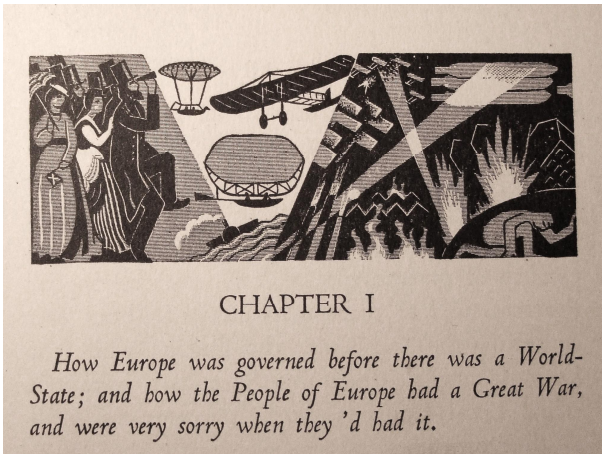
‘CICELY HAMILTON’S TWENTIETH CENTURY’

(A paper delivered to the Belfast Literary Society)

Dennis Kennedy, 3 April 2000



CHAPTER I

How Europe was governed before there was a World-State; and how the People of Europe had a Great War, and were very sorry when they ’d had it.

I recently paid 60p for an undistinguished-looking volume at a book sale. It was bought for the illustrations, rather fine wood blocks. I found the bookôs title intriguing enough, but when I read the first few pages, I was hooked. Having spent the past forty years of my life first writing about European integration, then working for it, and for the past seven years, researching and teaching it at university, you will understand why.

Here are those first pages. A wise aunt is talking to her young nephew:-

> You know without my telling you, dear little Arthur, the name of the country you live in; it is called Federated Europe. And I expect you know also that it is an important part - as we call it, a member - of our great World-State which is so immense that the swiftest airplanes, those that carry our letters, take nearly two days to fly all round it at its widest portion, the Equator. But perhaps you have not yet been told by your teachers that Federated Europe was not always known by that name, and that, instead of being one country, as it is to-day, it was split up into a number of divisions.

Yet so it was. Although not even the oldest person now living can remember it, there was a time ð in this Twentieth Century I am telling you aboutð when our European Provinces were quite separate one from another; the Province of France was quite independent of the Province of Italy, and the English Province used to manage its affairs without ever consulting the Spanish or the Dutch; while the Local Councils (which in those days were not called Local Councils, but Governments) made all their own laws and arrangements as they liked, doing just what they thought was convenient without asking permission of the World-State Council - for the simple reason that there wasnôt any World-State Council to ask.

All the Provinces, in fact, were Sovereign States or Nations; that is to say, nobody had the right to give them orders or interfere if they quarrelled among themselves, which was a thing they did fairly often. Now because they were independent and could not be interfered with, these nations all had their own soldiers and sailors and airmen to fight for them. I need hardly tell you that in these days there is only one Army in the world, and one Navy and one Air Fleet, all of them under the orders of the World-State Council. We and the other Provincesð Germany and France and Brazil and all the restð have our own strong Police Forces, so that we can keep order at home and put down rebellions; but no Province is allowed to have fighting machines and men for outside wars, as they used to in days gone by. If any Province nowadays were to think itself in danger of attack from outside, it would only-have to ring up the World-State Council, which would promise it protection from violence.

You must know that in the early part of the Twentieth Centurv there was a war that was called the Great War; partly because so many people fought in it - millions and millions from all over the world - and partly because it caused more misery, and was altogether more terrible and hideous, than any war that had ever happened before it. And the reason it was so particularly terrible and hideous was because of all the wonderful inventions and clever discoveries that men of science and engineers had for many years past been making just as hard as they could. For instances, there was the airplane, which was invented at the beginning of the century by two brothers who lived in America. At first everybody praised these two brothers for their cleverness and said what a marvellous thing they had done, and how splendid it was to rise up into the air and fly; but only a few years later

> the Great War broke out, and it did not seem nearly so splendid when airmen came flying over London and Paris and dropped bombs that exploded and blew up houses and killed all the people inside. I have no doubt that in those days a good many people would have been glad if the clever American brothers had invented something less new and astonishing, like a sewing-machine or a foot-warmer. The Great War went on for more than four years, and when it came to an end, exactly the same thing happened that had happened after other long wars; every one was so miserable about all the killing and wounding, and so weary of all the strict rules that had been made about food and travelling, and not having enough beer, and altogether so tired and disgusted that they forgot how gladly they had begun to fight.

The book is *Little Arthur's History of the Twentieth Century*, by Cicely Hamilton, published in 1933. I had heard of neither the book nor the author, nor indeed of the original Little Arthur book, *Little Arthur's England*, by Maria, Lady Callcott, published in the middle of the 19th century, of which this is a parody. What intrigued me was being able to read, in the very last year of the 20th century, a history of the past 60 odds years as envisaged by someone writing in the early 1930s.

Having read the book, I went in search of information on the author, Cicely Hamilton. And she, it turns out, is even more interesting than the book. She was, in her time, a suffragist, an actress, a stage director, a playwright a novelist, a journalist, and a travel-writer. She was a friend, or at least an associate of Mrs Pankhurst, Ethel Smyth, George Bernard Shaw, Ellen Terry and Lillian Bayliss.

In her time she wrote 20 plays, several novels, numerous travel books, a history of the Old Vic theatre, and the lyrics to Ethel Smythôs suffragist anthem *March of the Women*. She was for many years a regular contributor to *Time and Tide*. Her first novel, *William an Englishman*, was published in 1919, and was the winner of the *Prix Femina*, instituted that year. Apart from a *Times* obit, I could find almost nothing about Cicely Hamilton, and none of her many books is in print. Second-hand or even library copies were almost non-existent.

