end of naval hierarchy. Brown is born to a respectable spinster, the fruit of her one-week fling with a naval officer, and is raised with the hope that he would qualify for training as an officer. But poverty intervenes, and Brown becomes a seaman recruit, although with more of the naval character than most. In World War I, Brown is the sole survivor, captured after his ship was sunk by a superior German cruiser. The German ship needed to repair its battle damage before resuming its cruise, and hides in a tiny harbor in Resolution, one of the volcanic Galapagos Islands. Brown succeeds in

escaping (after all, there is no place to go) with a rifle, ammunition, and drinking water. The story concerns how Brown, by devotion to duty, delays the repair of the ship until he is hunted down and killed. That delay is just enough for the British hunting force to find the German ship and sink her. The British admiral is, of course, Brown's father, ignorant to the end.

Forester returned to crime with *Plain Murder* (1930), with a "wicked, bloody plot" (his own description of it) based somewhat on his experiences with the advertising agency. This was a reasonable success. He then returned to social novels with *Two and Twenty* (1931). This tells of a failed medical student who turns to popularly successful poetry celebrating naval actions (those which Forester had used as the background for Brown on Resolution), wins his upper-class girl and marries her secretly, decides that his poetry is "tricky stuff, good second-class stuff, meretricious stuff" which showed only the bad taste of the critics who had admired it, and returns to medical studies. The literary subject gives Forester the chance to describe literary critics and the cynical maneuvering in the literary world. Aside from inflating Cecil's and Kathleen's social classes, there is much autobiography in it; indeed, the poet's name is Cyril. The spiral of despair in which the praise of the critics for meretricious poetry only shows how bad the critics are, which then amplifies the faults of those parts that even they did not praise, are Forester's description of how he himself felt when the black mood was upon him.

In this period Forester wrote two plays about World War I, *U-97* (1931) and *Nurse Cavell* (1933). The set of *U-97* is the control room of a submerged German submarine under attack, and the plot is the effect of fear on discipline as the boat is first damaged and then destroyed. *Nurse Cavell* is about a British nurse who was executed in Belgium by the Germans.

After these side excursions, Forester returned to the military and naval theme that had so often appeared in his earlier works, so that *Brown on Resolution* is actually the first of a series of military and naval novels that made his reputation and earned him a steady living. In these novels Forester was concerned with "the man alone," how a man acts when forced to rely upon his own inner resources, as Brown had to on Resolution Island. In *Death to the French* (1932), rifleman Dodd spends a horrific winter from his regiment, among starving Spanish guerillas and hunted by starving French soldiers, but doing his duty by killing the soldiers one by one, and finally burning the bridge of boats by which the French hoped to attack the British, secure in their fortified peninsula and supplied by sea, the turning point in the war against Napoleon. In 1996, the commandant of the United States Marine Corps had *Death to the French* reprinted for issue to his troops. In a sense, even *The Gun* (1933) follows that theme, for the gun's almost demonic characteristics determine its effect against the French and on the succession of Spanish guerilla leaders who used it and died.

The Peacemaker (1934) concerns the inventor of a defensive weapon that will prevent modern war, so he thinks. Pethwick, a physics teacher, acts alone to demonstrate the weapon, and comes to grief as a result. However, Pethwick is solitary not by force, but by love, disenchanted love for his unpleasant wife, secret and idealistic love for the pacifist and intellectual daughter of the headmaster. Just as *Two and Twenty* allowed Forester to criticize the foolishness of literary posturing, *The Peacemaker* allowed Forester to criticize the intellectual shallowness of the pacifist movement.

The African Queen (1935) is the story of how Rose, a spinster English missionary war refugee in German Africa, persuades, in fact commands, Allnutt, a feckless mine mechanic, to take his decrepit steam launch, the *African Queen*, down an untraveled river with frightening rapids, to Lake Tanganyika, to torpedo the German gunboat that commands the lake. Rose grows from a repressed spinster into an attractive and commanding woman who enlists Allnutt's love and loyalty to accomplish what he never could alone.

The General (1936) is a sympathetic, and only slightly satiric, story of the career of a British general, one of those who mismanaged World War I by failing to recognize the effect of technology on warfare and thought that the horse still had an important place in modern war. Herbert Curzon is subaltern (2nd. Lt) in a socially nondescript cavalry regiment, now the senior officer present whose superior officers had been killed in a Boer ambush. The regiment is wandering through broken country to evade the enemy's fire and find their own side. Curzon comes to the mouth of his canyon to see before them the rear of the enemy's line, with field guns and supply wagons all open to a classic cavalry charge. Started upward by this chance of war, Curzon rises to command an army corps on the Western Front in World War I, and to marry a duke's daughter, before being wounded in the last German offensive of 1918. Curzon is lucky, but he also has very great virtues, while being fully equipped with just those defects that you would expect to accompany those virtues. Although *The General* did not sell very well, it is Forester's finest novel and it has the air of being written as a warning of how not to fight the next war. It had an unusually high sale in German translation, because Hitler recommended it to his officers. We don't know whether Hitler intended this as a warning of what German officers should avoid in the next war, or as a description of the backwardness of the British generals they would face.

The General was unintentionally but coincidentally prescient in another manner. The opening scene describes General Curzon being pushed in his wheelchair by his tall, thin, spinsterish wife, a description that fit Forester twenty years later, in his wheelchair pushed by his second wife.

With his growing reputation and sufficient income to support his family, Forester was rising in the social world. When I was born in October, 1929, my place of birth was listed as the Smith's house at 58 Underhill Road, Dulwich. By 1930, Cecil and Kathleen had rented a tiny apartment not far away. In February, 1933, their second son, George, was born, and they spent the summer in a rented cottage adjacent to the Belcher's camp in Winchelsea. They then moved to the upper apartment of 33 Longton Ave., Upper Sydenham, between Dulwich and the Crystal Palace. About 1930, Cecil became a member of the Savage Club, a London club for men in the arts. (Some scenes in *Two and Twenty* take place in the Savage.) After *The General* was written, the publishers asked Capt. B. H. Liddell Hart, the military analyst and advocate of mobile, armoured warfare, to review the typescript for military accuracy. Forester therefore met Liddell Hart, an entree to the proper military world.

Forester also became involved as the instigator of the amateur Forester Marionette Theatre. He and Kathleen persuaded several of their friends into this activity, which involved everything from building the portable theater, devising the turns, writing the scripts, making the marionettes and dressing them, and learning to work them gracefully. Cecil described this hobby in *Marionettes at Home* (1936). He became sexually involved with one of the young women, and then had to fake anger with her (for being late for rehearsal) and dismiss her from the company in shame, so that she and Kathleen would not compare notes.

