whooping cough, pulmonary tuberculosis, typhoid, and gastroenteritis. The adult diseases were more varied, including occasional cases of blastomycosis; typhoid and tuberculosis were common. Most illness, especially in children, presented against a background of anaemia, malnutrition, and parasitosis. Haemoglobin concentrations below 2.5 g/dl and eosinophilias above 50%, were common in cases of severe multiple infections—particularly in patients seen as I moved into the jungle.

I travelled to Tingo Maria, 700 m above sea level in hot, humid, densely forested hills, a moderately sized town, which thrives on the cultivation of coca, from which cocaine is extracted. Here 10 out of 40 patients were specifically diagnosed as having symptoms caused by parasites. In the surgical wards 70-80% of the patients were there because of road traffic accidents. Histoplasmosis occurs in some who visit the one tourist attraction in Tingo Maria—the impressive “Cave of the Owls.” Its entrance is at least 30 m high among densely forested hills and is covered in creepers. The notice by the entrance warns one not to go in more than 500 m because of venomous spiders, snakes, scorpions, and vampire bats. The noise of the insects and the screeching of owls flying among the shadows of the stalactites are deafening. As I walked I realised the ground was alive with insects, which made the floor look as though it was moving.

After travelling another 300 km into the jungle I reached Pucallpa. The most remarkable difference between the range of disease here and that elsewhere is the presence of leprosy. The patients I saw were severely malnourished, and many had consulted the doctor only when they were too deformed to work.

The doctors in all these rural areas had to rely for diagnosis almost entirely on their clinical ability. Only 5-10% of patients had blood samples taken for analysis, either because they objected to blood sampling or could not afford investigations. All except the very poor had to pay for any treatment or investigation.

My next destination was Iquitos on the Amazon 1000 km to the north. This journey had to be along the slow-running, muddy waters of the Ucayali and Amazon rivers for there are no roads in that jungle. The river trip was supposed to take four days, but engine failures and a broken rudder extended this to two weeks. As soon as the sun set we would moor by the river bank. Clouds of insects then surrounded us, and to avoid their bites we had to put on an extra layer of clothing. I then spent the night lying on cement bags, soaked in sweat and waiting for dawn, when the plague of biting mosquitoes gave way to one of biting beetles. Our unvarying diet was boiled green bananas and fish. As soon as the boat's engines were started in the morning, fish from the shoals around jumped aboard and provided the day's supply. It was a shock to see the seemingly vast city of Iquitos after two weeks on the water with nothing but surrounding jungle. The contrast between development and primitive existence in the city was considerable. On an island in a sea of jungle 4000 km from, but only 100 m above, the ocean, Iquitos is nevertheless both a port for ocean liners and the home of Indians living as they have done for centuries.

I gained four main impressions from my 2½ months in Peru. Firstly, I saw a land abounding in problems caused by population pressures in towns and poor hygiene almost everywhere. Secondly, I was impressed by the immensely rich variety of social, natural, climatic, and physical conditions. Thirdly, I saw a large range of diseases, mostly infective and as varied as the climatic and physical conditions. Fourthly, and most importantly, I was impressed by a people and a medical profession, warm at heart and struggling bravely against innumerable difficulties. The doctors command great respect and engender in those who work among them deeply felt wishes to return to help both them and the people they serve.

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Reading for Pleasure

Anything but science

M H LADER

As with many products of the postwar grammar school treadmills, I was required to specialise in science at the age of 11 and to concentrate on it three years later. Since then I have tried to correct the balance of my education by reading widely for pleasure—any topic except science.

My pleasure doubles when I read a book that is excellent literature and is also manufactured to the highest standards with good quality paper and imaginative bindings. What is more pleasing than a book with paper sufficiently opaque that one reads one page at a time, with a binding so supple that it remains open instead of mimicking a Venus fly-trap, with a bold, legible typeface, and with that distinct smell of fresh bookbinder's glue

and printer's ink? If specially commissioned illustrations or elegant new translations are added, one is describing the remarkable publications of the Folio Society. The range is wide—literature, travel, the classics, history, memoirs—and the choice eclectic.

A satisfactory membership

Intrigued by the descriptions of the forthcoming year's offerings (for one must buy at least four volumes a year, in advance), I have ordered books that I would normally have considered of little interest. And I have rarely been disappointed. In my 15 years or so of membership, I have stormed Quebec with Wolfe, braved the prairie Indians with Parkman, been sickened at Cortez's treatment of the Aztecs, seen the rivers of blood at the sack of Jerusalem in AD 70, been revolted

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at the barbarities of the Caribbean pirates, travelled Asia with Marco Polo, and shivered with Napoleon in the Russian wastes. I have sniggered at Aubrey's *Brief Lives*; and studied Machiavelli's *The Prince* for helpful hints with administrative duties. I have read Tolstoy and Tolkien, Manzoni and Monmouth, Plato and Pliny, Stendhal and Saki, Aksakov and Zola, and the Bible in a version meant for reading, not quoting or intoning. More offbeat offerings have included *Malleus Maleficarum*, a sort of witch-catcher's vade mecum, and *The Ship of Fools* by Sebastian Brant with its vision of the world overrun by fools of every description.