To my surprise, after I had become much involved in researching Miss Hamilton, an English publisher reissued *William an Englishman*, early last summer. Then, having spent many hours in pursuit of Cicely, relying almost entirely on her own *Life Errant*, published in 1935, I discovered, that a biography had indeed been published in 1990, by the Womenôs Press, in London. The author, Lis Whitelaw, an academic specialising in lesbian studies, was

chiefly interested in Cicelyôs sexuality, but she did produce a very serviceable account of *The Life and Rebellious Times of Cicely Hamilton, Actress, Writer and Suffragist.*

Like myself, Miss Whitelaw clearly found Cicely Hamilton a very private person. Her biography, I am sorry to say, almost entirely ignores *Little Arthur's History of the Twentieth Century*, dismissing it in one paragraph as a satirical *tour de force*. Out of the 30 or more books Cicely Hamilton published - she died at the age of 80 in 1952- 1 have been able to read only four - *Little Arthur*, her autobiographical volume *Life Errant* (1935) *William an Englishman*,(1918}, and *Modern Ireland as Seen by an Englishwoman,* (1936). I have also read parts of *Marriage as a Trade*, non-fiction, published in 1909.

THE PUT DOWN WAR SOCIETY HELD BIGGER AND BETTER MEETINGS

To return to *Little Arthur's History of the Twentieth Century*, the narrator tells how at the outbreak of the Great War, war itself was very popular, but by the end of it no one wanted to see war ever again. But for all the conferences and discussions of disarmament, it was not long before another war was about to break out (Remember that this was written in 1933, the year that Hitler came to power in Germany.)

Chapter Two already takes us into the future, that is post-1933. It is headed ôHow another Terrible War was just going to break out: and how, at the very last moment it was stopped by the Great Stampede. This war was about to be provoked by rivalry over the Balkans, and was going to be between Britain and France. This is how it was preventedô:

> You must know, my dear Arthur, that when anything of great public interest is going on, and people get excited and meet and talk in crowds, a very

curious thing often happens. This is called a Rumour, a story which every one repeats and believes though no one really knows who started it. Sometimes the Rumour is of good news and sometimes of bad; but whether it is good or whether it is bad, once it is started nothing seems able to stop it. It is passed from one person to another, and grows more exciting the farther it spreads, because people keep adding on bits.

Well, one afternoon at the beginning of August, such a rumour started in London and it spread, as we say, like wildfire. It was said that, though the Government had not yet made it public, war would be declared that very day; and that a French air-fleet, a thousand strong, was waiting on the cliffs between Boulogne and Calais, in readiness for a dash upon London the moment that war was declared.

The history of the Great Stampede has often been written, and historians have shown that there was no such thing as an air-fleet near Boulogne and Calais, because the French Government, very wisely and for fear of alarming the British Government and people, was keeping its airplanes farther off and out of sight. But that did not prevent people from believing the rumour about the thousand planes and saying that the fleet had been seen from a distance by British airmen, and also by passengers in the planes and boats coming from the Continent; rows on rows of fighting planes and bombers, just waiting the order to start!

And as one person passed on the story to another, the number of French airplanes grew larger and larger and larger. The thousand it began with soon grew into two; then there were three thousand, and then there were five; all carrying bombs filled with suffocating gas, or explosive that would blow entire streets into atoms with one bang! In less than an hour after starting from France they could lay the whole city of London in ruins, and massacre its citizens by thousands and hundreds of thousands. And who could say that they had not already started? In fact there were people who believed quite firmly they were on their way, and would have been over London already if they had not stopped to blow up Canterbury.

I am sure you will not be surprised to hear that as this rumour spread the one idea of those who heard it was to get away from London, far away into safety; the owners of cars began to bring them out, so as to leave as quickly as possible,

while those who had none hurried to the railway stations or crowded into omnibuses bound for the country districts. Fear, as perhaps you have been told, is a very infectious state of mind; you can catch it just as you can an illness; when you see another person running away from a danger, you nearly always feel inclined to run away from it yourself. And that is just what happened in the Great Stampede.

The terror which is called panic spread like a fever through the people of London and their one desire was to fly from the streets which would soon be a target for the dreaded French airmen. The streams of frightened people making for the outskirts soon swelled, on the main roads, into a rushing torrent. London, that great city which, for hundreds of years, had grown more and more populous, was being deserted by its citizens.

Many accounts have come down to us of that day, and the terrible things that took place when millions of people, grown wild with fear, were rushing and struggling for safety. There is hardly anything in the world more dangerous than a crowd when it is frightened, and the crowds in the Stampede were often mad with fright.

When you grow older you will read descriptions of the scenes that took place, some of them written by people who had witnessed them and who always remembered them with horror. In the tubes the crowd was so great that many people were suffocated and trampled under foot, and round all the stations they crushed and squeezed and fought for places in the trains. The same thing happened round omnibuses and coachesð each of them was the centre of a hand-to-hand struggle; and when buses or cars were held up in the crowded streets it often happened that they were rushed and overloaded till they broke down and had to be left in the road.

When the stream of frightened people had passed by and the streets were deserted, there were hundreds of these broken-down cars, standing uselessð some with a wheel off, some pushed into the gutter, some overturned and lying on their sides; and besides these hundreds of broken-down cars there were more hundreds of dead- bodiesð in the roads and on railway platforms. Some of them, especially children and old people and invalids, before they could reach the outskirts of London had fallen down and died of exhaustion.

