

CONTENTS

1-3	The Narrator, Lionel (Leo) Colston.
4-5	Marian Maudsley.
6-7	Ted Burgess.
8-9	Mrs Maudsley.
10-11	Hugh, Viscount Trimmingham.
12-13	Marcus Maudsley.
14-15	Mr Maudsley; Denys Maudsley.
16	Leo's parents.
17-20	Themes: Settings and Scenarios. The Outsider: Rites of Passage. Social Status: Attitudes. Love and Marriage; Spooning. Communication (Corrspondence);The Boer War.
21-24	Symbolism. the Zodiac; Mercury "the messenger.; Sacrifice/Blood; Myths. Superstition; Spells; Language; The Heat/Weather; Water; Belladonna; The Diary; Pictures; Music; The Twentieth Century.



By Carole Baldock
In collaboration with Harry Jivenmukta

THE NARRATOR, LIONEL (LEO) COLSTON

1

Looking back through his fifty year old diary, Leo relives a time when he was betrayed by those he idolised. As a result, he surrendered his pleasures: watching cricket, singing, intimacy with others, for a life which was a 'working arrangement', spent in 'dusty libraries'. It was never 'rainbow-hued' although the boy pictured himself crossing the rainbow bridge from reality to dream. A discarded husk, Leo lives in surroundings as barren as his life and his memories are evoked with graveyard imagery and painful words, making him feel bitter self-pity and guilt. He could have had things to look forward to; he would not have ended up all alone.

First impressions of young Leo

In the description of the photograph of himself and Marcus, the words used (cut, tightly, strain) show how strait-laced the boy was (old Leo feels guilty going to bed just five minutes late).

The diary

Leo's boyhood treasures are dull bits and bobs compared to the diary with its 'foreign look', passport to that 'foreign country', the past? In forcing himself to look at it (he resorts to 'magic' to open it) and re-visiting Brandham, he casts off the spell which blighted his life - as if by magic? Acting on impulse for the first time in so many years may give him the power to transform himself. The story comes round full circle but the ending is optimistic since he is now prepared to heed his emotions. He could be said to have fallen into the same old trap, running errands again for Marian, but this is for a nobler purpose, to ensure that her grandson does not waste his life away.

Leo and Marian in Norwich

Leo accepts her criterion: you are what you wear. He is impressed when they dine at a hotel and there is an unearthliness about their conversation. He is already in an exalted mood when he visits the Cathedral, even though she leaves him to his own devices. He doesn't even notice the heat.

Leo and the grown-ups

Although Leo seems to look down on Ted, he enjoys the factual conversation of the footman; the usual idle gossip of the grown-ups seems like 'showing off'. He can't be expected to understand them; they are gods communing: 'star-talk'. Yet he still likes being part of the 'triumphal progress'.

The cricket match

He claims he would have shaken hands with 'the biggest blackguard' on their team, then compares the villagers with the Boers and has more respect. The match seems to symbolise the conflict between chaos and order; Ted's 'glorious drive' fills the boy with elation, making him want the villagers to win. Trimmingham's being captain gives him a similar cachet to being a Viscount; when he is out, Marian applauds vigorously but Leo decides she is not mocking him, being a woman, she just doesn't understand cricket.

THE NARRATOR, LIONEL (LEO) COLSTON

2

The supper

Leo is already almost drunk with triumph but Marcus is always ready to bring his friend down to earth. He is delighted to hear about the engagement and even feels less ambivalent in his feelings towards Ted, no longer important now Leo has bested him. But he admits he enjoyed being a go-between: 'the secrecy and the conspiracy and the risk' - 'I was most myself'. He is like an oyster, whilst secrecy is 'an iron curtain'.

The messenger

Leo pictures Marian as a ministering angel, visiting Nannie Robson, then is dumbfounded to realise she still expects him to deliver letters - 'the scaffolding of my life seemed to collapse'. He feels that in losing her friendship, he has lost everything of value and it is that, rather than her cruel words, which hurts. He convinces himself she was just using him but cannot hate her. He dreads returning to Brandham, thinking she would tell everyone, but he has the place of honour, by the tea-kettle. Tea-time seems very civilised, 'the glitter of the trail of gold' conversely making him think of Ted, eating alone; almost like a wild animal in a cage.

Leo thinks he is indispensable, so leaving is the only way to stop the relationship: the missions once...my delight, were now my bugbear. He feels that he cannot trust himself or anyone and nearly falls out with Trimmingham. When Marcus tells him Marian has gone to London to buy a green bicycle, old Leo recognises it as 'hush-money'. But even this splendid gift cannot persuade him to retrieve the letter to his mother.

With both Mrs Maudsley and Marian away and no visits or visitors, Leo feels part of the family for the first time. The delay of his mother's letter is a welcome reprieve yet he does not seem regretful to be spending his last day at Brandham.

Leo's birthday

Once Marian is back, their first meeting is very formal at first but ends in reconciliation and he decides to use magic to free her from Ted's spell. The next morning, by contrast, his conversation with Henry the footman is very commonplace. The latter claims that heat drives you mad - Leo's experiment seems to prove his point.

The situation later becomes more explosive: thunder and lightening, even the crackers. Everything becomes distorted: the guests resemble the paintings, 'wholly abandoned', the bike looks misshapen and Mrs Maudsley becomes a nightmare figure.

Resolution

Old Leo has finally exorcised the past but must resolve the situation. His breakdown wiped his memory clean but knowing Ted killed himself left him with a tremendous sense of guilt. His self-inflicted punishment was to deny himself a normal life, protecting himself by sticking to the world of facts, which meant he didn't even fight in the war.

He also realises that Marian was fond of him from the first, as was Hugh. It was Ted, perhaps, who exploited him by seizing the opportunity to make use of him, whereas Leo believed he had ruined the farmer's life. He should not blame himself for Ted's death, especially as the farmer regretted getting Leo involved. Part of the reason for his suicide could have been his guilt about the boy, as well as a way out of an impossible situation.

THE NARRATOR, LIONEL (LEO) COLSTON

3

On returning to Brandham, Leo realises that Trimmingham must have brought up Ted's son as his own. To Leo, Marian seems as dead as her lover; she could not have survived such a scandal. This is what caused him to bear a grudge against mankind, seeing everyone as sinners; sometimes he rebelled against his drab life, though he is resigned to it and even congratulates himself on it. When he goes into the church, he says a prayer for Trimmingham and his family, and for Ted. And himself.

Edward seems pleased to make Leo's acquaintance, as if he too, has been looking for the facts. Leo is very careful to pretend that Hugh was his grandfather, though the young man reminds him so strongly of Ted; he does not seem troubled when Edward realises who he is. On meeting Marian again, he finds he is no longer in awe of her and even feels superior because of her self-deception. Besides, she still needs him, still expects him to do her a favour but this time, he is in control of the situation. Now, Leo can forgive himself, and her, and make a new start, however small.