Birth of Hornblower

At the end of 1935, Forester received an offer of employment at Paramount Studios in Hollywood, to work on a screenplay about pirates in the Spanish Main. He accepted and sailed in December. The letters that he wrote to Kathleen are those of a first-time visitor to the United States. There is not a single reference to any previous visit, although in later years he told many people that he had had regular employment in Hollywood. He lasted seven weeks, before getting on a Swedish ship to return to England.

At Paramount, he worked with Niven Busch, a screenwriter, under the producer Arthur Hornblow. When their screenplay was well under way, Warner's released *Captain Blood*, with Errol Flynn, whose

The General (1936) is a sympathetic, and only slightly satiric, story of the career of a British general, one of those who mismanaged World War I by failing to recognize the effect of technology on warfare and thought that the horse still had an important place in modern war. Herbert Curzon is subaltern (2nd. Lt) in a socially nondescript cavalry regiment, now the senior officer present whose superior officers had been killed in a Boer ambush. The regiment is wandering through broken country to evade the enemy's fire and find their own side. Curzon comes to the mouth of his canyon to see before them the rear of the enemy's line, with field guns and supply wagons all open to a classic cavalry charge. Started upward by this chance of war, Curzon rises to command an army corps on the Western Front in World War I, and to marry a duke's daughter, before being wounded in the last German offensive of 1918. Curzon is lucky, but he also has very great virtues, while being fully equipped with just those defects that you would expect to accompany those virtues. Although *The General* did not sell very well, it is Forester's finest novel and it has the air of being written as a warning of how not to fight the next war. It had an unusually high sale in German translation, because Hitler recommended it to his officers. We don't know whether Hitler intended this as a warning of what German officers should avoid in the next war, or as a description of the backwardness of the British generals they would face.

The General was unintentionally but coincidentally prescient in another manner. The opening scene describes General Curzon being pushed in his wheelchair by his tall, thin, spinsterish wife, a description that fit Forester twenty years later, in his wheelchair pushed by his second wife.

With his growing reputation and sufficient income to support his family, Forester was rising in the social world. When I was born in October, 1929, my place of birth was listed as the Smith's house at 58 Underhill Road, Dulwich. By 1930, Cecil and Kathleen had rented a tiny apartment not far away. In February, 1933, their second son, George, was born, and they spent the summer in a rented cottage adjacent to the Belcher's camp in Winchelsea. They then moved to the upper apartment of 33 Longton Ave., Upper Sydenham, between Dulwich and the Crystal Palace. About 1930, Cecil became a member of the Savage Club, a London club for men in the arts. (Some scenes in *Two and Twenty* take place in the Savage.) After *The General* was written, the publishers asked Capt. B. H. Liddell Hart, the military analyst and advocate of mobile, armoured warfare, to review the typescript for military accuracy. Forester therefore met Liddell Hart, an entree to the proper military world.

Forester also became involved as the instigator of the amateur Forester Marionette Theatre. He and Kathleen persuaded several of their friends into this activity, which involved everything from building the portable theater, devising the turns, writing the scripts, making the marionettes and dressing them, and learning to work them gracefully. Cecil described this hobby in *Marionettes at Home* (1936). He became sexually involved with one of the young women, and then had to fake anger with her (for being late for rehearsal) and dismiss her from the company in shame, so that she and Kathleen would not compare notes.

Birth of Hornblower

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lot used the same historical events that Busch and Forester had been writing into their script. There was lso a large management upset at Paramount. As a result, Forester's six-week contract was not renewed.

On the train across America, Forester had struck up a friendship with Dr. Jerome Wagner and his wife, and on arrival in Hollywood found an apartment in the same building as the Wagners. One of Wagner's friends or patients was the fading opera singer Annette Guilford, who was in Hollywood attending her dying father. Niven Busch got married while writing *The Buccaneer*, and the couple honeymooned in Palm Springs. Forester spent some weekends with the Wagners and Annette Guilford at a mountain resort, and some other time with the Buschs and with Guilford in Palm Springs, combining writing with socializing. Guilford apparently fell for Forester, and moved into another apartment in the same building as his. Her attentions then drove Forester out, to stay at the Roosevelt Hotel. Simultaneous with the non-renewal of his writing contract, Forester received complaints, delivered through Guilford's attorneys, that he had made her pregnant. That decided him. Rather than leaving town on the train the way he had come, on which he could be served legal papers, he left town on a foreign ship which would protect him.

The *Margaret Johnson* called at several Central American ports, loading coffee, before transiting the Panama Canal and crossing the Atlantic to London. When calling at the Bay of Fonseca, the ship had to wait for dock space to open up, and Forester was given a cruise around the Bay in the ship's motor lifeboat, which had to be tested. With his knowledge of Napoleonic and Nelsonic history, Forester wondered about the man alone, a naval captain, operating on this then very lonely and difficult-to-reach side of the world. Another of the passengers was the San Francisco socialite and professional photographer, Barbara Sutro. As the story came to his mind, the characters became named for his recent acquaintances: Captain Hornblower, Lieutenant Bush, and Lady Barbara. By the time that the *Margaret Johnson* reached England, the first Hornblower novel, *The Happy Return*, was ready to be written.

Forester in Hornblower, and vice versa

The character of Captain Horatio Hornblower was constrained by the needs of the plot. That set his rank, his age, his rise by merit without connections, his rather shy and gawky personality, his unsatisfactory marriage, his tone-deafness, offset by his ability at seamanship and navigation. Some of these fit Forester's character also, and those of Hornblower's characteristics that were not made necessary by the plot were very like what Forester thought about himself. Hornblower was Forester as Forester hoped that he had the courage to be. This happy fit between author and character allowed Forester to create new stories for Hornblower for the rest of his life. He wrote other stories also, but Hornblower always came back to his mind.

When *The Happy Return* (1937) was in page proof, I found my father correcting it. The process interested me, just after my seventh birthday, and I read *The Happy Return* in proof, among the very first of many Hornblower fans. Of course, I wondered a bit about why the return was not so happy. Hornblower is sent, in the frigate *Lydia*, to assist in an insurrection on the Pacific coast of Central America, against the Spanish who were allied with Napoleon. The rebel is a psychotic dictator who calls himself El Supremo and rules with utmost cruelty, a foretaste of Hitler. Hornblower captures the Spanish ship of the line in those waters, aids the insurrection, and then learns that the Spaniards had revolted against Napoleon's brother and were now England's allies whom he had to aid. There is a bitter fight to the death against the rebel ship of the line, after which Hornblower has to sail home without assistance from the Spanish. Before that battle, Hornblower has been forced to take on board, for the return voyage, the unmarried sister of the future Duke of Wellington. Seducing her would be little worse for him than rejecting her if she wanted him. The possible resolution of that quagmire is made impossible by the unexpected early departure of Lady Barbara, into a chance-met passenger ship, leaving Hornblower with no prize money, only professional recognition, an unhappy heart, to return to

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his unhappy marriage. Titling this *The Happy Return* is just one more example of Forester's ironic turn of mind, in which earned rewards are not received, great deeds accomplish nothing substantial, happiness is illusory. The American publishers didn't appreciate the irony, so they retitled the book *Beat to Quarters*.