Then there were others, many others, who went mad from terror, especially when it began to get dark and they were still in the streets, a long way from the country, and imagined they heard the airplanes coming. Eventually the stampede brought the entire nation to a halt, and the same thing happened in France. At which point the two countries came to their senses, and helped push the League of Nations into the business of peace-enforcement, through a League Police Force.

Cicely Hamiltonôs story of the Great Stampede is a remarkable foretaste of what happened, in Belfast for instance, less than a decade later, when the German blitz had people fleeing in panic into the countryside and sleeping rough. It was not based on imagination, but on her own experiences in France in the latter part of the Great War.

In 1918 Cicely was working for the YMCA in northern France, organising concert party entertainments for the troops, and living in the town of Abbeville, a port and rail junction on the Somme, about twelve miles from the Channel, and a major base for the Allied forces. Though it lived in constant danger of capture in any major German offensive, war had brought prosperity to Abbeviile, and in early 1918 it was clearly a bustling, lively place. Then the air raids began; Abbeville was a prime target for some of the worldôs first concentrated air-raids. (It was also shelled.) The experience of being bombed made a profound impression on Cicely Hamilton, just as it was to do almost exactly 20 years later on a young George Orwell in Spain.

She wrote about it at the time in one of her regular essays in journalism, and also more reflectively in her remarkable autobiographical *Life Errant*, published in 1935. It features too in her prize-winning novel *William, an Englishman*.. She describes vividly the nightly flight of people from the town:

> They streamed in emigration organized, as well as in voluntary flight. Cars crawled outward as the sun went down; army lorries rumbled from the danger zone; soldiers tramped orderly away. And at the side of the road - the side of every road - was the draggle of civilians afoot. An hour after sunset the town was a dead town, shuttered; a dead town till morning, a shell of empty homes and unslept beds. There remained in it only the military minority, tied there by duty - railwaymen, postal officials, and the like - and the invalids and aged who could not be moved out of danger.
>
> If you went out at the tail of the exodus, you passed through street after street whence life had departed; rows of blank upstanding houses, that an hour ago were homes, now abandoned. . . . I remember thinking, as I passed the blank houses, that here was a phenomenon unknown to the wars whereof history tells us. In the old wars men sheltered behind walls and found safety in numbers; our states and social systems are what they are because safety was in numbers and in walls. But in our wars, the wars of the air and the laboratory, the wall, like enough, is a trap that you fly from to the open, and there is danger, not safety, in numbers - the crowd is a target to the terror that strikes from above.
>
> All the country, nightly, was alive with men and women who, in obedience to the principles of the new warfare, had fled from the neighbourhood of the target - the town - and scattered in small groups that they might be ignored and invisible. They crowded into barns or lay out on the hillside while the Gothas swooped down on their homes in the town and the batteries spat fire in defence of them; they watched the wheeling of the searchlight and wondered, as they listened to the roar of high explosive, what a coming day and a journey home would reveal. And this, one realized, was only the beginning of air-power and the need for invisibility that air-power imposes; what we saw was but a promise of terror to come, a foreshadowing of full-grown achievement. Lying on the hillside one glimpsed something, at least, of the chaos of full-grown achievement.

Who was Cicely Hamilton, and why was she organising concert parties in Abbeville in 1918? When she witnessed the German bombing of Abbeville in the early summer of 1918, she was almost 46 years old, and already had behind her an assortment of careers and interests. She had been born Cicely Mary Hammill in Paddington in London in June 1872, the daughter of Denzil Hammill, a serving army officer in the Gordon Highlanders, who was English-born but of Scottish extraction. She later took the name Hamilton to avoid causing her father the embarrassment of being seen to have a daughter on the stage.

Her mother was Maude Piers, (Pearse?) who was Irish, or at least Anglo-Irish, coming from a family in Westmeath. Though born into apparently comfortable upper-class circumstances, Cicelyôs childhood was characterised by a distinct lack of cash that was to be the dominant factor in her development. Very little is known of her mother, who disappears rather mysteriously from the scene when Cicely was about ten years of age.

By that time Mrs Hammill had given birth to three more children, a daughter Eveline, and two sons, Jack and Raymond. Raymond was born in 1879, when Cicely was only seven, and little is heard of Mrs Hammill after that. In her autobiography Cicely writes very lovingly of her mother, and of her own great sorrow at parting with her early in life. The reference in *Life Errant* to the parting is enigmatic. It does not say Mrs Hammill died, simply that the finality of the parting was not recognised at the time. Whether this means that she died overseas, while accompanying her soldier husband, or that she deserted her husband and family, or went insane we do not know.

Even before this final parting some time around the beginning of the 1880s, Cicely had known separations from her mother, and had feared losing her permanently. Some of this childhood was spent in army barracks, notably at Weymouth. By 1880 her father had risen to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel in the Gordon Highlanders, and his wife may well have accompanied him on his overseas missions.

Cicely could have looked also to her fatherôs line for some Irish ancestry. In a letter of 1856 supporting his sonôs application for admission to Sandhurst, Denzil Hammillôs father had claimed as one of his ancestors Colonel Hugh Hammill, of Lifford, who had raised the Strabane Regiment and led it to play a prominent role in the defence of Derry during the siege in 1689.

It is an indication of the Hammill familyôs lack of cash that, when it came time to purchase Denzilôs commission, his father had to admit he could not pay for one and asked for Denzil to be granted a commission without purchase. Denzil Hammill served in India,

immediately post-mutiny, and later in Egypt, where he commanded the first battalion of the Gordon Highlanders. He went on to the Sudan, where he took part in the attempt to relieve Gordon in Khartoum, and by 1885 was a Major-General, at which point, at the age of 45, he resigned his commission and retired. It is not clear why, though lack of money may have been a reason. At any rate he seems to have gone overseas almost immediately, and died six years later in West Africa.