EXERCISE

Old Leo admits he is 'such a dull dog', a 'cindery creature'. Describe how the author shows this then compare it with some of the things the young Leo did at school? Are the two Leos very different? Do you think Leo must be stupid to have wasted his life? Do you feel sorry for him; what rouses your sympathy for him?

1st Impressions

Leo accepts that Marian is beautiful because Marcus says so, as he does the belladonna, citing his mother's botany book. Yet there is something a little repellent, almost rapacious about Marian with her stern look and hawk like nose: Her eyes were always fiercer than her mouth; they glinted while it smiled. Nonetheless, she is a great one for 'wide-eyed innocence' with her big, blue eyes, when smiling at either Leo or Trimmingham. Leo tells Ted she is a topping girl and Trimmingham that she's : 'a ripping girl; spifflicating; A1'. She is almost ethereal, while Ted is earthy.

Marian insists on buying Leo a new outfit as a present but despite her generosity, she has an 'abrupt way' and in conversation often veers from sweet-natured to spiteful and back again. Capricious and impatient, she can be extremely self-centred and very stubborn. Yet, like the Viscount, she is adept at putting Leo at his ease, bringing out the best in him at the concert then staying in the background, letting him have all the glory.

Marian and her mother

She is almost as formidable as her mother and they are often in conflict; 'In her mother's absence she seemed to be reigning already'. Back home from Norwich, Leo is vaguely aware that Marian is not being truthful; she finds it much easier to be duplicitous than Ted. When she tries to ensure Leo has the opportunity to deliver the messages; he recalls she said he would get bored with the grown-ups, not her mother as she claims. He compares her with the girl in the fairy story whose words turned to pearls, yet her apology for the misunderstanding about his family 'gave me a strange feeling of sweetness and power'.

The messages

Leo admits he is going to the farm because of his liking for her; something he finds very difficult to say but Marian seems pleased. He is unaware that her exalted mood at the pool is because of her proximity to Ted, although he spots the effect the notes have on her. She and Ted claim it is 'business', an 'almost sacred' word to Leo's mother and thus him. When he realises they are love letters, bitter disappointment turns him almost hysterical. He is horrified that Marian still wants him to deliver letters despite her engagement. Anger makes her animal-like (as it does Ted): 'her body curved to pounce'; she may also be furious at his apparently siding with the Viscount. She threatens never to speak to him again, which he won't see as a false threat. That Leo may betray her doesn't seem to occur to her despite all the horrible things she says to him. She finishes him off with a bribe, calling him a 'little Shylock'.

However, at tea, they both act as if nothing has happened. When she goes to London, Leo is relieved not to have to face her mockery, having always been a bit afraid of her. It's a strain, trying to keep up with her, because she is bright enough not to suffer fools gladly, even if her impatience is good-humoured. Marian is probably rebellious through the frustration of her restricted way of life but Leo feels as if her view of him brings him alive; he is her creation, her creature.

The reconciliation

She tells him how much she missed home and apologetically calls herself 'a ghastly old governess'. He cannot understand her sadness: 'She seemed to have happiness at her beck and call... and to be above the need for it.' With her tears, she reverts to Marian of the Zodiac; it washes out all her deceit. Leo also starts crying and gives her Ted's message. She kisses him for the first time and when he agrees to take the notes again, she tells him he is a friend in a thousand.

Leo's party

Mrs Maudsley says Marian wanted to be the first to give him his birthday present - presumably so she can leave in time to meet Ted at 6.30pm, Leo having altered the message in the hope her impatience will provoke a quarrel and separate them for good.

After lunch - another note; old Leo almost admires her nerve. During the ensuing horse-play, his laughter is as 'loud as any spooning holiday-maker on the sea-front', but while he is ashamed, Marian appears exhilarated because of having her own way. Leo panics when Mrs Maudsley appears and drops the note but Marian just puts it in his pocket, saying it is for Nannie, blaming him for the scuffle.

The epilogue

Marian's grandson says she is forgetful, as well as being a great talker. He rarely calls on her, as she points out, while she insists she often visited Nannie Robson. But he tells Leo few people called at the Hall, the opposite of what Marian claims. He speaks of her without enthusiasm but is quick to suggest that Leo visit her, maybe because he feels guilty about not seeing her?

Almost the first thing she says to Leo is that 'it wasn't her fault'. He doesn't recognise her (nor she him) although her eyes have kept their 'frosty fire'. She doesn't hesitate to make use of Leo once more, to convince her grandson he is not cursed by her actions and persuade him to marry. She and Ted were doing no harm; she blames 'this hideous century' for all her family's misfortunes. She only stays there to be near him and can't bear to think he has a grudge against her. All men should marry - she tells Leo he's 'all dried up inside'. She even says he owes it to them and asks him to kiss her goodbye and, once more, calls him a friend in a thousand.

Marian tells him that there's no spell or curse except an unloving heart, which is quite true. But she fails to realise that it is she who put that curse on Leo.

EXERCISE

Do you think Marian is a romantic heroine or not? Give examples to prove your point.

1st impression

A very physical description, showing what Ted *does*, not who he is. 'Hunched' and 'cramped' suggest a caged animal (Leo compares him to a lion and to a tiger) and the powerful images are accentuated by his actions - it's a ten foot drop when he dives in and he doesn't bother using the steps to climb out. Leo later notices his strained look when swimming is the same expression when he is thinking hard. Despite the physical threat that his presence always implied Leo wants to swap places: master of those limbs which... exist for their own strength and beauty. But Ted cannot master himself, hence his sudden temper and, ultimately, his suicide.

The description becomes more sensuous - perhaps Ted is daydreaming about Marian? Also heroic ('copper breastplate'); Leo even notices later on how his skin has become more tanned. It's not altogether hero worship since Ted's smile 'would have looked childish on most people'. Leo comments later that the farmer 'always seemed to speak with his whole body and it gave a curious intensity to his words'.

1st meeting

Like an animal's, Ted's 'red-brown eyes sparkled with angry lights'. The boy is not impressed by the house and Ted points out that he is a working not a gentleman farmer. Leo makes it easy for him to suggest delivering messages because he cannot help showing off about his friendship with Marian, though he notices how they both claim they don't know each other. Ted is impulsive and seizes opportunities, though cautious enough to double check that Leo can be relied upon and it will be possible for him to carry messages. He is reluctant to actually let go of the letter, sweating so much, his shirt sticks to his chest; he approves of Leo's hiding it.

Ted always salutes the boy, a gesture which is a mixture of teasing and respect, and christens him 'the postman'. Knowing the farmer depends on him gives Leo a sense of power - he is almost pleased to see him upset when explaining he can't deliver any more messages now Marcus is well. But he begins to feel guilty when Ted points out how much the messages mean to Marian. He questions Leo about his feelings for her, telling him he'll make her cry.