After writing *The Happy Return*, Forester spent some short time as a reporter to the Franco side of the Spanish Civil War. What he wrote or did is unknown.

While on a cruise ship that circled the British Isles, Forester thought out the way to resolve the half-finished situation that gripped Hornblower at the end of *The Happy Return*. This resulted in two novels, *A Ship of the Line* (1938) and *Flying Colours* (1938). Barbara marries a titled admiral. Hornblower is promoted to a ship of the line, to serve under that admiral along the Spanish coast. Before the squadron sails, there are social scenes of the admiral, his captains, and their ladies, at which Hornblower is both jealous about Lady Barbara and ashamed of his Maria. Nonetheless, he gets Maria pregnant before sailing. (Their two previous children had died of smallpox.) The admiral isn't much of an admiral, but Hornblower sees a lot of action, mostly independent of the squadron, largely interdicting the coastal supply lines for the French army in Spain. A squadron of four French ships of the line escapes from Toulon, and Hornblower takes his ship into battle alone, with the intention of so damaging the French ships that they will not be able to escape the rest of the British squadron, whenever it could arrive. He does so, but his ship is beaten into helpless surrender and Hornblower is taken prisoner, along with Lieutenant Bush, whose foot has been shot away, and the other survivors of the crew.

Flying Colours opens with Hornblower a prisoner in the castle overlooking Rosas Bay, where the damaged French ships, and his own surrendered wreck, have taken shelter. At night, he sees the British squadron enter the bay to burn the damaged ships, and escape with little damage, the flagship losing a topmast. One of the survivors from the fallen topmast tells Hornblower that there was little damage until that time, except for the shot that wounded the admiral. Then Hornblower and the wounded Bush are loaded into a coach, under military escort, to be taken to Paris to be tried and shot as war criminals by Napoleon. Hornblower asks that his coxswain, Brown, be assigned as their servant for the journey, which is done. It is now winter, and in a nighttime snowstorm the coach gets stuck in the snow, within sight of a small river in which is moored a rowboat, probably used as a ferry. The escort are sent to look for help. Hornblower and Brown overpower the escort officer, load Bush into the boat and set off down a river in flood, in the dark. They come to grief at the overflow of a dam, and seek shelter and surrender at the nearest house. This is a chateau, owned by an aristocrat whose sons have died in Napoleon's armies, who has no love for Napoleon and his government, who secrets them until spring. Brown, a very capable man, finds a lover in the kitchen, while Hornblower has an affair with the count's widowed daughter-in-law. They build another rowing boat, sail it down the river to the sea, retake a captured British cutter, and sail out to meet the British fleet. Hornblower is tried for the loss of his ship at Rosas Bay, but is exonerated with praise and given a medal. He learns that he has been reported dead in France, Maria has died in childbirth, Barbara's husband has died of wounds in the Mediterranean, and that Barbara has adopted Hornblower's newborn son, who awaits the return of his now-famous father. Those two novels resolved Hornblower's problems and the three were published in a trilogy, without thought of more.

In 1938, Forester returned to the east coast of America for a book promotion tour. In New York he met Thayer Hobson, the president of the publishing firm William Morrow, and Frances Phillips, the editor. In the fall of 1938, Hitler threatened Czechoslovakia, and at Munich, the British prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, signed a pact with Hitler giving him the important part of that nation. Cecil was in Prague, reassuring the Czechs that Britain would stand behind them, but when Chamberlain signed the Munich Pact he "fled in shame like a dog with my tail between my legs." Chamberlain called this "Peace in our

time," but wiser heads recognized that this was just the prelude to war. Recognizing that this might be the last year of peace, Cecil and Kathleen took a cruise in the West Indies. Kathleen was seasick on the outward passage, while Cecil tried to seduce all of the women that might be available. From this cruise, Forester thought of the plot of *The Earthly Paradise* (1940), a story of Columbus's third voyage as told by a worldly-wise attorney who has been instructed to report conditions in the New World. Maybe it had been an earthly paradise, before the arrival of Europeans.

World War II

When World War II broke out on September 1, 1939, Forester had a plan. He knew that it would be vital for Britain to attract and keep America's support. He proposed to the British government that he go to America, to support himself by writing pro-British screenplays in Hollywood, while having time to also be a press representative for the British government. He sailed in six weeks.

For the two years that America was neutral, Forester worked part-time at the British Information Service in Rockefeller Center, New York, and part-time in Hollywood. His most effective work was the stories that he sold to the Saturday Evening Post, which in those days was the equivalent of network TV. His stories told, fictionally, of the exploits of the Royal Navy in the Mediterranean and of the British army that drove the Italians almost out of Africa. One character is the Captain (D), commanding a squadron of destroyers, who no only gets the Greek government's gold out of Crete, and raids Italian naval bases, but writes each day one letter, writing in turn to each of his string of unacquainted lady friends. Forester wrote two films, *Eagle Squadron* and *The Commandos Strike at Dawn*, but these did not appear until after America joined the war. For the BIS he handled news stories and sought to counteract the pro-German and isolationist views expressed by Lindberg (the famous flyer) and by Colonel McCormick, the owner of the Chicago Tribune.

He had one unusual assignment. The British had developed the first radar set small enough to fit in a fighter plane, and this was very secret. Because the Battle of Britain had convinced the Germans to abandon bombing England by daylight, they had resorted to night bombing, against which only an aircraft-carried radar would be effective. The secret was in the transmitter tube, that generated such small waves that the set could be made small enough to fit. To cover up, much was made of the idea that vitamin A and complete isolation from daylight had improved the night vision of Britain's night fighter pilots. A planeload of radar experts and their equipment, en route to the American aircraft factories in Southern California, was forced by mechanical trouble to stop at Tulsa. Forester had to rapidly organize the storage of the "night fighter pilots" in blacked-out rooms completely protected from daylight, and the purchase of crates of carrots (for the vitamin A), in order to continue the cover story for this unexpected stop in Tulsa.