During the four years he had been in Egypt, his four children - Cicely, her sister and the two young brothers - had been boarded out to a family in Clapham. This was a period which Cicely later recalled as one of intense unhappiness, during which the children were ill-treated by the foster mother, and forced to eat vile food. It ended in 1885, when her father returned home and took his four children to live with his two spinster sisters in Bournemouth. Somehow or other enough money was found to send Cicely to a girls boarding school at Malvern in Worcestershire, where her formal education began.

She had already become a voracious and precocious reader, and at Malvern further developed this interest, extending it into French in which she claims to have become proficient by the age of 16. After four years at Malvern she was able to add German to her languages, as a distant relative agreed to pay for her to continue her education in Germany. So in 1889 she found herself in the spa resort of Bad Homberg, near Frankfurt, and soon having to teach English to pay for her keep - the family support covering only the first six months of her stay.

In Bad Homberg she acquired fluency in German, a lifelong taste for beer and a fond regard for the German people. She also saw Bismarck. (Cicely had a happy knack of coming across rather famous people. At Malvern the visiting music teacher had been a Herr von Holzt, who kept telling the girls of his talented young son Gustav.) In 1890, after the Kaiser dramatically sacked his Iron Chancellor; Bismarckôs wife came to spend three weeks drinking the waters at Bad Homberg, and at the end of the period Bismarck himself turned up to join her, to a tumultuous welcome. Cicely wrote later:

> I am always glad I saw Bismarck in the flesh; not only because he was history personified, but because, in himself, he was well worth looking at, a human being massive and magnificent..... No doubt there was grossness in the Bismarck face; but what struck me when I saw it - what I remember to this day - was its rough-hewn magnificence of strength. A head cut out of granite, was my instant thought as he lifted his *Schlappbut* and showed his bald cranium, in

acknowledgement of cheers and wavings. A head cut out of granite, a good-natured smile and bluest of turquoise-blue eyes.

She seems to have stayed in Germany for little more than a year, for in 1891 she was back in England seeking to earn some money to support her younger sister by working as a pupil teacher in the English midlands. Emerging from a not-too-happy childhood and girlhood, she was now, in her own words, óa discontented, rather sullen young creature, strongly conscious of her grievance against fate; sick of school life and the routine of the classroom, and faced with the fact that she was expected to continue it indefinitely in some minor teaching capacityô.

As she noted, it would have to be in a very minor capacity, as there was no prospect of university or special training for her. A few months later the outlook became even bleaker when her father died, of malaria, in West Africa, leaving Cicely at the age of 19, the eldest of the four children and firmly entrenched as a member of the impoverished middle class. But by then, as she later recorded, all her hopes and dreams were of success elsewhere - in the theatre.

She stuck teaching for less than a year, and then made the astounding decision, to resign her post and go to London to seek a career as an actress. It was astounding in part because her only theatrical experience had been as a schoolgirl at Malvern, and also because the career of actress was still far from widely accepted as decent for a young lady. (Hence her change of name to Hamilton, to preserve the family honour.) One reason was to be with her younger sister, and the two of them took a single room in London, and managed together for the next decade.

A respectable theatrical tradition had been emerging in England from the 1860s on, with distinguished actors such as Wyndham, Tree and Irving presenting Shakespeare and a range of dramas and melodramas far removed from the bawdiness of the music hall. Irvingôs knighthood in 1895 was public recognition of this. In 1892, however, acting for women still carried strong overtones of looseness if not blatant immorality.

Striking-looking rather than beautiful, tall with golden red hair, Cicely Hamilton managed to survive in the theatre, though mostly in touring ófit-upô companies rather than on the London stage. She had also begun to earn some money by writing ï some journalism, some translation work from German, and pot-boiler adventure stories of pirates, bandits and detectives for weekly magazines. The theatre was hard-going - earning a pound a week as a

member of a touring company, required to find her own costumes as actresses were expected to dress themselves, and living with the weaknesses and dishonesty of actor-managers, and with a degree of public hostility.

She records in *Life Errant* being in Armagh with a touring company and unable to find accommodation as no landlady would take in actresses. Cicely presented herself at the police barracks and asked that the female members of the cast be accommodated in the cells. An amused and kindly Peeler did better than that, finding families in the city willing to shelter the homeless.

Her modest success at writing encouraged her to try to write for the theatre, and in this she was marginally more successful than at acting. In 1906 she had a one-act curtain-raiser produced at Wyndhamôs in London, and, encouraged by this, went on to write a full-length comedy *Diana of Dobson's*, which was produced at the Kingsway Theatre in London in 1908, where it ran for 143 performances and was well-received by at least some of the critics.

Though she was now more interested in writing plays than acting in them, she continued her career as an actress, and in 1911 appeared in the London production of *Fanny's First Play*, by George Bernard Shaw, in which she had the privilege of being directed by Shaw himself, whom she found ókindlyô and ready to allow his cast óa certain freedom of experimentô. After that she landed the part of Mrs Barfield in a 1913 production of the stage version of George Mooreôs *Esther Waters*. Moore himself commented that her acting was the finest he had ever seen.

That explains, in part at least, how Cicely Hamilton found herself in Abbeville in 1918, organising entertainments for the troops, and being bombed, though there is another chapter of her life still to be explored between 1911 and 1918.

When we left Little Arthur, his aunt was telling him how the danger of war after the Great War was averted by the Great Stampede. Chapter V is headed óHow the Sovereign States gave up being Sovereign; and how they really went in for Disarmament instead of only talking about itô and tells how the states allowed the League of Nations to have a League Police force with the power to act against any aggressor. The League Police Force grew into a modern World State and Government, with Advisory Departments and Hereditary Council, presided over by a Hereditary President. (Little Arthurôs Aunt was no glib democrat - she repeatedly warns him of the dangers of democracy, where the people can vote for anything

they like, without anyone taking responsibility for the result. Monarchs and even dictators, can, on the other hand, be held to account.)