Recently, I read the *Diary of a Provincial Lady* by E M Delafield. This lady describes genteel but shabby life in a West Country village between the two world wars. Her husband, a younger brother, was bailiff to the formidable Lady Boxe. The parallels between this noble lady and Lady Catherine de Bourgh in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* are close. Both are insensitive, opinionated, and high-handed. Ms Delafield bemoans her chronic state of indigence, although this reflects mismanagement because of impulsive and extravagant purchases. But in those days the size of the servant establishment was astonishing. Our wives have to make do with a succession of dreamy au pairs. Fifty years ago, an average middle-class household in the country seemed to possess at the very least a cook, a couple of maids, a governess (Mademoiselle), and a gardener. Servant problems take up much of the book, including a hilarious episode when a male house-parlourperson enters service. Named Fitzsimmons, he accepts instructions with a breezy "Right-oh," which apparently was just not done. But the most laconic entry is for 16 January: "We all run short of handkerchiefs." In the days before packaged paper tissues, butter muslin had to suffice to stem the coryzal floods.

The Folio Society have been publishing one volume a year of the ecclesiastical novels of Trollope. The sense of timeless repetition, of human generations in their proper place, is nowhere matched in English literature although many authors provide more vital insights into character. Nor does Trollope stray far from a hazy, cosy, somewhat frowsy, middle-class setting. Not for him the horrors of Dickensian London. But Trollope is ideal for reading during those waking nightmares called air travel. Seated in a busy airport lounge while my plane is hours late arriving, let alone departing, I find Trollope soothes and stills. Nor can I read Trollope quickly: the rhythms are too slow and marked. His novels are solid, workmanlike, and enduring: exactly what one expects from the man who invented the pillar box.

I avoided watching *The Pallisers* on television so I have all Trollope's "political novels" to look forward to. Television spoils my enjoyment of those classics which I have not read. Having avidly viewed the *Forsyte Saga*, I cannot read Galsworthy's novels because images of Kenneth More and Susan Hampshire, Eric Porter and Nyree Dawn Porter intrude. I am unable to evoke my own images, which is surely the true novelist's intent. A book is merely a literary do-it-yourself kit; the reader does the work.

Apart from the rest of Trollope to look forward to, I have just received the Folio Society's new translation of Dante's *Inferno*. (If this article reads like an advertisement for the Folio Society, then so be it.) I shall have to read it out loud to savour the language of what is acknowledged to be a superb translation and I hope no one diagnoses either incipient dementia or precious dilettancy.

As well as patronising the Folio Society, I am an inveterate browser. Across Malet Street from University College London, where I sometimes lecture, is a rambling bookshop called Dillons. On the top floor in a corner are remaindered and secondhand books piled into inaccessible heaps or jammed on to shelves reaching to the ceiling. I am drawn there irresistibly, not because I hope to discover a treasure (a first folio Shakespeare or two?) but because the books are so varied, and again I find myself buying volumes which at first sight are only of marginal interest to me. My most recent acquisition was a single volume published

by American Heritage, containing reproductions of 431 watercolours of *Birds of America* painted by the inimitable John James Audubon. These watercolours formed the basis of the set of etchings double-elephant folio in size (29½ × 39½ inch), engraved in London by Robert Havell, and sold in the late 1830s to rich subscribers at the then substantial sum of 1000 dollars. (To buy a set today in good condition would probably cost more than a quarter of a million dollars.) The pictures are very finely executed with a liveliness and verisimilitude never excelled. Even people like myself with little ornithological interest can appreciate the artistry and exactitude with which Audubon carried out his lifetime's task. The commentaries are fascinating, describing where and how Audubon painted each bird.

Nobel laureates

Another bargain I could not resist was nine volumes which each contained samples of the work of three or four Nobel Laureates in literature. The books are well produced with etchings and aquatints as illustrations. Thus I have renewed my acquaintance with Gide, Faulkner, and Pirandello and discovered for the first time Carducci, Gjellerup, and Heidenstam. Some of the authors are neglected even in their own countries and others presumably lose by the translation. With hindsight one wonders at the Nobel Prize Committee's choices when so many major writers of this century received no recognition. It is easy to be parochial but Anglo-Saxon authors do seem under-represented. Meanwhile, it was fascinating to read *The Weavers* by Hauptmann and to realise that England was not the only country containing major writers with socialist consciences.

Italo Svevo is another foreign author I sampled recently. His novel *Confessions of Zeno* is the first major European work to reflect the influence of Sigmund Freud. I believe that Freud's genius has influenced literature much more than psychiatry, and this is the sort of masterpiece that reinforces that view. The introspection is precise, understandable, and constructive—unlike the luxuriant meanderings and sexual ambiguities of Proust's *Remembrance of Times Past* (yes, I have read it, in its totality). Svevo also includes in this book the best literary account of nicotine dependence.

Occasionally, I do make an exception and devote my leisure hour to reading science. Darwin's *Origin of Species* (6th edition), now illustrated, has been abridged by Richard Leakey, who also contributes a detailed explanatory introduction and brief commentaries interlacing the text. This version provides an easy way of reading Darwin's theories which now seem so self-evident. Was it only a century ago that so much controversy developed? Yet reading Trollope one can appreciate the strength of opposition to evolutionary theories which upset fundamental beliefs concerning man and his creator.

Finally, I derive pleasure from reading about antique furniture. It is one of my leisure interests and I now know enough about the subject to know that I do not know enough (? the definition of an expert). Of the many books on the subject few are worth reading. Most either concentrate on museum pieces to which no collector could aspire, or they copy canards from each other. But one recent publication devoid of both faults is that by Robin Butler entitled *The Arthur Negus Guide to English Furniture*. It is informative, sensible, authoritative and succinct. I wish more medical books were like that as, although many can be read for information, few can be read for pleasure.

Does the colour of a newborn infant's eyes change and, if so, why?

The colour of the iris depends on the amount of pigment that is present in the anterior stromal layer. If the amount of pigment is slight, reflection from the posterior layer causes scattering of light and the iris appears blue. The colour of a newborn infant's eyes changes because pigment does not develop in the stroma until after birth.