He also wrote a novel about the American navy in the War of 1812, a novel that managed to combine both American patriotism and pro-British sentiments and showed that the differences between Englishmen and Americans were of little importance when compared to their similarities. Josiah Peabody, *The Captain from Connecticut*, (1941) comes from good American puritan stock. He escapes the British blockade in his frigate to harass British trade in the West Indies. But France has already made peace with Britain, so continuation of the war between America and Britain is absurd. The French have resumed control, as neutrals, of their islands in the West Indies. Peabody meets the British squadron, but in French waters where they are not allowed to fight. Neutral proprieties and the laws of war prevent any fight, but Peabody and the British ships cooperate in chasing down pirates. Peabody falls in love with a French island woman of a proper, but decidedly not puritanical, upbringing, while the older British captain falls in love with her widowed mother. Peabody and the British captain are forced, by honor, into a duel, from whose results they are saved by cooperation of their wives. Peabody's puritanical

upbringing at first horrifies him when he learns that the pistols had been loaded with bullets of toasted bread, but he recovers into laughter with the thought of the British captain, a dead shot, trying to bring him down with nothing more than burnt toast.

Forester also wrote articles about current British military and naval events, such as *How the British Sank the Scharnhorst*, articles that typically appeared in the Saturday Evening Post.

Forester received permission for his family to follow him whenever transportation could be arranged. Kathleen, John, George, and Ruth, the Danish au pair girl, sailed from England in February, 1940. Although Forester spent part-time working in Hollywood and part-time working in New York, he sent his family to San Francisco to find a house. He said that it was the nicest city on the Coast, but it was also a place in which he had left no tracks. With his family in San Francisco, when he was in either New York, where he lived at the Gramercy Park Hotel, adjacent to Frances Phillips, or Hollywood, he could live as he pleased. Kathleen rented a house in Berkeley, where Forester lived until 1945. He did his serious writing in Berkeley, and spent a lot of time there. The house had three floors stepping down the steep hill below Keeler Avenue, all with westward views straight out through the Golden Gate.

To keep his younger son, George, eating, Cecil told stories at lunchtime, stories that continued as long as eating continued. Forester left his thoughts about *The Captain from Connecticut* and walked into the dining room, prepared to tell another story entirely. This resulted in the child's book, *Poo-Poo and the Dragons* (1942). Cecil and Kathleen played tennis at the Orinda Country Club and at the Berkeley Tennis Club, and Cecil played bridge at the Tennis Club. Kathleen joined the Sierra Club and took her sons on hikes and camps. In 1941 she hiked for two weeks on the Sierra Club's High Sierra Trip. Upon her return, she discovered that Cecil had managed to acquire a full crop of body lice in her absence, lice that she undertook to shave off him.

The damage of various British warships was repaired at American ports. The light cruiser, HMS *Penelope*, was repaired at Philadelphia Navy Yard, and Forester met her crew and sailed in her on her trials after the repairs. *Penelope* was one of the cruisers that frightened an Italian squadron containing battleships away from a vital convoy to Malta. Forester worked the story of that action into a novel, *The Ship* (1943), about a fictional ship, HMS *Artemis*. While Forester tells the stories of many men, each performing his task during the action, the eyewitness point of view is told by the captain's secretary, before the war an advertising copywriter and seducer of women, whose possible fear during the action is covered by furious jealously that one of his prewar mistresses has married a man he also knew, and is trying very hard to become pregnant. Forester has given Captain the Hon. Miles Earnest Troughton-Harrington-Yorke two of his own names (Troughton and Harrington), and describes that captain in terms that he also used when describing his own youth to me. The Captain had grown up in shameful poverty, had been a youth of strong passions, of no restraint, of indulgence in evil temper. Recognizing the danger, he had mastered those passions slowly to become a masterful captain. If the captain's secretary is Cecil as he felt himself, the Captain is Cecil as he wished he were, another Hornblower so to speak.

The Ship is different from Forester's other novels, in that the actions of *Artemis's* crew produce a historical fact. In his other historical novels, Forester had to tell of actions that, however courageous and brilliant, accomplished nothing of importance, a pessimism that appears to be his dominant emotion.

Living in Berkeley Society

In 1941 and 1942 occurred the strange story of the premature baby. Due to the personal tangles inherent in war, Forester's British-born New York secretary became pregnant by a man not her husband. Forester

feared that this event would disrupt Anglo-American friendship, so he decided that to avoid upsetting American public opinion and jeopardizing American help to Britain, the conception and pregnancy had to be re-dated to a time when the husband had been present. The cover story was that the pregnancy was going badly and the child would be born far premature and dead, even though it actually would be full term and healthy, and be given for adoption.

Since this couldn't be carried out in New York, the woman was sent to Berkeley to live with Kathleen under a veil of secrecy. The adoption didn't go smoothly, and was still being negotiated by Kathleen in the woman's hospital room after the mother had given birth. By this time America had entered the war, and many nurses had been replaced, wherever they could be, as in well-baby care, by middle-class women serving as nurses aides. Forester became upset that Kathleen might take responsibility for the child, got a travel priority, and flew to Berkeley to tell the cover story, that the child had been premature and born dead. Unfortunately, he told this story to Berkeley women who knew of the healthy birth and had quite likely held the healthy baby in their arms. Naturally, Berkeley society concluded that the baby was Cecil's, and that Kathleen was being complaisant about it. In fact, that baby had been conceived 3,000 miles away from Cecil, but that was not known to Berkeley society. That was probably not the only Forester scandal that was circulating; Forester was nearly cited as co-respondent in a Berkeley divorce suit. In this period, Kathleen found torn-up scraps of letters to Cecil in the wastebasket. In one, Frances Phillips assumed that she was his steady mistress in New York. In another, a Swedish lady listed her score with men as 164, and doubted that Forester had been able to overtake her from his last score of 143. The arguments between Kathleen and Cecil were so acrimonious that both sons spent much of their time in the houses of their best friends.

One asks why Forester so feared the stigma of bastardy, that the wartime illegitimate pregnancy of a typist would reduce the effort that America was giving to Britain. That's not reasonable, but the fact that Forester feared this enough to run the risks inherent in covering this up is one of the several reasons that I conclude he both feared and hoped that he was a bastard.

In this period, Forester wrote what he called his three pornographic stories. Their subject is sex through the centuries, about spinsterly propriety titillating what was not sexual at all one hundred years ago, about sex with neither marriage nor conception in today's world, and about conception without sex one hundred years later. These were published by Forester's Canadian publisher under the title *The Bedchamber Mystery* (1944). These are not what the Saturday Evening Post would publish, but they are not pornographic at all. Any big city newspaper contains stronger material today. Forester's puritanical facade was not ignorance. He knew real pornography, and I knew that because I had discovered his cache and read my way through it. He just wanted people to think that he was such a nice man that even if he had real sexual thoughts, it would not occur to him to tell them.