As the Aunt told Little Arthur, these were great changes. There are always people, she said, called Conservatives, who donôt care about the new arrangements and would like to go on as they were...people who canôt understand that everything has to be paid for in some way or another, and who think that a great benefit to mankind, such as peace and security, can be obtained by just wanting it, without making any sacrifice.

> If you think of it, dear Little Arthur, some of the safest persons in the world are those who are shut up in prison; although their surroundings may not be agreeable, they have this compensation, that they cannot be run over, and are sure of their meals, and not nearly so likely to catch influenza as people who go about in buses....but as I said, some people seemed to find it terribly difficult, especially the Conservative people who still believed in democracy. So, in the end, the Conservatives had to give way to the Progressive people, who believed in a strong central Government to keep the peace, with a strong Police-Army to see that its laws were carried out.

But even without wars, the 20th century had its problems, and Chapter VI deals with The Unfortunate Consequences of Improved Education and the Outbreak of Scientific Brigandage. The Aunt continued:

> By this time I am sure I have made it clear to you that the Twentieth Century was a time of great changes in our history and manner of living; and one of the most important of these changes had to do with Educationð the teaching of Science in our schools and universities. You know, I expect, that if when you are older you want to be a professor of chemistry, like your Uncle Robert, and have a laboratory like his where you have strange-looking bottles and balances, and do what is called research workð you know you will have to go through what is called a probation before you are allowed to take up the study of chemistry in earnest.
>
> This probation is a very strict training at the school for Science Cadets; and while the training is going on the masters and doctors belonging to the school will watch you carefully, and write reports about your character, so as to make quite sure you are the kind of boy who can safely be allowed to study chemistry -

the kind of boy who will not put his knowledge to any bad use. One of the things they will want to make sure of is that you are not likely to go out of your mind, like the professor of whom I shall tell you later on who went mad in his laboratory, and did most terrible damage. For the knowledge of what is called Applied Science, because it is a very great power, is also a very great danger to the world; and those who are trained to hold such power must be carefully chosen, and prove they are fit to be trusted.

As time went on more and more discoveries were made by electrical experts, and by doctors and chemists working in their laboratories; and some of these discoveries were so wonderfulð and also so dangerous unless used with great careð that it was clear to thoughtful and progressive people that the power to make use of them ought not to be given to every one. What is the good (said the thoughtful people) of doing away with guns and bayonets and fortresses and providing more terrible weapons in our colleges and laboratories ?

So these progressive people began to agitate for a new system of education forbidding the teaching of dangerous knowledge to every one; and they pointed out, quite reasonably, that the knowledge of how to make deadly poisons had always, so far as possible, been kept from the general public, so as not to encourage wicked persons to murder their families. Like all useful reforms, however, this reform of education met with great opposition at first; there was an outcry from the teachers and professors, many of whom earned good wages by giving lessons in science classes, and the

Conservative people who still believed in Democracy made an even louder outcry about Equality of Opportunity. This was called a slogan, and slogans in politics are very useful things; when people have once invented a good slogan they go on saying it in a loud tone of voice and don't listen to what anybody argues. So the progressive people didn't make much headway at first; although they pointed out that Equality of Opportunity might sometimes be risky, the public didnôt take much notice.

The principal way in which the danger was brought home was through the power placed by their education in the hands of the criminal classes - the thieves and the burglars and bandits. By the middle of the century all boys and girls had a good education up to the age of twenty, and their teaching in those

days was largely about science and mechanics. Because of Equality of Opportunity those who were going to be thieves and burglars were taught science and mechanics along with the rest. and you can imagine they found it very useful when they took to their burgling and housebreaking; the Police, on the other hand, found it more and more difficult to deal with educated burglars, who made use of the latest scientific devices and flew to their burglings in airplanes. And even before the use of the air- plane became general, the motor car had brought back the highwayman, who had disappeared, for a century or more, from the civilized regions of Europe. In England, for instance, about the nineteen-thirties there were highwaymen in motor cars who stopped travellers on the roads and robbed them, just as Dick Turpin used to do on his mare, Black Bess; and sometimes they would dash into banks, with revolvers, and steal the money and dash off with it; and even shoot the clerks.

And that was only the beginning of the period of Educated Crime; it was about the middle of the century when the danger came to a head in a widespread outbreak of brigandage. When we study the books that were written by pacifists after the Great War we see that many of them quite honestly believed that people only fought because there were nations and soldiers and guns; they did not remember there were lots of other reasons for losing our tempers, and a fighting instinct which, if there were no more nations or armies, would seek for other means of doing violence. That is how our historians now account for the outbreak of scientific brigandage which for several years was a terror to the world, and especially to certain districts. The worst of all were parts of North America - the great city of Chicago and the district round it - and also the large islands of Sicily and Corsica and Ireland.

In these places the brigands were particularly cruel and ruthless, and their bands were so strong and well organized that they made public bodies, like town councils pay them heavy taxes-what is called blackmail-and people were so frightened of them that they dared not tell the Police they had been robbed, for fear they should be murdered as well. So it often happened that when the Police arrested a man they knew was a brigand no one would come forward to give evidence against him. and they had to let him go free.

This was a dreadful state of things among civilized people, and the World-State Council made up their minds to put an end to it; and they saw now that the progressive people had been in the right when they said that precautions would have to be taken with regard to the teaching of Science. When we read about our ancestors of the Twentieth Century, it is sometimes difficult not to feel pity for them because of all they had to go through before the dangerous things they had invented and discovered were brought under proper control, and used only for the good of the world.