During the cricket match, Leo wants both sides to win; elated by the sense of occasion, he very nearly applauds the other side. Then bowler and batsman face each other, the Viscount against the farmer, but it is Leo who catches Ted out. In the midst of his joy, he feels regret and apologises but Ted is generous in reassuring him (he had 'miscalculated'). Leo notices how popular Ted was with the crowd - and that watching him makes Marian too excited to be able to speak.

At the supper, Ted is very reluctant to sing. Marian takes more notice of his music than the others and although she takes it all in her stride, he is clearly uncomfortable. Leo's companion says they could have made a handsome couple but the boy is both embarrassed for Ted and amused; whether clown or a hero, the farmer is still popular. Again, the man generously compliments Leo's singing, and obviously felt moved.

Leo considers his feelings about Ted: rival, ally, enemy, friend. He knows that in hurting him, he hurts himself and wants to grow up to be like him yet he is jealous of his power over Marian. He has knocked Ted off his pedestal, not once but twice, and seems to despise him, though he admits that Ted could win him round by deferring to him. As it's only polite for him to say goodbye, he may as well find out about spooning and after falling out with Marian, Leo delivers her letter, deciding Ted is to blame for everything. Yet they still get on quite well and Leo tactlessly offers to oil his bat then blurts out that Marian will be angry with him if he doesn't take any more messages.

Again, their bargain comes up, though Ted says it's a father's job to explain about spooning. When the boy insists on knowing, he asks him what he likes doing best and tries to explain that spooning is like that, only better. Leo isn't satisfied and threatens not to bring any more messages, making Ted lose his temper: 'He towered above me, as hard and straight and dangerous as his gun', and orders him to clear off.

Ted sends Leo a letter of apology but the boy decides he is just trying to get round him. Being unhappy about explaining the facts of life doesn't stop the farmer from offering to do so as a bribe; the letter perhaps apologises for both these things. At their final meeting, there is 'a small but noticeable gulf'. Ted is very formal, even when double-checking Leo hasn't given the game away. He repeats his appreciation of the boy giving up his time to run messages and Leo impulsively offers to take one last message, to show that they have parted as friends. When he turns back, Ted removes his old hat and waves to him - just as he did when bidding Marian farewell in Norwich?

EXERCISE

If Trimmingham had found out about the affair, how would Ted justify his behaviour?

MRS MAUDSLEY



1st impression

An extremely gracious hostess but a formidable woman in her forties, who appears to overshadow her husband. Old Leo compares her to a portrait by Ingres or Goya, an appealing description, with the curls escaping across her brow, a softening effect, both of appearance and attitude i.e. something not under strict control.

Mrs Maudsley's sudden indisposition may be because of the heat or a kind of nervous collapse; this stigma could be why Trimmingham is uneasy letting it slip to Leo. Marcus, like his sister, calls his mother 'nervous'; she is 'hysterical' because of the strain of Marian's engagement. Mrs Maudsley tells Leo she was 'laid up'. He thinks of her as brave but Marcus says she is afraid of burglars (perhaps she is nervous when Leo mentions poachers because she knows who they really are?). Finding Marian and Ted together, she can't stop screaming 'all sorts of Biblical words' and had to go away. Marian claims she recovered enough to be pleased about the marriage.

Leo thinks her stillness is unnerving; her presence clearly causes tension in everybody. Yet on his birthday, the unsettled weather upsets her. To Leo's surprise, she makes no mention of their talk in the garden; when pulling a cracker with him, her lips are 'compressed'. It is the decision to find Marian which finally makes her show her emotions and her face is 'unrecognisable'. She says Leo will show her the way, but she knows where to go, even when he tries to make her turn back.

Leo comments on her coldness (voice, smile); she looks at people with a fixed, unchanging regard, like a searchlight beam. The mention of insects (moth, bee-line) makes it more sinister still. She constantly watches Marian but Leo feels 'she had us all on a string' - everyone must do her bidding. She plans everybody's day (except her husband's): picnics, expeditions or visits; she had her 'hand on the reins'. Yet she always defers to Lord Trimmingham, except at Leo's party where, because of her fears about Marian, she ignores his comment about the boy being Marian's chevalier.

Her sons

When she offers to buy Leo's birthday present on Marcus' behalf, Leo is surprised to see the fond look on her face. She confides in her son, presumably unaware he can't resist gossiping and he thinks he should tell her that a 'spooning' couple have sneaked into the grounds, not realising it is his sister and Ted.

She dislikes Denys, constantly putting him in his place. When she confuses 'duke' for 'duck' and he points out her mistake, he's the one they laugh at.

MRS MAUDSLEY

9

Her attitude towards Leo

Leo calls her 'cordial'; she seems to approve of him and is often kind to him, telling Marian 'he's your little lamb', yet he finds her menacing: '...I only half-sensed the danger behind her fascination.' Presumably she takes such an interest in him because she feels at a loss trying to control her daughter whereas he soon becomes Marian's pet.

After his tussle with Marian, Mrs Maudsley insists on showing him round the garden; he wants Marcus to come too, for protection. She questions him relentlessly about the note, purportedly for Nannie Robson, but the sudden thunder-storm saves him from answering. She is 'all affability' at his party, at first.

Mother and daughter

They watch each other 'like cats' and Leo can't help noticing that with the cats away, the atmosphere becomes very relaxed. Marian tries to use Marcus' measles as an excuse to put off the ball where her engagement will be announced. Her mother appears to be appealing to her better nature (or making her feel guilty?). There is even conflict over little things like Leo's clothes; Mrs Maudsley gives in graciously, maybe because Marian cannot stand to be thwarted, but has to have the last word, advising her where to shop. After the trip, she virtually interrogates her, though Marian seems unconcerned.

At the cricket match, when the ball Ted bowls flies towards them, Mrs Maudsley jumps up with a little cry - tries to get away; Marian puts her hands in front of her face - pretends nothing's going to happen. But they both laugh it off. It is the only time they seem to be enjoying each other's company.

EXERCISE

Draw up Mrs Maudsley's diary for a week.

HUGH, VISCOUNT TRIMINGHAM

10

Ist Impressions

Like Ted, Trimingham is first seen through the eyes of others and when he is mentioned, even Mr Maudsley takes an interest. Leo reacts strongly, admitting to resentment and jealousy. He doesn't want Trimingham there to spoil his expedition with Marian or to have to put it off.

Marcus admires Trimingham and even warns Leo not to react when he first sees the Viscount although the boy is repulsed by the scar; because of the disfigurement how little his face would answer to his thoughts. Old Leo thinks Trimingham would refer to the scar to try and reconcile himself to it and to spare the feelings of others so they didn't worry about upsetting him.