Disease and Divorce

In August, 1943, Forester began to be afflicted with the disease that changed his life. This was atherosclerosis, gradual plugging up of the arteries to his legs. His legs became tired easily and early. He was told that the circulatory restriction would progress until his toes died, then his feet, then his shanks, each being amputated in turn to prevent gangrene and prolong life. Actually, the disease stopped at the point where he could climb two flights of stairs, or walk several hundred yards slowly, in each day, but it took more than a year to realize that his condition was not getting any worse. Forester's condition stabilized at this level until the strokes that afflicted him in the final eighteen months of his life.

The disease was not well understood at this time. Kathleen, with her physical education and massage training, thought that exercise would strengthen Cecil's leg muscles. When he complained of pain and

said that he wasn't getting any stronger, she thought that the pain was merely a symptom of good exercise and that he was giving up too easily. Peculiarly enough, it was not until my work on the exercise of cycling that his symptoms were understood. He could do only so much in each day, and that was that.

Cecil went through very dark periods in this time, and his gloomy words frightened Kathleen. Cecil talked about crippling her so she would be as disabled as he was. Her bedroom had a small balcony that overlooked the more than two-floor drop to the garden, and below the balcony was the bowl-shaped top of a cedar tree that had been topped to preserve the view. George and I had discovered that we could jump off the balcony into the top of the tree. Kathleen removed the screens from her bedroom windows and kept a set of clothing in my bedroom on the lowest floor, so that she could jump out of bed into the tree if escape became necessary.

A divorce was practically inevitable, and it proceeded over the year from 1944 to 1945. Kathleen had found a lover, a well-educated but philosophically ineffectual man, just the sort that she liked. She took him on a Sierra pack trip with John, George, and John's best friend, Tom Lewis. We boys joked a little about what Neil and Kathleen might be doing, although we never saw anything improper. As far as I was concerned, if that was the love that my mother needed, that was fine with me.

Cecil, upon hearing of this episode, realized that he had caught Kathleen with the goods. He berated Kathleen with the idea that her behavior had thoroughly upset their sons and that the proprieties required a divorce. Kathleen was not averse to the divorce, because she had the opposite character to Cecil. Cecil made sure that he was seen to be obeying all the proprieties, while acting thoroughly immorally in secret. Kathleen, on the other hand, while she paid little respect to the proprieties, was a thoroughly moral person who didn't do things in secret. She had come to love Neil; therefore, she should marry Neil. The divorce became final in 1945, with Kathleen receiving the leasehold on a house in London, her car, and her clothes.

Simultaneous with this, Cecil had to move. The owners of the Keeler Avenue house needed it back. Cecil did not want to buy a house, but no rentals were available at that time in the war. He bought a house on Hawthorne Terrace, much further down the hill, near the UC campus. The European war had ended that spring, the Japanese war could not last much longer. Cecil intended to live at, and own, Hawthorne Terrace no longer than eighteen months, and then to send his sons to boarding school while he lived as he liked, part time in New York, part time in England, part time in France. However, he didn't tell his sons of this plan.

Return to Hornblower

In this gloomy time, Hornblower returned to Forester's thoughts. Forester later remarked that Hornblower had saved his sanity. Hornblower was sufficiently similar to Forester that when Forester thought about himself, he also thought about Hornblower. What could Hornblower do next, free of his unsuitable wife and with the prospect of a brilliant marriage before him? He married Lady Barbara, but blockade duty off the coast of France would not be exciting. Forester could not let Hornblower get involved in the naval war against the Americans. Forester sent Hornblower to the Baltic, to cooperate with the Russians against Napoleon. There is no large naval action in *The Commodore* (1945), but there are small-ship actions, complicated negotiations with neutrals and with the Tsar, Hornblower preventing an assassination of the Tsar, Hornblower acquiring body lice from amorous dalliance with a Russian countess, Hornblower supporting the besieged city of Riga, at the furthest extent of Napoleon's invasion along the coast, at which Hornblower meets Clausewitz, later to be acclaimed as the foremost military writer of the time, the turn of the tide when the French start retreating, and Hornblower being struck

down with typhus, transmitted by those body lice from the countess. (The Saturday Evening Post had enough difficulty with the adultery; it would not stand lice, so Forester called them fleas, but it is lice that transmit typhus, not fleas, and lice had been what Forester had collected in similar manner.)

Napoleon was not yet defeated at the end of *The Commodore*, but there was little enough time for Forester to tie up all the loose ends of Hornblower's career in *Lord Hornblower* (1946). Hornblower recovers from typhus, is made a baronet, supports the invasion of France by the royalists from England, in which his companion, Bush, is blown to bits by an exploding powder barge, sees the first deposing of Napoleon, almost gets dragged by Lady Barbara to the peace conference in Vienna, and retreats to the French countryside to renew his affair with the lady he had met during his escape from France. Napoleon escaped from his island exile and, for a hundred days, again ruled France until defeated at the battle of Waterloo. During those hundred days, Hornblower, the count, and Marie raise a resistance group and conduct guerilla warfare against Napoleon's army, but are finally caught in an ambush, in which the count and Marie are killed, and Hornblower captured, to be shot on the next day, when the word of Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo comes through and saves him. So endeth the career of Hornblower, for the third time (*The Happy Return*, *Flying Colours*, *Lord Hornblower*, were each intended to close the books.)

Educating His Sons

Meanwhile, Cecil's sons continued at school in Berkeley, where he thought that they were doing badly. Cecil hired a succession of housekeepers, but none of them remained satisfactory because there were too many good jobs available for competent people. Cecil persuaded Marjorie Manus, the woman who had owned the bridge parlor in which he has played professionally in the 1920s, to come to Berkeley in December, 1945, to be his housekeeper.

Once the divorce was final, Frances Phillips arrived for a stay in March, 1946, to discreetly sleep with Cecil and to kiss and cuddle with me, before returning to New York.

In 1945, Cecil made a trip to the East Coast, during which he inspected the prep school that he had selected for his sons. In May, 1946, he informed his sons that, in the fall, they would be going to St. George's School in Newport, Rhode Island. He informed John that, although he would have become a senior at Berkeley High, he would have to be two years at St. George's, or three years if he didn't work hard, to meet the standards. John accepted this as what was necessary to catch up with the faster schooling that he had started in England, but had since been slowed in California.

