the numerical burden on these clinics. New duties have fallen on the medical and nursing staff of the Ayrshire hospitals. Although no new clinics have been formed, the arrangements provide an additional four to eight patients for an already existing outpatient clinic. The telephone calls are received by one of the two physicists, who are also responsible for keeping the records.

There is little overall difference to the NHS costs of staffing the clinics in the district general hospitals and staffing those in Glasgow. The time of the medical staff, the nursing staff, and the ECG technicians is roughly the same except that the service and its costs are now transferred to Ayrshire. A telephone call from the Ayrshire hospitals (under 35 miles) costs 46p for five minutes in the morning.

The reduction in the distances of ambulance travel is the major saving for the NHS. The total saving is 2760 miles (4416 km) a year at a cost of £0.7 per mile³—that is, over £2000 a year. This sum is roughly the cost of the equipment.

There are potential problems that did not materialise during the time of the trial. Those patients with programmable pacemakers will still have to attend the Glasgow clinics when it is necessary to reprogram the generators. The transmitting and receiving systems have proved reliable over the trial period.

Conclusion

A regional telephone pacemaker follow-up service has been established based in Glasgow with district general hospitals as medical care centres. A pilot project in three Ayrshire hospitals

has proved successful, and the system will now be expanded to include hospitals in the Dumfries and Galloway and the Argyll and Clyde areas. Potential savings to the NHS by reducing ambulance journeys in the west of Scotland exceed £10 000 a year. The scheme is carefully monitored to ensure that patients with pacemakers receive adequate attention with a minimum of inconvenience.

This scheme was made possible by the purchase of the equipment by the British Heart Foundation. The support of the department of clinical physics and bio-engineering of the West of Scotland Health Boards is also acknowledged.

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Reading for Pleasure

Ancient preferred to modern

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Few would deny that Dickens was a great entertainer. His hold on the reading public of his time has probably never been approached, let alone equalled, by any other novelist. The dwarf Quilp in *The Old Curiosity Shop* is the most likable villain in fiction, his only rival for this title being the Italian Count Fosco in Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*. In Evelyn Waugh's *A Handful of Dust* the hero ends his days in the South American jungle, employed by a wealthy illiterate to read Dickens's works to him. In a book quiz programme on the BBC World Service it was asked in which book this event occurred. The opinion of the speakers was that it was an enviable and not an unhappy fate to be paid to read Dickens. In a "Letter from America" Alistair Cooke mentioned an American writer who before beginning work each day gets through two chapters of Dickens, and when he reaches the end of the last book goes back to the first.

As an entertainer, then, Dickens's stature is beyond question. Judgment of his position as a social reformer depends in part on the opinions of the individual concerning the desirability of social reform. What of the novels themselves, as novels? Chesterton wrote that strictly speaking there was no such thing as a Dickens novel, that any work of Dickens would contain given proportions of good and bad stuff, and that a character or two could be transposed from one book to another without causing much disturbance. He believed that *Pickwick Papers* was the greatest of the achievements. Dickens's early works were lacking in plot but contained humour, pathos, and suspense in abundance. In his later books humour is less prominent, with greater emphasis on plot and moral responsibility. The novel which marks the transition is *Dombey and Son*. It is an alternative viewpoint to Chesterton's to believe that Dickens's greatest work is in these later novels. It seems to me that *Bleak House* is in a class of its own among English novels, and that class is of the highest. The organisation is immense and detailed: there are no passages that one would want to omit, not a word too many; the characters are numerous and varied, and the arrival of any other, even Mr Pickwick, would result in a fatal imbalance.

Dickens's transformation into a different kind of novelist was remarkable; whether it was conscious or subconscious I have yet to learn.

Among his contemporaries were Emily Brontë and George Eliot, whose *Wuthering Heights* and *Adam Bede* are books, like *Bleak House* and Hardy's *The Return of the Native*, to which I return again and again. Unlike Dickens, George Eliot wrote of people and situations that do not invite the accusation of caricature, and her greatest achievement, *Middlemarch*, is thought by many to be the English novel most worthy to be set beside *War and Peace*. Of her historical novel *Romola*, F R Leavis said that few would want to read it a second time. I was one of the few. I remembered it as a convincing account of a young man's decline from a state of moral inertia to acts of positive evil. The novel's Italian setting explained part of its attraction. Wishing to read this book again, I sought it without success until I joined the public library in Benin and found it in the Everyman's Library edition. The novel is set in Florence at the end of the fifteenth century. There is a sympathetic portrait of the Dominican monk Savonarola. The young Greek who arrives in the city soon makes friends and influences people because of his good looks and pleasant ways. What is lacking in him is any sense of moral obligation to others. Entering the shady world of Florentine politics, he intrigues more and more deeply in an attempt to gain real political power. Justice is done and his death is ignominious. No, I find that none of George Eliot's novels deserves to be neglected.

Trollope's prodigious output

Only the real devotee or the most voracious reader is likely to get through the whole of Trollope's prodigious output in a lifetime. It is only lately that I completed *The Small House at Allington* in the Barsetshire series. Like all Trollope's novels that I have read it is entertaining and well done. The story concerns a young lady who falls deeply in love with an ambitious young man. Marriage is agreed, but when he spends a weekend at the home of a titled family he allows himself to propose to one of the earl's daughters. She accepts his proposal and he cannot withdraw. The first young lady, being jilted, continues to believe in his goodness, and resolves never to marry, the memory of her love being sufficient. An unlikely story it sounds, but in Trollope's hands it is made to seem probable enough.