Leo and Trimingham

Leo nominates the Viscount as Janus, yet he is only physically 'two-faced' and the boy, who usually goes by first impressions, comes to look upon him as a father figure 'He gave me a feeling of security, as if nothing that I said or did would change his opinion of me. He doesn't even mind Trimingham teasing him and becomes protective towards him, risking falling out with Marian. He respects his self-discipline and admires him for being able to laugh. Old Leo feels a great deal of pity when he discovers that Trimingham died at 36 since he cannot have had an easy life. He realises there may well have been more harm done to the Viscount 'besides the damage one could see.'

Leo wants him to do well as captain of the cricket team because he liked him (plus the reflected glory of being connected with a Viscount) and also because the glory of Brandham Hall...centred in him. When Trimingham calls on him as twelfth man, he is decisive, helpful and encouraging. He suggests Leo sings at the supper and later sticks up for him on his birthday when the boy is teased for wearing his Norfolk jacket.

Trimingham and the Maudsley family

The Viscount is an elegant man, which makes a more poignant contrast with 'his damaged face', and wears extremely smart clothes. Yet his arrival has everybody on their best behaviour and the atmosphere seems strained. Leo works out that he is a guest in your own house, a situation which marriage to Marian will solve. At first, the boy is appalled - why would Mrs Maudsley want her daughter to marry this ugly man? He thinks of rescuing her by casting a spell on him.

Trimingham and Marian

Does the Viscount ask Leo to deliver messages as a kindness, or because he is wary of Marian? Leo begins to accept Trimingham's relationship with Marian and sees himself making a sacrifice, relinquishing his idol to him. He is thrilled that the engagement unites his two idols; he was only possessive where Ted was concerned because the Viscount is not a rival, being 'on a higher plane.' At tea-time, when Trimingham is sitting next to Marian on a low chair, Leo realises that's how it will be when she holds court at Brandham as the Viscountess: she in full view and he half in shadow.

Trimingham teases Leo about his devotion to Marian, calling it a 'love-scene' when he unexpectedly finds the two together, unaware of the note. She meticulously keeps the Viscount company, though clearly irritated by his messages. But Leo still offers to take them; when Trimingham calls Marian a scatterbrain, the indulgent tone reveals his feelings. Now that the boy is happier and more sure of himself, he pesters Trimingham about the fifth Viscount and ends up comparing that duel with the possible rivalry between him and Ted. Ironically, after the row with Marian, he tries to comfort himself repeating the Viscount's words: 'Nothing is ever a lady's fault'.

Leo is not scolded by Trimingham when he is reluctant to look for Marian, though the Viscount is rather put out. When the boy remembers Marcus said she had gone to Nannie Robson's, Trimingham jokes that she should be 'Robdaughter' - Marian is always there. Shortly after, Marcus assures Leo that the Nannie has an excellent memory; Marian has told the Viscount that the old lady never remembers her visits.

Trimingham evidently misses Marian while she is in London, commenting on how hot she will be, especially shopping, a remark which is both sympathetic and sensitive. But Marian tells Leo that Hugh is hardhearted - like all men.

Trimingham and Ted Burgess

When Leo explains about his accident at Black Farm, Trimingham announces he wants to see Ted, presumably about joining up. Leo is puzzled that Marian does not appear to be listening, since he is carrying Ted's letter. At the cricket match, when Trimingham tells Ted Leo will run errands for him, the farmer just says that he is a useful young gentleman. Later, Trimingham explains to the boy that 'getting your rag out' means losing your temper easily, as Ted is prone to do. He adds that the farmer is 'a lady-killer, but there's no great harm in that' - ironically, it's Marian whom Ted has seduced and it is himself whom he kills.

Typical schoolboy, with whom to compare and contrast Leo, though not as endearing. The latter admires him for being down-to-earth rather than imaginative. Given to gossiping, making awful jokes and showing off. Not outstanding at studies or sport, Marcus 'gets by'; he was like a premature Etonian, easy, well-mannered, sure of himself.

Marcus and Leo

Best friends go through ups and downs but Leo is very ambiguous about his feelings. Old Leo starts by trying to distance himself as if that meant the betrayal of his friend and his family was not so bad.

Although a snob, Marcus does not brag about his parents' wealth. He is precociously sophisticated and had no wish to be thought other than he was, whereas Leo loves assuming different roles. Marcus doesn't care for games of Let's Pretend and will play only for a while: 'on condition that the English won'. Leo believed Marcus had a knack for being on the winning side, yet he ended up killed in the war. Marcus respects success. He tells his family about the 'spells' and Leo enjoys his admiration; Leo 'the magician' is the equal of Marcus the expert in etiquette.

Leo was fond of him, if not close because of the coolness and deep-seated conventionality of his nature;. We trod a knife-edge between affection and falling out. But he hates his mocking him about being 'green', seeking revenge by attempting to betray Marian. He knows how dangerous it would be if Marcus found out about her and Ted but he doesn't really think she'll be by the outhouses. Nor that Marcus will tell his mother because schoolboys don't sneak - except when they are outside school

Once Marcus recovers, he presents an obstacle to Leo's delivering messages - not in deceiving him but because he cannot trust him enough to confide in him. Leo does not approve of his gossiping but admits he enjoys hearing it. He doesn't want to fall out with him and would like life to get back to normal, just be a schoolboy larking about with his friends, but he certainly doesn't want to upset Marian. Marcus is a great believer in making sure Leo doesn't get above himself but does not appear to get jealous, rather basking in his friend's reflected glory. For example, Trimmingham's approval of Leo.

Marcus and his family

Unlike Denys, he rarely bothers to join in conversations, only to crack jokes or reveal secrets. He seems to have little to do with his family although he is his mother's favourite; he appreciates her, calling her 'decent', even though aware of her failings. He appears to admire Marian; if only for her beauty; when talking to Leo, she makes a teasing reference to her brother's choice of unsuitable French words. She tells old Leo that he was her favourite as well. His reasons for warning Leo how to treat Trimmingham are as much to do with his admiration for the man as not upsetting the family.

Marcus' snobbery, attitude to others

He can't bear 'the great unwashed' and is thankful they won't need to have anything to do with the villagers for another year. He even says their Nannie's house smells but visits her out of duty. He refers to: 'grooms, gardeners, skivvies and such-like scum' and the villagers are 'sales types' (filthy lot). He is very imperious with the telegraph boy and earlier, points out to Leo that servants are there to pick your clothes up off the floor. Yet this was accepted and Marcus 'was to some extent in their confidence', hearing all the gossip. Leo says Marcus was in the habit of speaking badly of others, particularly his 'inferiors' and it 'didn't mean much'.