At the end of the summer of 1946, Cecil took the boys to the East Coast on the train. George, starting at the lowest form of the school, liked it, but John hated St. George's. He could not do the range of engineering and gadgeteering activities that he had done in Berkeley, and the schooling was no harder. It took him six weeks to discover (naturally, he didn't dare ask about that subject) that he was expected to graduate in June. He found the absence of girls to be surprisingly painful, and the snobbery of the school appeared unwarranted considered the small advantage in education offered. He had always wanted to be a physicist, and, in Berkeley, he lived just walking distance from UC Berkeley with its world-famous department of physics. In June, when he returned to Berkeley, he walked down to the admissions office and was accepted as a student in physics. He then wrote and posted a letter of regret to Harvard. The next day, he informed Cecil of his action. Cecil made sure that his house ran like a clock, that his breakfast was carried in to his bedroom at the stroke of eight, and this summer morning the morning concert from the university's campanile drifted in through the open window as John gave him the news.

Cecil was very upset at John's news, and wanted him to change back. John pointed out that his letter

declining Harvard was in the mail, and they would hardly want him after learning that Harvard was his second choice. Cecil then accused John of upsetting George's education, "For I can hardly have one son on one side of the country and the other son on the other side, on different vacation schedules!" Cecil could not allow himself to be seen to abandon the Berkeley house as long as John was attending UC Berkeley, and since he could not do that he saw no advantage in sending George to prep school, although he frequently complained bitterly to John that George was wasting his time at Berkeley High, implying that that was John's fault. In fact, George was not wasting his time, but completed the usual college preparatory courses with good grades.

Second Secret Marriage

Over this period, Cecil courted several Berkeley ladies, but nothing came of these efforts. He courted Ruth, the Danish woman who had lived with the Forester family from 1938 to 1941, and whose American marriage had come apart. He said he was rich, because Kathleen hadn't got any of his money, and that he would be knighted, so that Ruth would be Lady Forester, and she could visit her family in Denmark every year. Ruth replied that she knew far too much about him and wouldn't let him touch her with a ten-foot pole.

In the summer of 1946, while John and George were visiting Kathleen, he returned to England for the first time since leaving it in 1939, to be received with open arms or legs, as he wrote to Kathleen. He visited his brother Geoff, Kathleen's mother Florence, Dorothy Foster (a member of the tennis club with whom he had had a flirtation while Kathleen was teaching in Shropshire), and Lillian, with whom he had had that strained relationship before marrying Kathleen. The meeting with Lillian did not go well, as Lillian recalled years later. "One sometimes doubts when one should believe, because one is not sure if he is just playing cat and mouse. When he came to England in `46 I was too tired to stand that sort of thing."

Upon returning from England, he visited Frances Phillips in New York. Her mother had just died. Cecil arrived just after the death, and left before the burial. Frances, as an only child, had born the entire responsibility of the crisis and Cecil was obviously no help to her. They parted under some strain. Cecil wrote to her, later, that his visit to England had made profound changes in him, but he never specified what those changes were. However, before January, 1947, he had decided to get Dorothy Foster to marry him.

Up to 18 January, Cecil's letters to Frances had been quite normal. After that he wrote three letters to her in a large, sprawling script that is entirely unlike his normal small script. "You won't want to be friends with me any more. ... There isn't any truth I can tell you, and if there were you know you wouldn't believe it. Would you? ... I'm madder than any hatter you ever met." Cecil and Frances didn't see each other for the next three years.

Dorothy Foster was a spinster, a good Victorian daughter raised to look after her parents, which she was still doing. Dorothy had none of the attractions, physical or mental, of the ladies that Forester had been courting. She was proper, skinny, colorless, unimaginative, and obedient. Cecil had never in his life lived alone or looked after himself; he had always had someone looking after him. I think that Cecil looked on Dorothy as someone to look after him. In any case, when he next visited England in the spring of 1947, he secretly married Dorothy on May 3. The marriage ceremony performed, Dorothy returned to looking after her aged parents.

Forester's next book, *The Sky and the Forest* (1948), was different from all of his others in that it concerned primitive society. Loa is chief of an African jungle tribe, with the supposed power of

recalling the moon and of controlling the sun. He becomes captured by slave traders, is rescued by the least of his several wives, and then uses his observation of slaving methods to build a dictatorial nation. Finally, his new nation is conquered by Europeans arriving by river steamboat. As always, Forester creates characters and society to suit his plot, with little left over that is not strictly required, but, again, the reader is led to believe in the society and events. An anthropologist wrote to Forester asking for his source for things that the anthropologist had suspected but had never directly observed. Forester had to reply that he had invented the items in question to suit the plot, rather than using observed things to guide the plot.

Over the next two years, Cecil lived his life in Berkeley while John attended UC and George attended Berkeley High. Shortly before Christmas, 1948, Cecil suffered a massive heart attack. I visited him in hospital daily, at first being allowed only a few minutes at a time. It had been my custom, since 1940, of spending some of my Christmas vacation skiing at Donner Summit. When my father was largely out of danger, but still required hospitalization, I inquired whether he would be coming home during vacation time. He replied that he wouldn't be able to leave the hospital until after then, and that I could go skiing as usual. Then he said, "John, there is something that I must tell you. I am married and my wife will be coming from England in January. You may remember her, Dorothy Foster, who sometimes looked after you when you were young. She has been looking after her parents, but they are now getting simple-minded and won't mind her coming."

CSF's Effect on His Sons

Sometime during these years, George decided that his father was a lying, hypocritical, authoritarian, licentious bastard, and rebelled. He refused to obey Cecil and thereafter they lived, even in the same house, at arm's length. John did not reach this conclusion, but remained respectful and loving to his father. The difference in opinion not only separated George from Cecil, but it also separated John from George, who would not try to tell John what he believed.

In the late spring of 1949, I had a romantic crisis. In 1947, lonely at St. George's, I had started writing to Janet, who had been my very first serious girl friend in 1945. By 1949, the two of us had decided to marry when I finished my education, and I had been hurrying along my studies in physics at an unusual rate. However, Janet's parents became thoroughly opposed to me, although they never said why, and, unlike most people, who wanted to meet the famous C. S. Forester, they carefully avoided all contact with him. Janet's mother was good friends with the woman who had run the nurses' aid committee during the war, a woman who obviously knew about the supposedly premature baby scandal of 1942, and whom Cecil thought was the most dangerous woman in Berkeley. And there were Cecil's several other scandalous doings as well. Of course, neither Janet nor I had any idea of these matters at that time, and Janet was puzzled by her parents' attitude. However, they wore her down, and she came to visit me to say that she couldn't take her parents' opposition any longer and she had to leave me although she loved me as much as ever. I flunked my next midterm examinations, couldn't do even one of the five problems in differential equations, and withdrew for the semester.