To us it seems curious that it was such a long time before they even thought of bringing them under control; but although in many ways the people of the Twentieth Century were quite civilized, intelligent people, they seem to have been terribly superstitious about their science and invention. They seem to have bowed down to them and worshipped them, just as ignorant savages, in times further back, used to worship the idols and fetishes to which they made sacrifice.

As the outbreaks of brigandage became more frequent and dangerous, people began to ask themselves what was the use of forbidding scientific weapons to soldiers, and allowing criminals to make use of them as often as they wanted. And the use the criminals made of them was sometimes terrible. When an American bandit, the leader of a gang, had been captured and executed as a punishment for his kidnappings and murders, his followers in revenge dropped gas-bombs into the town where the execution had taken place, suffocating many innocent people, and making the town for a time uninhabitable; and an Irish gang obtained the release of one of their leaders by threatening to infect the whole city of Limerick with plague-virus if the government did not let him go.

And this kind of thing would happen quite often in days when there was equality of opportunity in dangerous knowledge for bad citizens as well as for good; and when they had happened often enough, people began to wonder if this Equality of Opportunity was such an excellent thing after all. Knowledge is power, they said, and scientific power is often very dangerous. So isn't the State acting rather foolishly in giving such power to persons who will make a wrong use of it?

At last the World-State Council issued its famous decree on the Selection of Students for Higher Education - and thus introduced that Limitation of

Dangerous Knowledge which was one of the most important reforms of the Century. Of course that didn't help about the scientific bandits already grown up, but it did prevent another generation of scientific bandits succeeding them. What decided the Council to make this wise law was not only the danger from brigandage, but a terrible disaster in the Province of Poland, where an eminent professor went out of his mind while he was splitting up atoms in his laboratory. Instead of splitting up the atoms properly he began to mix them in some peculiar way, and blew half the city of Lwow to pieces, killing hundreds and hundreds of people.

No one quite knew how he made this explosion, because he blew himself up with all the other people, and they only found little bits of him. After this disaster another decree was issued by the World-State Council, saying that all doctors and professors who made dangerous experiments must be regularly inspected, at least twice a year, and certified to be of sound mind.

No history of the 20th century would be complete without a chapter on economics, and Little Arthur's Aunt, stretches to three. Little Arthur is told first of how mechanisation meant fewer people were needed to produce goods. So people who had been educated at State expense, could not get jobs and so could not repay the state through taxes, nor could they buy the goods that were being manufactured.

So we saw the Breakdown of the Labour System around the middle of the 20th century. The first remedy tried was Extended Education, with the school leaving age raised to 25. This worked for a while in the more studious countries like Germany, but not in England, which had never been a studious country. There the young people would'nt stand it, and declared they'd rather play football or go to the cinema. There were Education Riots, and windows were broken in Whitehall.

The next remedy was Old Age Pensions at 40. It was made illegal to employ anyone over the age of 40. This too caused some unpleasantness, not least because the quality of meals went down as all the best cooks had been made to retire. And anyway, as mechanisation proceeded, unemployment remained just as large. In the end the solution adopted was the Living Allowance. Under this everyone was paid an allowance by the State for life, to cover what were termed 'the necessaries of life'. Anyone wanting more than the Living Allowance would cover, had to work for it. The great advantage the system was that it

divided people naturally into their proper classes - Citizens, who used their minds and bodies and were some good to other people or to the State, and the Parries, content to live on the Allowance. Only the Citizens, of course, had any voice in public affairs

The system took some time to evolve, as those Conservative countries still believing in democracy had a lot of trouble implementing it. As long as there were elections, politicians would promise the Parries all sorts of things to get their votes. Once Democracy had been done away with, the system began to work properly.

The Aunt mentions one other scheme tried as a means of countering unemployment, which she describes as the silliest of all - that all girls and women should give up paid work, and marry and have children, which would give them plenty to do and leave the work and wages for their husbands and fathers and brothers. The people who liked this plan said the proper thing for women to do was to marry and have lots of children, and those who didn't care for that sort of life weren't at all the right kind of women.

Anyway the plan did not work, because one of the things forgotten by those backing it was that quite a lot of women didn't ever get married - some because they were plain or disagreeable and nobody asked them, and some because they didn't like the people who did ask them, or they just didn't care about the life. The short and rather light-hearted treatment of this particular issue in *Little Arthur* gives scant clue to the fact that this was an issue above all others of importance to Cicely Hamilton.

By 1911 she was already deeply involved in the suffragist movement. She records taking part in her first march in 1907 with the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, one of the more moderate campaigning groups. Her play *Diana of Dobson's*, produced the following year, while a comedy, was a serious comment on the place of women in society, and society's attitudes to women and their right to earn a living outside marriage.

Around that time she joined the more militant Women's Social and Political Union, led by mother and daughter Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, and played her part in heckling Ministers and interrupting meetings. Almost by accident she found herself in demand as a speaker - thanks to her commanding appearance coupled with her stage experience, plus the fact that she had something to say, and had already said it in part through *Diana of Dobson's*.

But she did not fall under the great Pankhurst spell, and soon left the WSPU. Looking back on the militant suffrage agitation, more than 25 years later, she had less than kind things to say about the Pankhursts:

> ...it was the beginning - the first indication of the dictatorship movements which are by way of thrusting democracy out of the European continent. Not the Fascists but the militants of the Women's Social and Political Union first used the word 'leader' as a reverential title; and the *Fuhrer Prinzip,* the principle of leadership, was carried to something like idolatry by the wearers of the purple, white and green. Emmeline Pankhurst in this respect, and on a smaller scale, was forerunner of Lenin. Hitler and Mussonlini - the leader whose fiat must go unquestioned. The Leader who could do no wrong.