Nevertheless, he sneers at Ted Burgess for looking as if he would 'blub' when Leo was singing; seeing 'the brute' accompany Marian made him 'go all goosy'; he resents him on his mother's behalf: 'she feels like I do about the plebs'. He later refers to him with 'an unprintable epithet' when Leo explains he is giving him a swimming lesson and hopes Leo drowns him. But is the affair one secret Marcus is really not privy to?

Back at school, Leo and Marcus are almost strangers, but seeing him makes Leo determined not to get close to anyone again and avoid being hurt.

EXERCISE

Just as Leo believes he is an outsider, Marian's scandalous behaviour makes her a misfit in Society. Other than Marcus, would you say that this could be true of all the other characters, and if so, in what way?

MRS MAUDSLEY, DENYS MAUDSLEY

14

1st impression of Mr Maudsley

'Hopelessly old', 'gnome-like', 'thin lizard neck', 'frail', stiff gait and quick, jerky movements like a creature or a robot. The ruthless businessman is at odds with the man at home, who rarely joins in conversation. He reads family prayers reverently yet monotonously; his personality was so subdued that it seemed to fit in with anything he did; at the supper, his speech is fluent though too fast. But he manages to say something about everyone (including praise for Leo), and dryly delivers jokes.

Although kindly, he makes the boy uneasy. When Marcus warns Leo not to touch the thermometer, the boy tries to picture the man being angry ('or indeed anything else') but it's his wife who would be cross. Leo never sees the Maudsleys disagree and they go their separate ways; Mr Maudsley's sole purpose that of provider. Leo's own parents were more demonstrative.

Maudsley and Trimmingham

The Viscount often defers to him, to Leo's surprise; Mr Maudsley talks more to him than his family and seems more at ease with him, apart from Trimmingham's referring to his scar. When he exerts his authority, people fall in line: pistol-shot hospitality - it doesn't bother him offering cigars at 'inappropriate' times of the day. The only time the two men do not seem to agree is over the Teniers' paintings.

Attitude towards Ted Burgess

Complimentary about his looks and his ability to ride, later, he is far more dismissive, saying 'he has that reputation, I believe', about Ted being a good shot and a lady-killer. He tells Trimmingham Ted won't really be missed if he joins the army; when he adds that 'they say he's got a woman up this way', is he trying to warn his prospective son-in-law?

Father and son

At the cricket match, Denys attempts to 'exert the overt authority which his father never exerted'. Mr Maudsley's playing is business-like, his opportunist policy, the opposite of Denys' methods. Old Leo recognises his gift for being slow but steady, acknowledging his 'quality of judgement', whereas the boy seems almost to despise him. After the match, Mr Maudsley is applauded; he appears to have exerted himself less than anyone else.

Father and daughter

Marian says her father was a wonderful man; he took charge and restored order after Leo's party. She seems proud her son took after him. Mr Maudsley lost interest in the business after his wife had gone, gave it up entirely after his sons died but lived to nearly 90 and often visited Marian.

At the party, his orders for the brougham to be sent for Marian are diffident, indicating his worry. Then he actually speaks up, suggesting a round of crackers and when his wife says she is going to look for Marian, he tries to stop her. Leo, although distressed, notices it was the only time I ever heard him call her by name. But he would surely be encouraging her, unless he dreaded Marian being found out?

MRS MAUDSLEY, DENYS MAUDSLEY

15

Denys: 1st impression

The only person who does not overawe Leo: handsome when you didn't look...too closely. He thinks Denys' opinions are worthless and that he is 'conceited' - he is also irritating, ineffectual and ingratiating, a great one for attention-seeking (he 'insists' or 'persists'). Ironically, he keeps warning his father how easily poachers could get in the grounds without anyone knowing, unaware of Ted's trysts with his sister. Yet Mr Maudsley later tells Trimmingham that Ted was seen in the park.

Denys and Mrs Maudsley

The more he tries to please his mother or stand up to her, the clumsier he gets and the more she snubs him. It may be the done thing for schoolboys, but not for grown-ups. Leo finds it embarrassing but Denys never gives up, even trying to argue about what the boy wants to do on his birthday. His mother grows more and more impatient and finally informs him cuttingly: 'I think you'll find the arrangements were satisfactory, now, for us *grown-ups...*' She later blames him instead of Marcus for revealing Marian's surprise for Leo's birthday.

Denys and Marian

Denys was never quite at home in it i.e. the family. Marian is expressing a fact, not sympathy. She is unkind about her brother when discussing cricket with Leo. When Denys tried to bribe the boy outright (unlike Marian) with a tie, she assures him they bought it from the shop he recommended, which Leo assumes is a mistake, not a lie. At the party, however, Denys tries to protect Marian, insisting that she must be getting changed. Leo seems to end up more sympathetic towards Denys, who was also an outsider. Marian can't even remember which of her brothers was first killed in the war.

The Cricket Match

Denys tactlessly informs Trimmingham they cannot win because of Ted; his knowledge of cricket exceeds his ability to play. He is too over-protective of his father until Mr Maudsley loses patience and yells: 'Come on!', 'like the crack of a whip; all the authority...so carefully concealed in his daily life spoke in those two words' Dennis ends up crest-fallen and red-faced - animal imagery stresses timidity and stupidity. But this is the only time Leo hears Mr Maudsley snub his son.

EXERCISE

What do you think Mr Maudsley should have done about his daughter and about Ted? What would you say is Denys' role in the book?

Mrs Colston

Marian describes her as 'a sweet woman', noting her grey eyes were like Leo's and her brown hair, her 'quick way of moving and talking'.

Parents' relationship

Mr Colston must have been very fond of his wife to accompany her on social occasions because he is not gregarious. In turn, she is not keen on his hobbies but kept his books to remember him by - maybe she felt a bit guilty? Unhappy about 'his lack of enterprise', it's almost as if she felt cheated out of her rightful place in Society. She is critical about him to Leo because he could have improved the boy's future prospects.

Leo and his mother

The death of Mr Colston diminishes their social role: 'my mother felt the responsibility of bringing me up, and thought that firmness should come into it, but she never quite knew when or how to apply it.' This wryly witty remark shows insight into her behaviour for she worries dreadfully about his future. She doesn't understand his 'improved status' because success comes from work or games, not 'magic'. She brought Leo up to think about being good and to say his prayers, which he does mostly for 'soliciting divine aid'. When in trouble, Leo does not pray but turns to magic.

Initially, she worries about Leo's visit and he feels guilty about spending his birthday apart, but still badgers her into agreeing. When he gets cold feet, she is horrified at the idea of making excuses. They spend their last evening in the rarely used drawing room; dull and stuffy. It's very similar to old Leo's. He thinks she was trying to accustom him to being in a strange place and that she wanted to offer 'practical or moral counsels' but says nothing because he is upset.