While at St. George's, I had been greatly influenced by an enormously capable and personable teacher of literature and composition, the one great teacher I have ever had. When I returned to UC in the fall, after much soul searching, I returned as a student of English literature, thinking that I might become an editor or a professor, not an author, a talent that was very rare. That thoroughly upset my father. Ironic, isn't it, that my father, who thought me barely of average intelligence and wanted to keep me away from literature, unwittingly produced the exact opposite of his desires? His desire to send me off to prep school so he could live a licentious life, plus the reputation of that licentious life, combined to give me the mental shock that drove me into literature.

All of my university friends, other than Janet, were either graduate students, foreign graduate students, or veterans of the war. I was a better match with them than with the typical undergraduates. While the graduate and foreign residents of International House were well fed, the food was bland. With a large house within walking distance, I could give dinner parties with interesting food and hold dances afterwards. Besides, my father was happy to read selected portions of his current work or other unfamiliar material, such as the slightly risque stories of *The Bedchamber Mystery*. That particular reading embarrassed me, because I knew that everyone concerned knew much more explicit material, and I didn't want my friends to think that Cecil was as puritanical and ignorant as he pretended to be, but I could not say so. I suppose that some became more accurately informed, for he tried to seduce, and possibly succeeded with, several of the women who came to my parties.

There is no doubt that his sons caused Cecil considerable trouble, but it is equally indubitable that the cause of the trouble was Cecil's character and his manipulation of his sons to attain his secret ends. John's unhappiness at St. George's, followed by his refusal to attend Harvard and his later change of college major, were significant troubles, but nothing unusual in many families. George had a few more problems, the most serious being getting a neighbor girl pregnant, but in telling John of these problems, Cecil exagerrated the real problem and invented imaginary problems. George left home when he graduated from high school, and he didn't really want to go to college, but Cecil pressured him to do so. George applied to Cornell's School of Hotelkeeping, in the expectation of being rejected, but was accepted. In October, Cecil, who had been in New York, visited George at Cornell for a weekend, the two of them playing bridge against all comers and not losing a rubber. After that there was a mixup about paying George his allowance. Cecil's agent had been sending George his allowance, because Cecil had been traveling, but after returning to Berkeley, Cecil sent George two checks that he thought were George's normal allowance but George took to be presents. When George returned to Berkeley for Christmas vacation, Cecil accused George of stealing by cashing those checks instead of returning them. As a result, Cecil cut George off entirely. From then on, George supported himself. Cecil never told John that, but he took care to tell John, later, the false story that he was supporting George and his family when first George's wife and, after she had earned her teaching certificate, George himself, returned to college. One can say that the troubles that John caused were the direct result of Cecil's own actions, while the troubles that George caused were both the direct result of Cecil's actions and of George's response to those actions. For years Cecil complained to Frances of the laziness, incompetence, lying, "horrible genes," of his sons, writing, "I hope they fry in hell," and that the world would have been a better place had they been drowned at birth. When I first read those letters, twenty years after his death, those phrases still hurt me.

CSF's Philosophy in a Contemporary Novel

Forester's novel of 1950, *Randall and the River of Time* (1950), was an attempt at a contemporary novel that would express his philosophy, something that he had not done before. Forester's philosophy was that the world was run by chance, which brought unpredictable influences to bear upon people, each of whom reacted according to his character. Randall was just enough older than Forester to fight in World War I. That worked fine for Randall; war is the greatest unpredictable force unleashed by mankind. By chance Randall survives the battles that killed so many. By some brains and lots of luck, Randall invents an improved flare. He gets into a hurried wartime marriage. After the war is over, Randall becomes an inventor with many reversals of luck as his inventions progress, but is somewhat feckless. He surprises his wife in bed with a one-legged veteran, and in the subsequent fight the naked one-legged man topples out of the bedroom window to die upon the front walk. Randall is barely exonerated of murder and (this is now 1929) decides to go to America to seek his fortune there.

Randall is different from the typical Forester novel. In his typical works, Forester thinks of the plot and

devises the characters who are best fitted to work the plot. That is his failing as a novelist, because the characters don't really have that well-rounded appearance, with unnecessary and unexpected sides to their characters, that the characters of the great novelists possess. Forester starts with plot and devises characters to suit, while many great novelists start with character and devise plot to suit. The plots may creak, but the characters interest the readers. In *Randall*, Forester tried to reverse his usual method, combining character with suitably-chosen events that appear to be random, to produce an interesting story. The trouble is that his characters are not quite detailed enough, or real enough, to produce the interest that is required. Neither *The Sky and the Forest* nor *Randall and the River of Time* sold nearly as well as Forester had hoped.

Hornblower Again

During this time, Forester was also writing a series of short stories about Hornblower as a midshipman, first published in the Saturday Evening Post and later published in book form as *Mr. Midshipman Hornblower* (1950). When he first wrote about Hornblower in *The Happy Return*, Forester included certain facts. Hornblower had to be able to speak Spanish, he had won a sword for boarding the *Castilla*, he had married unsuitably, and the rest. Forester became as interested in thinking about Hornblower as he was in thinking about himself. Not only had these early events to be explained, but they had to occur in such a way as to create the character of the mature Hornblower. For example, in the last story of the book, Hornblower is taken prisoner by the Spanish and manages to learn the language before being released for saving some Spanish seamen from drowning. Hornblower the risk calculator, Hornblower the solitary thinker, and Hornblower the sometimes desperately unhappy youth are illustrated by Hornblower's desperate involvement in a duel, in which he demands pistols at point-blank range, the duelists not knowing which pistol is loaded with a bullet.

This was followed by *Lieutenant Hornblower* (1951-2), which, although written as a novel, was a series of stories that completed a single plot. The Saturday Evening Post bought this as a serial. This is the one Hornblower book that is not told through Hornblower's eyes. The reason is that the book must include Hornblower's courtship of Maria and the wedding ceremony, and it is difficult to describe the emotions by which such a sensitive and self-analytical character gets himself into what is obviously a foolish marriage to an unattractive woman.

