DAYS IN THE ISLE OF WIGHT

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Days in the Isle of Wight by Paul Bourget & M. C. Warrilow

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PAUL BOURGET & M. C. WARRILOW

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DAYS IN THE ISLE OF WIGHT by Paul Bourget the English version by M. C. Warrilow



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London Howard Wilford Bell Hastings house, Norfolk street, Strand 1901

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N beginning this journal in the form of disjointed notes relating to a first visit to England, which will be short and without preparation, I must ask the in-

dulgence of the reader of these cursory lines, dotted down anyhow and anywhere. These, for instance, will have been placed on the table, covered with advertisements, of a waiting-room at the extreme end of the pier which limits the little town of Ryde, and in the midst of a crowd of travellers who are arriving either by tram or rail-for both run side by side along the pier-and are just about to take the boat for Portsmouth. The bell rings, smoke pours from the funnels, loud calls are heard from one end of the esplanade to the other. The young girls with their hats awry and their gloves with wide stitching, who are talking ۸ 1

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together two steps from me, the merchant who is finishing his letters and dipping his pen in this same inkpot, the girl at the counter with her wondering eyes, from whom I bought these sheets of notepaper and borrowed this pen, do not dream for a moment that I am trying to sketch from nature the landscape which stretches around us. So the world moves on, each one following his destiny and his thoughts, and showing but the outward semblance and, as it were, ghost of himself. Nowhere is the feeling of the loneliness of each life more marked than in the course of a hurried journey through a country whose language one understands but imperfectly, But the beauty of the thrilling sight of the waves soon dissipates this sadness. The well-defined line of the English coast stands out in the distance, the houses of Portsmouth shine white in the brilliant sunlight, and are only separated from us by an immeasurably soft rippling sea, a sea of subdued colour, whose delicate green undulates as if mixed with milk. To the right and left, if one turns one's head, are the woods of the island, great masses of black trees, 2

and above our heads the summer sky, of too warm an axure, which weighs heavily, and gathers around it the mist of a storm. Truly this is the moment to store up, before they fade away, the few pictures which have graven themselves on the mind since leaving Paris. Once again may these notes, which do not pretend to discover England to others, be excused if they appear either too commonplace or too personal. It is not easy to avoid one of these faults without falling into the other.

No incident worthy of note between Paris and Calais, unless it be the beauty of the setting sun. But how can that be described in words? On the line of the horizon, black with forests, a faint fringe of deepest red melts into every shade of colour until it reaches the most delicate green, as may be seen in the backgrounds of the typical pictures of Léonardo. The first star ahines with a golden brilliancy through this exquisite green. Even my neighbours, two strong muscular Englishmen, almost resembling old trees in their solidity of build, look for a long time at this

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