The Pankhursts had themselves annulled the constitution of the WSPU in 1907, and had dictated all its policies thereafter to their adoring followers. Cicely joined the Women's Freedom League, a breakaway from the WSPU and continued her enthusiastic support for the suffrage campaign, concentrating on a new group which she herself helped to found - the Woman Writers' Suffrage League, and alongside that, the Actresses' Franchise League, through which she became friendly with Ellen Terry.

The ferment of agitation - with rallies of up to 250,000 people - continued in the years up to the outbreak of the Great War. Pageants, tableaux vivants and other theatrical presentations formed a key part of this, and Cicely's writing and acting skills were fully employed. For one such occasion Ethel Smyth had composed a suffragist anthem, but could find no words to go with it - Cicely came up with the lyrics, and the *March of the Women* was born.

A much more significant piece of writing had come in 1909 with the publication of *Marriage as a Trade*, not a play or a novel, but a serious book analysing the place and plight of woman in the world of that day. Its central theme is in its title - that marriage is the only means of livelihood open to women. Denied education and formal training, the only trade they can follow is that of marriage, within which they exist in permanent economic subjection.

In the book she defines woman '...as an individual human being whose life is her own concern; whose worth is in no way advanced or detracted from by the accident of marriage; who does not rise in my estimation by reason of a purely physical capacity for bearing children, nor sink in my estimation through a lack of that capacity.'

Drawing clearly on her own experience, she cites as the greatest wrong inflicted upon women ‘the enforced arrest of her mental growth’. By this she means not just denial of formal education, but the concentration of women’s energies on acquiring those qualities

necessary to find a husband which, she asserts, had deprived women steadily and systematically of the power of creation and artistic achievement.ô

Marriage as a Trade is both deadly serious and amusing. In it Cicely displayed much of the writing ability that was to sustain a long writing career, characterised by a capacity for dealing with serious, even sombre topics, while employing much gentle irony and selective ridicule. *Little Arthur* is the perfect example of this. She was writing almost non-stop in the period between 1908 and 1914 - about a dozen plays, most of them one-act, numerous pageants, and a novel *Just to Get Married*, published in 1911 and later turned into a play.

Her account of these years in *Life Errant* is exhilarating, and while she was clearly a dedicated suffragist - never a suffragette - she was not among the more militant, and while an energetic heckler of Ministers, she did not get round to knocking off policemenôs helmets or chaining herself to railings. She did join the Womenôs Tax Resistance League, and wrote to the inland revenue collector in Chelsea in 1914 to inform him she would not be paying as a protest against denial of the vote. After some months correspondence, the inspector himself arrived on her doorstep, to see if things could be settled amicably with a lady who wrote such nice letters.

No compromise could be reached, and the inspector eventually wrote saying he had no alternative but to ósell her upô - that is, seize her goods and auction them to settle the debt. She wrote back with an inventory of all her saleable property, which consisted of some books, a strip of elderly carpet and a kettle. The Inland Revenue decided she was not worth selling up, but warned her that if she did, in the future, acquire any property, it would be liable for seizure. The Great War intervened leaving unresolved the questions of Cicely Hamiltonôs income tax and womenôs suffrage.

Like most in the womenôs movement she was, if not a pacifist, anti-war mongering. In January.1914, she had written of a new and saner spirit abroad in the world, noting particularly the happy relations between Britain and Germany, and the remarkable movement for real reconciliation between France and Germany. She looked forward to these three foremost countries in Europe united in a policy of external peace and internal reform, no longer wasting their substance on the futile symbols of barbarism, but devoting their time to the task of adding to the wealth of life. The main point of the piece was to oppose any addition to óthe already monstrous expenditure on armamentsô, on the grounds that Britainôs relations with her neighbours had never been more generally cordial.

When war did break out, however, she was soon involved, motivated partly by a belief in the invincibility of the German military, based on her time in Germany, and in part on her determination that, as a woman, she had to play a part. She volunteered to join an organisation called the Scottish Womenôs Hospitals, which was already setting up an emergency unit in France, and was eventually to have several more in France, in the Balkans and in Russia. These were staffed entirely by women, including women surgeons. As a result, the British Army declined their services, and the hospitals in France catered only for the French and other non-British wounded.

Cicely Hamilton, equipped with good French and a knowledge of book-keeping, went as a manager, and by mid-December 1914 was helping set up the first hospital in a derelict convent at Chantilly, near Paris. She worked there, in appalling conditions, until the spring of 1917. She then applied for the Womenôs Auxiliary Army Corps (WAACs) then in course of formation. She was accepted, but did not, in the end join - in *Life Errant* she says this was for financial reasons; no one could tell her what wages she would get, she had to find the money for her uniform and she had financial obligations to meet - possibly the support of her younger sister.

Instead she joined óConcerts at the Frontô and found herself in Abbeville under the auspices of the YMCA. There, in 1918, she received by post the news that her name had been placed on the electoral register in Chelsea- she had got the vote She records in *Life Errant* how little it meant to her; her real concern was to survive the bombardment then in progress. The vote for women, by then, was of supreme unimportance in national life, and indeed to her, and that, she suggests, was why it was granted. Her priorities, and her life, had been profoundly changed by the experiences of the war.