Leo's clothes are unsuitable because having been bed-ridden the previous summer, it was not worthwhile buying clothes he would have outgrown. But the weather is cool and neither of them can imagine him doing anything to make him hot and bothered. After leaving Brandham, he refuses to discuss what happened with his mother.

Leo's Father

In some ways, Leo greatly resembles his unsociable bank manager father, though his temperament had more in common with my mother's. Enclosed in himself, as hobbies do, Mr Colston proves to have been astute. Selling his books meant Leo and his mother were comfortably off but being thrifty. They look after their possessions and tend to hoard things.

Mr Colston was unambitious, as is his son, but Leo's admiration for his single-minded father is grudging. He even calls him 'a crank' because of his unorthodox views about education; the boy was taught at home, by him and a tutor. But he was not misanthropic, something Leo admits he has become.

EXERCISE

Describe Mrs Colston's visit to Brandham, after Leo's collapse.

Settings and Scenarios

The main action takes place in and around Brandham Hall: the Hall itself; garden and outhouses; Black Farm; the church; the village. Also included: Leo's school, his home, the visit to Norwich; the cricket match and the Harvest supper.

The Outsider

Leo understands there are different 'languages' at school and at home but not that behaviour and attitude can be adapted. His diary is a talisman for self-esteem; 'vanquishing' his foes shows him as resourceful and resilient and: 'For the first time I felt that I was someone'. The intoxicating transition from a trough of persecution to a pedestal of power is a feeling of elation which recurs at Brandham: glorious to be me. Over-confidence means power goes to his head, convincing him he is invulnerable and he ends up out of his depth. When mortals believe themselves to be god-like, this 'hubris' must be punished. In the end, he has been completely 'vanquished'.

Leo loathes being teased, while admitting it was 'very mild'. He is wary of adults, in case of making them angry and has no wish to upset Ted, Marian or Hugh. He finds loss of face unbearable, justifying his feelings by claiming it causes wars. He even worries about sitting in the right place in church and often sees himself as socially inferior, a misfit and a figure of fun. He hates the idea of his mother accompanying him to Brandham, because he is frightened she wouldn't look right, do right, be right.

Marian becomes a *deus ex machina* - he is even impressed that she knew he had no summer clothes rather than being dismayed. Standing on a chair wearing his 'trousseau' (i.e. a new way of life), like being placed on a pedestal, he is transformed, feeling one with the summer, with Nature. He is vastly beholden, such generosity establishes his worth.

The bathing party is a new experience, exciting and frightening; he sees the sluice as a 'gallows'. But Mrs Maudsley will not let him bathe without his mother's permission and he is left out, finding it unbearable to watch the others enjoy themselves.

Leo's pronunciation of 'Hugh' seems to be a device: to confuse him, to cause the row with Marian, and to show her spitefulness and his insecurity. When first mentioned, the name is repeated so Leo should know how to say it, nor would he make the same mistake twice. If Marian feels guilty about Hugh perhaps she is taking it out on Leo?

Rites of Passage

A large part of Leo's 'growing-up' is that he constantly wrestles with ideas of morals and ethics, right and wrong which he sees as 'two gigantic eavesdroppers'. His thoughts are invariably ambivalent: my attitude to the diary was twofold and contradictory. He believes you must sort things out yourself and not expect God to come to the rescue: Life was meant to test a man, bring out his courage, initiative, resource. He says he longed to be tested yet convinces himself he failed.

On his birthday, he feels ashamed of all his actions at Brandham, not just casting spells; at 13, he must act like a grown-up and be himself. Everyone has treated him as a child except Marian, who made him feel grown-up, and depended on him. Leo dons his old outfit; no longer a sea-green corruptible parody but still feels no birthday spirit.

Though Marian is not exactly maternal, Trimingham tends to treat Leo as he might his son. However, Leo often relates to Ted much like a teenager to his father. Similarly, he questions everything; some of his imaginings are almost metaphysical.

Social Status: Attitudes

The Maudsleys

Marcus's ingrained snobbery shows up the class system. More than the adults, Leo invariably goes by what his friend says because he is so assured dispensing advice, it's almost instinctive - Leo can't wear the 'common' made-up tie, although it's all right for somebody like Trimingham. Leo mustn't come down to breakfast in his slippers, like 'bank clerks do.' - and Mr Colston. But Marcus isn't aware of their 'lowly social status' and is trying to be helpful, not spiteful.

The Triminghams were always interested in cricket and Mr Maudsley, even if nouveau riche, keeps up the tradition. At the match, Leo does not approve of his success, which comes via the 'head-work and superior cunning'; Old Leo is amused at the boy's priggishness. Earlier, he is disdainful about the businessman's 'trail of gold' though he applies this less disparagingly to Marian and her good fortune in marriage.

Mrs Colston

Diffident and anxious, she was far more ambitious than her husband, yet depended on his support on social occasions since she wanted to be well thought of. She enjoys them very much - getting dressed up and hiring a landau and it brings her out of herself. She is quite snobbish with a delicate sense of social nuances.

Ted Burgess

Denys is obsequious towards Ted, Trimingham's tenant. Leo believes Ted should act differently towards him because he's from Brandham, just as his attitude towards Trimingham altered once he knew he was a Viscount. At the supper, Leo is taken aback when Trimingham addresses the farmer as 'Ted', encouraging him to sing. The boy says that Ted's cricketing gear changes him, as if it were fancy dress, and is even less impressed when the farmer is dressed up at the supper.

Leo and Lord Trimingham

Leo is at a disadvantage not knowing where this man is on the social scale and how he is to be treated - clearly superior to Ted, but is he a gentleman? He decides the Maudsleys fuss over him because of his disfigurement and thinks he should also adopt this attitude of Christian kindness. He is puzzled by the deference people like the verger display: as if we were something special. He is shocked to realise who the Viscount is, then aggrieved at making a fool of himself but admits that he doesn't notice the obvious, and that I couldn't have told whether I liked the Viscount or the man.

Love and Marriage; spooning

Leo adores Marian and Trimingham's feelings must be similar since he still marries her, despite the disgrace. Or is this necessity - his disfigurement, lack of money?

Marian claims: Our love was a beautiful thing yet it makes her unhappy. She appears more appalled about losing Ted than of being found out and would even make sure he stays by threatening Hugh not to marry him; he shouldn't go to appease his conscience. She tells Leo Ted is as weak as water. Hugh's far stronger. Ted himself said: 'she has the say-so' although Leo recalls him saying: 'sometimes he felt like it, sometimes he didn't' and guesses that after the engagement, Ted 'didn't feel like it'.

In her old age, Marian appears to appreciate Trimingham more: Hugh was as true as steel. Everyone accepted her as Lady Trimingham but she admits this was perhaps because they were fond of Hugh. Yet it seems she may have thought that even when married, she could have kept up the liaison.