Trollope is consistent from one book to the next. Hardy's works are of great variety. He classified them into "novels of ingenuity," "romances and fantasies," and "novels of character and environment." It is on the last group that Hardy's reputation as a great novelist stands or falls. What I often feel in these works is that the characters have no chance in life, that their doom is sealed from the start. I do not feel that Hardy likes the characters that he creates, does not like them in the way that, for example, Dickens likes Quilp. One reason for the success of the novels is the rural settings. In *The Return of the Native* the humans appear to be insignificant actors on the timeless stage of Egdon Heath. Recently I have read *The Hand of Ethelberta*, which, being a "novel of ingenuity," shows, according to Hardy, a not infrequent disregard of the probable in the chain of events. The book is pleasant enough, and it is a relief to remember that Hardy could at times be lighthearted. As for probability, the chain of events leading to the downfall of Michael Henchard, the *Mayor of Casterbridge*, seems to be as improbable as anything in Hardy's fiction. In his last novel he made the mistake of attempting a serious work in an urban setting. This apart, in *Jude the Obscure* he so offended public morals of the time that he resolved to write no more novels; henceforth his powers found expression in poetry, by which he is at least as assured of permanent fame as by his novels.

The reasons for the decline and fall of the Roman Empire have occupied many inquiring minds. Some historians, such as Toynbee, believe that every civilisation contains the seeds of its own decay. Gibbon's famous work in "Eight volumes. Red and

Gold. Purple ribbon in every volume; to keep the place where you leave off," was bought by Mr Boffin, the wealthy illiterate in Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*, to be read to by Silas Wegg; Mr Boffin, however, is always under the impression that the title of the work is Decline-and-Fall-Off-The-Rooshan-Empire. A question that has not been asked so often, perhaps, is the reason for the rise of the Roman Empire. A guide to the answer may be found in a truly fascinating book, a *History of Rome*, by M Cary, revised in its third edition by H H Scullard. In the first place, the geographical position of Rome in the centre of Italy enabled its armies to march against enemies in any part of the peninsula. Of greater importance was the fact that the Romans took seriously the business of making war, and when they met with defeat had sufficient reserves to build new forces and wisdom enough to learn from their mistakes. In the wars against Carthage, beaten in battle by the genius of Hannibal, the Romans had the advantage of greater manpower, provided by their Italian allies, and the sense to avoid further pitched battles until their armies were reconstituted. While waiting for their armies to become strong enough to engage Hannibal again the Romans showed remarkable tenacity of purpose. The fact that other Italian cities were willing to be allies of Rome against Carthage speaks well for the tolerant attitude of the Romans to other peoples and this may have been the result of the absence of excesses in the religion of Rome. Carthage or Rome, only one could survive. Nevertheless, Cary and Scullard believe that the Romans did not set out to create an empire, but that, like the British Empire, it was acquired "in a fit of absent-mindedness."

Travel in Africa by Europeans has often been succeeded by the publication of a book. One of the most remarkable travellers was Mary Kingsley, whose *Travels in West Africa* was issued by the Folio Society five years ago. Her uncle was the author of *The Water Babies* and her father qualified as a doctor, but he never practised regularly and visited his family in the intervals that punctuated his world travels. When ill health forced him to travel no more Mary had to care for him and his invalid wife. She helped her father to prepare his multitudinous notes for publication. When Mary was nearly 30 both her parents died. She was left with no set task in life and decided to continue her father's study of early religion. For this purpose she went to West Africa. She travelled by herself with no escort, walking through bush and mud in the type of clothing that she had worn in England—long skirts and petticoats. It seems that her life was never in danger although she travelled among cannibals and West Africa was at that time known as the white man's grave. She became a trader in a small way and this was something that Africans could understand and respect. After returning to England she became well known and her book was a success. Later she went to South Africa during the Boer War and worked as a nurse in a prisoner-of-war camp, where enteric infections were rampant. In West Africa she had perhaps met with little in the way of infectious disease and returned unscathed. In the prisoner-of-war camp she died, probably of typhoid. At her own request she was buried at sea. Mary Kingsley did not become famous in Nigeria, but in Benin nowadays the name of Kingsley is not uncommonly given to children as a first name. I am told that this practice appears to be increasing. I have no direct evidence for a link, but I would like to believe that the name derives from Mary's.

In reading for pleasure the arrangement of the words on the page may add to the pleasure obtained from the words themselves. This is especially so in the case of poetry. In reading novels I often make it a point to see how quickly I can devour the pages. With poetry the reverse is the case, and the eye may linger on the words. I admit that I have not tackled the longest poems in the English language. Like Dickens, Tennyson became famous in his lifetime. In the reaction to the Victorian age and all things Victorian his reputation suffered. Those who prefer the writings of more modern poets should remember that T S Eliot believed Tennyson to be a great poet. If I were asked to choose one poem to accompany me to a desert island, or anywhere else for that matter, it would be Tennyson's *Ulysses*.