She was now obsessed with the theme we have just been looking at in *Little Arthur* - disaster through science, and was already thinking of her next novel, which was to deal with that theme. Meanwhile, in the summer of 1918 she was finishing *William an Englishman* during a spell back in England. Just before the Armistice her younger brother, Raymond, was killed in action. In January 1919 she was back in France with the concert parties, first in Amiens, then in the Devastated Zone, and finally in occupied Germany. In 1919 *William an Englishman* was published, hailed as a masterpiece, and awarded the *Prix Femina*.

It is a powerful and remarkable work. It tells the story of a wimpish young Englishman who gets involved in the anti-war movement pre-war, makes a small reputation for himself as a speaker, and marries Griselda, a timid, silly mousey supporter of the same

movement. They take their honeymoon in August 1914 in a remote cottage in the Ardennes. Well away from their nearest Belgian neighbours they know nothing of the German invasion until they prepare to leave for home They are then captured, and engulfed in the horror and brutality of occupation, captivity flight and destruction.

Cicely herself did not regard it primarily as a war novel. In *Life Errant* she attributes its origins and inspirations to the suffrage movement, and to her observation then of the enthusiastic ignorance of many of her fellow campaigners. It was only the catastrophic accident of the war that transformed it into something different. Its success established her as a major writer, and thereafter she earned her living as a novelist, playwright, travel writer and journalist - mainly in the pages of *Time and Tide* which had been founded in 1920 as a feminist weekly by Lady Rhondda, a friend of Cicely from suffragist days. Cicely later served on its board of directors.

Her main concern on her return to London was to finish her novel on the theme of disaster through science, *Theodore Savage*. She herself described it as - not a pleasant bookô, but declared she had óput good work into itô. It has been described as the grimmest of her works. One reviewer said politicians should be forced to read it to understand the disaster that threatened mankind if it could not stop the mad process on which it was engaged.

Six years later she reworked the novel, and it was published under the title *Lest Ye Die.* Another novel, *Full Stop*, appeared in 1931. She was still involved in the theatre though not as an actress. She wrote two more full length plays and one one-act and in 1926, jointly with its owner Lillian Baylis, she produced a history of the Old Vic.

After 1921 she combined her devotion to women's rights and to the theatre with a new involvement in international affairs. She joined the League of Nations Union. During a stay in Geneva in 1920 she became involved with the Save the Children fund, and travelled to Austria to write about its activities. Later in the 1920s she attended a conference in Berlin, and from then on she found a new vocation as a travel writer.

The 1930s saw travel books on Germany, France, Italy, Russia, Austria, Ireland, Scotland, England and Sweden. These are not travel books as we know then today, but essentially extended journalism dealing more with social and political issues in the countries visited rather than tourist attractions Her *Modem Ireland as seen by an Englishwoman*, published in 1936, for example, has chapters on, among other things, the Economic War and the Cattle Farmer, The Sweep, Censorship, and Compulsory Irish, and she deals fairly comprehensively with the North and the political issues there.

Her main involvement in women's affairs from the 1920s right to her death was through the Open Door Council. This had been founded after the Great War to further the rights of women, both nationally in Britain, and through Open Door International. Its aims were very dose to Cicely's own priorities:

õTo secure that a woman shall be free to work and be protected as a worker on the same terms as a man, and that legislation and regulations dealing with conditions and hours, payment, entry and training shall be based upon the nature of the work, and not upon the sex of the worker, and to secure for a woman, irrespective of marriage or childbirth, the right at all times to decide whether or not she shall engage in paid work, and to ensure that no legislation or regulation shall deprive her of that right.ô

Cicely Hamilton

One final travel book, on Holland, was published in 1950, but had in fact been compiled before the outbreak of war. The last work was probably *Lament for Democracy,* which came out in the dark days of 1940. Judging from the few excerpts from it I have read, it was a deeply pessimistic work, repeating one of her old themes from *Little Arthur*, that democracy is fragile, suffering from the inherent weakness of non-accountability - voters can vote as they like, without ever having to take individual responsibility for the outcome.

By the time the war ended, she was 73, but not finished with campaigning. In that year she joined the British League for European Freedom, which had been set up in 1944, to protest against the abandonment by the west of Poland and the Baltic Republics,

foreshadowed in the Teheran deal between Churchill and Roosevelt on the one hand, and Stalin on the other, and confirmed at Yalta. She edited the League's weekly news- sheet from then until her final illness.

I have not found anything written by her after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which events must have confirmed her worst fears expressed in *Theodore Savage* a quarter of a century earlier. She belongs to the first half of the 20th century. In the 20s and 30s Cicely Hamilton was a well-known public figure on the London scene and beyond. In her lifetime she produced an impressive body of work, both fiction and non-fiction, including at least one masterpiece, *William an Englishman*, and, in *Little Edward*, a remarkably prescient satire on world affairs and human nature.

Post Script:

The wonderful black and white illustrations which first drew me to *Little Edward* are by John Farleigh, 1900-1965, watercolourist, etcher and illustrator. Much in demand in the 1930s, he illustrated two works by George Bernard Shaw - *The Adventures of the Black Girl in her Search for God* (1932) and *Back to Methuselah*, (1934). Farleighôs depiction of a bare-breasted black girl earned GBSôs book a banning order from the Irish Free State censor on grounds of obscenity. Farleigh also illustrated works by D H Laurence and Sacheveral Sitwell, and produced a series of etchings showing war damage in London in the Second World War.

Sources

Life Errant by Cicely Hamilton. J. M. Dent, London, 1935.

The Life and Rebellious Times of Cicely Hamilton, Actress, Writer and Suffragist by Lis Whitelaw. Womenôs Press, London. 1990.

Cicely Hamilton obituary. *Times,* December 8th, 1952. London.

Little Arthur's History of the Twentieth Century, with fourteen illustrations by John Farleigh was published by J.M. Dent, London, 1933.