Leo tries to exonerate her of 'spooning', although he does not like the thought of Ted being involved. Yet, in his presence, he cannot connect the farmer with something so silly: a kind of game that grown-ups played. He hits Marcus for teasing him about 'spooning' with Marian but takes 'a fearful pleasure' in pestering Ted about it. The farmer agrees to explain what it means, if Leo continues to take the messages. Old Leo can't imagine why he 'wanted so much' to know about spooning; he has shunned it, perhaps as atonement to Ted: he had paid with his life for showing me.

Marian's surprise for Leo's birthday entails wearing bloomers to ride his new bicycle; Marcus explains that tights are 'fast', black tights utterly forbidden; some women are not 'quite-quite', not realising his sister is one of them. Neither he nor Leo really understand Marcus' 'joke' about the 'awe-mongers', and yet, his mother is acting like a whore-monger, 'selling off' a daughter whose behaviour would condemn her as a whore.

Communication (Correspondence). See also Language (Symbolism)

At first, Leo enjoys delivering the notes: I had an instinct for secrecy, the sense of power, the romance of leading a double life. He is scared of slipping up, though he cannot work out what this might be or the consequences. Marian's unsealed letter provokes a dilemma but he convinces himself she meant him to read it. Plus, it may be the very last message he can deliver, unless the contents prove to him their importance. He is completely devastated to find it is a love letter.

Ted's fingers look too large to hold a pen; Leo is shocked the farmer does not have a proper inkstand. Ted soon resorts to verbal messages and when he writes a note of apology to Leo, 'yours faithfully' is crossed out; ironically, he signs it 'your faithful friend'.

Leo interprets Mrs Maudsley's letter as taking an interest in him: the first time I had felt myself real to somebody who didn't know me. At Brandham, it's Leo's home which seems strange; his mother's letter irritates him. He does want to tell her what's been happening and to ask to stay longer but can't find the right words; the tone is like an immortal acknowledging kinship with a mortal. However, once he falls out with both Marian and Ted he begs to come home. Anything Mrs Colston disapproves of is 'rather wrong' or 'very wrong' so Leo uses these phrases and over-dramatises the delivery of the notes, knowing she fears for his health. He feels better for having written but although Mrs Colston is overpoweringly affectionate, she is also conciliatory. In his haste, he has given her the impression it is Mrs Maudsley's messages and she is keen that he should not offend his hostess, as it may reflect badly on her. Leo is so taken aback by her refusal, he is completely at a loss.

The Boer War

Leo is patriotic enough to be thrilled at the relief of Ladysmith, though he agrees with his father, who was a pacifist, virtually pro-Boer, and calls patriotic people 'a "Jingo".' Unimpressed that Trimingham is a war-hero, Leo then begins to have doubts about pacifism, which was a very unpopular stance to adopt - since Mrs Colston calls soldiers 'poor things', she may have agreed with her husband.

Trimingham explains to Leo that he does not personally dislike the Boers, regretting that they have had to shoot so many. Later, Leo is horrified at *Punch's* satirical comments; it's as if the Viscount himself was being ridiculed. He is extremely puzzled when Trimingham finds it funny.

When the Viscount tries to persuade Ted to join up, his complimentary remarks suggest he respects the farmer and has his well-being at heart: 'a good chap...'; 'he'd make a first-rate N.C.O....a good shot too, by all accounts.'

EXERCISE

What goes up must come down is a common theme in literature. Name other novels or plays where it appears and write a short story where this is the fate of the villain. Why does this turn out differently when it is the fate of the hero?

The Zodiac

My favourite religion; (prologue) the lowly creatures no less than the exalted ones suggests Leo can rise up through the hierarchy. Virgo is the key to the whole pattern; symbolising Marian, likewise the Virgin Mary and Maid Marian (maid = virgin; Marian = diminutive of Mary), thus her immoral exploitation of Leo is even worse.

The boy admires the Lion but cannot identify with him, picturing himself as the romantic Archer: the idea of shooting appealed to me. The Water-Carrier is very similar but being a farm-labourer or a gardener does not appeal. Leo is both attracted and repelled by them - perhaps I was jealous; Trimmingham is the Archer, Ted the Water-Carrier - literally, when first encountered at the farm. Leo himself takes on tasks (labours of Hercules) which prove insurmountable, believing so strongly in his 'magic' powers he doesn't realise he is not invincible. Fanciful and naive, he convinces himself his spell worked at school and nobly refrains from invoking the third, fatal curse.

Mercury 'the messenger'

Trimingham's nickname admits him into the Zodiac, making him feel even more important; he even admits he 'fancied myself as a breaker of bad news'.

Sacrifice/Blood

Leo sees Ted as a sheaf of corn which the reaper will come back for. The Grim Reaper does return, which may relate to the ancient ritual of the Corn God, sacrificed to ensure a good harvest. Ted's suicide rescues him and saves Marian. At the last meeting, Leo decides Ted is about 25 but looks older: a 'husk' - the same word he uses of himself.

Both Ted and Marian tend to Leo's knee - she keeps Ted's bloodstained handkerchief. When he accidentally smears the letter with blood, it seems to bind him with Leo as blood brothers and his stoicism is a sign of manhood, something into which Leo will one day be initiated. The description of Ted cleaning his gun anticipates his suicide and when Leo sees him throw the rook away: he so alive, the bird so dead, again, this is like a 'sacrificial rite'. He shows the boy how to clean the gun, but Leo gets carried away pretending to fire it and Ted tells him off for pointing it at him.

Myths (roles)

Leo flew too close to the sun (Icarus); just one harsh look from Marian could cause his downfall. Because the people at Brandham personify the Zodiac, Leo, too, has assumed divinity and doomed by hubris, his sole prospect my own imminent destruction.

After reading the letter, Leo compares his disillusion to Adam and Eve when expelled from Eden; later, he calls Ted and Marian's passion 'the serpent'. When Mrs Maudsley says the pink magnolia reminds her of her daughter, she assures Leo he won't find poisonous flowers in their garden.

He thinks Marian makes roses look wilted; she is beautiful but thorny. He sees her and Trimmingham as 'Beauty and the Beast' and thinks her tactful for sitting on the Viscount's good side, as if to make a pretty picture.

Marcus goes on about Leo's 'serpent tongue', although he is the one who betrays secrets. Later, Leo visualises his laced boots as 'mouthfuls of serpent's teeth'; changing back into the green suit which embodies his spiritual transformation, making him feel like Robin Hood, cast for a new role. When trying to resolve everything by casting a spell to split Ted and Marian, he thinks of himself as Puck.

Superstition

Leo uses alternative routes on the double staircase to avoid 'something awful from happening'. Conversely, the suit is 'magic', transforming him into 'one of the family' and thus closer to the Zodiac. When he joins in the cricket match, he feels safe once he notices he is standing in a fairy ring.