In time, Forester filled in almost all of Hornblower's early career, with *Hornblower and the Atropos* (1953), *Hornblower and the Hotspur* (1962), and he was working on the last bit of available time with *Hornblower and the Crisis* when he suffered an incapacitating stroke in 1964. By that time he had also completed Hornblower's later career with *Admiral Hornblower in the West Indies* (1957-8). Forester felt that he had to resolve all the uncertainties in Hornblower's life, and in *Admiral Hornblower* he did so. He considered this novel his technical tour-de-force for managing to keep so many balls in the air at one time, to resolve all things in one story. The analysis is too long for this space, but, in summary, Hornblower has to doubt Barbara's honesty, but Barbara's action must seem to the reader to be one of principle rather than indulgence. Barbara has to fear for their lives, and Hornblower has to bring them both through the danger, with a better understanding each of the other. Forester brings it off.

Forester's next major book is *The Good Shepherd* (1955), about the commander of an American destroyer who is also the senior officer of the escort of a trans-Atlantic convoy during the time when Hitler's U-Boats were sinking ships by the dozens. Commander Krause is one of the very few Forester characters who has been raised by a good parent, in this case a pastor father. Forester could have produced his finest character because Krause combines the most interesting qualities of many previous Forester characters, but Forester produced a rather uninteresting man who finds his competence in the self-limiting, unlimited agony of war and his peace by falling asleep, only half undressed, across his

bunk at the close of his duty. The creative energy that had started so many half-men fifteen and twenty years before was now only strong enough to mix their parts without synthesizing a whole man.

The Nazi Horror

The other significant work in this period is *The Nightmare* (1953), a collection of stories about the horror of Nazi Germany, written before *The Good Shepherd* and published in book form in 1953. Forester hated writing; he did it only because it gave him more freedom than any other way of earning money. Over the years, his letters that discuss his work are a string of complaints about how difficult it is, how tiring, how many words will be required, and how many more must be done to make the book of minimum acceptable length. In several cases, once he reached that length, he wound up the book just as quickly as he could. While writing *The Good Shepherd*, events in Hollywood promised much money from older books, causing Forester to write that he wouldn't finish *The Good Shepherd* if Hollywood gave him enough money for good living. *The Nightmare* is different. Forester felt impelled to write stories despite his prediction that no editor would buy them.

Just after the defeat of Nazi Germany, Forester was shown the films taken at the death camps, and was utterly horrified. I have never otherwise seen him so shaken. He said that these films should be shown once a year lest we forget and let such things happen again. That did not happen. It was not until recent years that books and films about that horror became widely available, with corresponding showing of some of the documentary films that Forester had seen in 1945.

The horror of the Nazi regime appealed to Forester's dark side in the same way that Suetonius's account of the decadent Roman emperors had appealed to him as a child. What happens when you have unlimited power to do evil, when evil itself is considered a good? The evil done by one Nazi ends up by causing other Nazis to do evil to him, in a chain of evil and horror, right up to the end, either death at the hands of other Nazis, or death after being tried at Nuremberg. The elderly doctor, assigned as doctor at a death camp, witnesses execution by beheading, with the head rolling across the floor between his feet. The resulting nightmares and hallucinations cause him to act in ways that make the other staff members suspect his resolution and commitment to Nazi dogma, or make him fear that they would suspect, and the fear causes him to take his own life lest he be tortured in the ways that he has seen. There are eight other stories equally grim.

Forester's only other literarily significant work in this period is *The Hornblower Companion* (1964), a combination of sailing track charts and analyses of the events in Hornblower's career and an account of how Forester came to write the Hornblower stories. Much of the latter is probably correct, insofar as it describes Forester's perception of his own creative processes, but its account of Forester's stay in Hollywood, that initially started the Hornblower stories, is false.

End of Hornblower

The last remaining part of Hornblower's career that had not been told was that immediately before the battle of Trafalgar, in which Nelson, at the cost of his life, destroyed the combined French and Spanish fleets and thereby prevented any possibility of the invasion of Britain. Forester worked out a plot in which Hornblower is sent to Spain to introduce into the Spanish communications fake orders from Napoleon ordering the fleets to sail against Nelson. In fact, Napoleon did issue such orders, so Hornblower's actions would not have been necessary, reflecting the dominant Forester attitude that heroic actions often fail to produce great results and are not properly rewarded. Forester was working on that book when he suffered a stroke that incapacitated him from writing or even speaking ever again. The fragment, *Hornblower During the Crisis*, was published after his death, two years later.

Death and Discovery

That should be the end of the story, but it is not. By chance, I was present when my father was discovered lying on the floor beside his writing table. Over the next eighteen months, my wife and I assisted Dorothy in taking care of him and trying to further his recovery, but he never spoke again. I had to tell Dorothy how to manage his affairs, for she had no notion of what to do. We moved him to near my house in Southern California, and he finally died in the hospital within sight of my house. Over the years after his death, documents surfaced that demonstrated, for the first time, the extent to which he had lied about his life, his family, his money, his sexual activities, other people, and which showed what he really thought of other people. Disclosure started with his will, that demonstrated that he had far more money than he had said in the stories that he had taken care to tell me (I never asked him about money), and part of which was distributed to a most peculiar list of people, including some of my college friends, in at least one case obviously for sexual favors rendered, and which suggested that he had three sons, rather than only the two officially admitted. George and I, and one of the ladies from the marionette show, with her son, each received two-thirds of one percent of the cash value of his estate, and nothing else, using identical words. Dorothy received all the rest.

Then I found letters from mistresses in his jacket pocket, received just before he had his stroke, and kept there until he had the chance to burn them, as he always had done. Those letters showed that he had offered each lady particular dates on his next trip to England, take it or leave it, so to speak, and was ecstatically accepted. The letters to Kathleen and to Frances, both of whom he had instructed to burn his letters as he did theirs, but neither of whom obeyed him, showed up. His eldest brother, Geoff, had long before written an unpublished history of the family to correct *Long Before Forty* (Geoff knew of this unpublished work because Cecil had asked him about family information), "because my brother, Cecil, is a much better novelist than historian."

Just before starting on *Hornblower and the Crisis*, Forester had returned from England in a freighter that called at Long Beach, near where I lived, before San Francisco. Forester was welcomed at a lunch held by my engineering department, which largely consisted of engineers who wrote specifications, test methods, and the like, just the people who most admire Forester's works. I was also at that time an assistant professor at California State University at Long Beach. It was only when I read my father's letters to Frances that I learned that he had always considered me to be lazy, slipshod, barely intelligent, someone who should have been drowned at birth, and a burden to him. He had told Frances that he had bought my house in Southern California for me. In actuality, he had helped with the down payment for my first house in Berkeley, and nothing more. It was only when I became an assistant professor in addition to my normal work that he decided that I had more intelligence than he had thought. His letters telling Frances of his reception at Long Beach were almost his first that complimented me in any way. Well, at least he died with a better opinion of one of his sons than he had held for most of his life.

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