Marcus claims his mother is superstitious about number 13; she admits to Leo she is silly because of the two birthday cakes. He keeps dreaming about her, though as the gracious hostess, not that terrible aspect which was his last sight of her.

Spells

Leo inscribes curses inside his diary in code using his own blood, then Jenkins and Strode fall off a roof. Asked to cast a spell for a school holiday, there's an outbreak of measles. But his spell for making it cooler fails at first and is only temporarily successful. The spell using the belladonna is so complicated, chanted thirteen times backwards and forwards, it has to be written down in his diary.

Mrs Maudsley is amused by 'Leo the magician' yet in fact, it is Marian who enchants the boy and transforms him; he gives her the credit for all his success, even at cricket.

Language

Leo's knowledge of Latin makes him feel superior to Marcus; he may insist on French to reassert his authority, a rather contrived device to make both boys let things slip - you tend to think things over carefully before saying them in a foreign language. Similarly, Leo stops Marcus discovering the spooning couple by using the phrase *trop ennuyeux*; being boring is unforgivable. When old Leo uses the habitual phrase: *eh bien, je jamais*, finally realising why Marian bought the bike; in temporarily reverting to the boy, he seems to come to terms with the past.

The Heat/Weather

Heat was my enemy, reminding Leo of his illness the previous summer. Pleasantries embarrass him like rows of gas-jets scorching me; praise for his new outfit turns them into fountains of water. Now more comfortable: the summer had become my friend and there was a heart of heat I should attain to. I felt for it what the convert feels for his new religion. Leo is himself becoming more passionate and the heat both causes and mirrors his intense emotions while he, 'the mercury' is soaring ever to new heights. His constant checking of the thermometer, wanting the temperature to reach 100, adds to the tension.

Clouds appear the day after he reads the note but at the cricket match, he notices an unusually beautiful cloud, heading towards the sun - signalling Leo's glorious triumph i.e. apotheosis (deification)? Or a bad omen? Waiting for his mother's reply, Leo feels that his emotions should match the serenity of the weather, which is now 'set fair'.

Water

Leo's first sight of Ted Burgess is when he dives off the black thing which reminds the boy of a gallows; a portent of Ted's fate. When the farmer climbs out, he seems liable to impale himself.

The description of the river is enchanting, fish and shining golden gravel visible underneath water blue as the sky. The women bathing smile 'beatifically' and draw 'blissful breaths', as if they have been christened with happiness. By the next time, the water-meadows are drying up: 'rusty' pools; 'greyish' haze; the time after, Leo is delivering the note he has read - the landscape is rotting away as if corruption lurked beneath the water. Leo blames the sun; he feels it must have gone to his head (addled his brains?). On his last visit, the description is even grimmer, evocative of battles and death: 'corpse-like' boulders; 'mad disorder', 'bent and broken'.

Belladonna

Traditionally a symbol of deception and danger, it also stands for Leo's ambivalence: The picture of evil and also the picture of health. Both the plant and being in 'the grown-ups' part of the house make Leo feel he is trespassing - there are aspects of adulthood, i.e. spooning, he wishes to avoid. The plant itself is personified as a temptress, symbolising Marian and her behaviour, and sexuality itself: I couldn't bear to think of those lusty limbs withering on a rubbish-heap (trash?) or crackling in a fire; (hell-fire?) all that beauty being destroyed. Another secret - he won't tell Mrs Maudsley in case she has it destroyed.

He plans to revisit it but dreads the thought so he doesn't go until accompanied by Marcus. The plant is now bursting out of the hut; Leo actually thinks it is moving towards them. Marcus wants to push past it but draws back when asked. It has become even more sinister ('young, middle-aged and old' also applies to witches: maiden, woman and crone) suggesting guilt: questionable traffic; some shady secret and embodying evil: night which the plant had gathered to itself.

It takes courage to go out by night and face something so frightening, which shows Leo's desperation and he plans to use every bit of this poisonous plant to ensure success. At first sight, it appears like a prostitute, then a monster which will swallow him up, turning the tables by using him in a spell. Yet he cannot resist and enters the unhallowed darkness. Taken off guard at first, he says it's delicious (forbidden fruit?) almost seduced by every part of it. Then he panics and wrestles violently with it, tearing it apart as if it's a life or death struggle, even rape, since he ends up on the ground, the uprooted plant on top of him.

Diary

There were joys that depended upon secrecy; they would vanish if I told them or even betrayed their source. The whole point of a diary is to keep its contents secret. Nevertheless, Leo can't resist showing off and this leads to his being bullied.

Pictures

Leo doesn't care for Tenniels' pictures of a scene in a pub - paintings should 'record a moment chosen for its beauty'. He decides they can't be valuable because they're small but Maudsley probably bought them as an investment.

The photograph of the two boys is portentiously described: 'we seem to be rushing violently down a steep place.'

Music

Trimingham sends Leo to ask Marian to sing 'Home, Sweet Home' at the supper concert - a subtle hint? Spitefully, she suggests he sings 'She Wore a Wreath of Roses'; Trimingham explains to Leo he doesn't sing and the boy tries to spare his feelings, saying it was a joke, which annoys Marian - Leo is meddling, editing the messages.

Leo enjoys Ted's rendition of a sentimental song by Balfe, where the lover hopes his faithless sweetheart will remember him; he doesn't connect it with spooning. He completely outdoes Ted with my songs of death, not... his songs of love, choosing 'The Minstrel Boy' and picturing himself laying down his life for Marian. His encore is very difficult: 'Angels ever bright and fair'; Ted generously compares him to a choirboy. Marian sings 'Home, Sweet Home' and the applause is like an accolade to a goddess.

When Leo overhears Ted cajoling Marian, it's as if he is serenading her - the voice of temptation. The night Leo goes out to get the belladonna, he hears a guest singing 'The Thorn', where the lover would sooner die than cause his loved one hurt.

The Twentieth Century

The first year of the century, winged with hope; The year 1900 had an almost mystical appeal for me; infinitely precious, thus tied in with the Zodiac - the past year has been a bad one for Leo, with the death of his father and his own long illness. Although he looks forward to the future, his life never fulfils all that promise or his dream of becoming perhaps the greatest writer of the greatest century.

Even when being bullied, he doesn't think the twentieth century was letting me down, although his illness meant he wished the century over. The people at Brandham were the incarnated glory of the twentieth century; you insisted on thinking of them as angels, even if they were fallen angels. Marian blames this hideous century...'which has denatured humanity and planted death and hate where love and living were'.

When young Lord Trimingham says he sometimes rings Marian up, Leo observes dryly on the difference it would have made had there been a telephone when he stayed there.

EXERCISE

Describe a garden, giving it an atmosphere which is either sinister or serene, and some idea of the person who owns it.