

Peter Warlock Society

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Newsletter No. 32. April 1984

Editor: David Cox, Bell Cottage, Magpie Bottom, Shoreham, Sevenoaks, Kent

The most important recent event has undoubtedly been the recording by the BBC of a series of six programmes devoted entirely to Warlock songs. We had hoped to include a full report of this in the present Newsletter; but for various reasons that has not been possible - so the report will have to wait until the July number. Transmission dates are not yet known. There is usually a fairly wide gap between the recording and the transmission of Radio 3 programmes, but members should keep an eye on Radio Times.

We are very grateful to Dr Eric Fenby for giving us his memories of Peter Warlock (see p.7). These date from 1928, in France (where for several years, as everybody knows, Eric Fenby was Delius's amanuensis at Grez-sur-Loing), and in London. To find, and talk to, someone who knew Philip Heseltine personally - that is now a rare experience... We also include a memory of the composer's childhood which has turned up.

THE ENGLISH SONG AWARD

From all accounts, this competition for singers, under the wing of the Brighton Festival, seems to be getting off to a good start, with a large number of entries from Britain and other countries. It is not only an important event for singers - with three prizes of £2000, £1500, and £1000 respectively, to help them pursue their careers - it is important also for our heritage of British song. As the brochure puts it: 'British composers have responded with particular sympathy and subtlety to the great legacy of English lyric poetry, yet much of the rich heritage of English song is little known and seldom heard. The purpose of the English Song Award is to stimulate wider awareness of the best examples of this repertoire and to encourage singers, teachers and concert organisers to explore it.' It is good to see that two Warlock songs are included this year in the 'Compulsory Song-List' - Sweet Content and The Night.

The finals take place on 15 May, in the context of the Brighton Festival. (Further details can be obtained from the Festival Office, 54 Old Steine, Brighton, Sussex: tel. 0273 29801.)

WARLOCK AND ELGAR

In this Elgar centenary year, it is appropriate to recall a letter which appeared in the press around March 1931. Gray, in his biography, states that Warlock was the author of the letter - and there is no reason to doubt this statement. Warlock signed it, along with the other distinguished people, not long before his death. Besides the ~~two~~ quotations in the letter, Dent also said in his article: 'Elgar repels many English musicians owing to his rhetorical gallantry which imperfectly conceals the essential vulgarity'. The first edition of Adler's *Handbuch* was in 1924. The letter was written only after the second edition, in 1931. Bernard Shaw, besides signing the letter, added a statement of his own: 'Elgar holds the same position in English music as Beethoven does in German music'.

SIR EDWARD ELGAR

Musicians' Protest against Prof. Dent's alleged injustice

The Press Association has received the following letter signed by representative musicians and music-lovers, and addressed to the editors of the leading newspapers of England and Germany:

Sir, - We, the undersigned, wish to record an emphatic protest against the unjust and inadequate treatment of Sir Edward Elgar by Prof. Dent in his article on 'Modern English Music' in Adler's monumental '*Handbuch der Musikgeschichte*' (second enlarged edition, 1930) - a work that will be indispensable to all students of musical history for many years to come.

The fact that the learned professor devotes sixty-six lines to Parry, forty-one to Stanford, and only sixteen to Elgar is perhaps hardly a matter for criticism, but the statement that 'for English ears Elgar's music is much too emotional and not free from vulgarity,' the summary dismissal of all his orchestral works as 'lively in colour, but pompous in style and of a too deliberate nobility of expression,' and of his chamber music as 'dry and academic,' cannot be unchallenged.

At the present time the works of Elgar, so far from being distasteful to English ears, are held in the highest honour by the majority of English musicians, and the musical public in general.

Prof. Dent's failure to appreciate Elgar's music is, no doubt, temperamental, but it does not justify him in grossly misrepresenting the position which Sir Edward Elgar and his music enjoy in the esteem of his fellow-countrymen.

(Signed)

EMILE CAMMAERTS, JOHN GOSS, HARVEY GRACE, LESLIE HEWARD, BEATRICE HARRISON, HAMILTON HARTY, JOHN IRELAND, AUGUSTUS JOHN, ROBERT LORENZ, E.J. MOERAN, ANDRÉ MANGEOT, PHILIP PAGE, LANDON RONALD, ALBERT SAMMONS, G. BERNARD SHAW, RICHARD TERRY, WILLIAM WALTON, PETER WARLOCK.

AGM AT MAGPIE BOTTOM: Saturday,

This year the Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held at Bell Cottage, Magpie Bottom, not far from Eynsford. The programme, as previously, will be lunch at the Five Bells, Eynsford - opposite to the house where Warlock lived, next door to Munn the grocer (now, more appropriately, a wine shop) - followed by a Committee meeting at 2 pm. Then, when the pub closes at 3, we leave for Magpie Bottom. (Turn left at the Eynsford War Memorial into Bower Lane; keep on for about 3½ miles until you come to crossroads; turn right and then almost immediately right again (by a dilapidated farm-house). You are now in Magpie Bottom. Carry on down this lane. Bell Cottage is half a mile down, on the right, among pine trees.)

The AGM is due to start at 3.30. Refreshments will be provided at about 5 o'clock. We hope to have some musical entertainment. If the weather is kind, swimming would be possible: there's a solar-heated pool.

Members and friends are welcome to join in the full programme, or to come straight to Bell Cottage at 3.30. Would those who are coming please ring Otford (830 from London) 4325 beforehand and tell David Cox or his daughter (Mrs Vivienne Murphy) - so that they know how many to cater for. Or drop a line to David: Bell Cottage, Magpie Bottom, Shoreham, Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 6XP.

TWO VIEWS

'He combined in one person the characteristics of an Elizabethan like Thomas Nashe and a *fin de siècle* Victorian like Aubrey Beardsley. He had the delicacy of the hothouse plant and the ebullience of the willow-herb that grows on ruined bomb-sites. Humour in plenty, shyness of an odd kind, a roaring laugh that would give way to a fit of solitude and melancholy - there was Warlock, the man who exquisitely poised the psychologist's requirements of both introvert and extrovert.'

Hubert Foss in *British Music of our Time*, ed. Bacharach (1946)

'Warlock's very large collection of songs, set to a choice from the finest English poetry, shows three distinct aspects: in one he captures the tone and feeling of the Elizabethan masters with extraordinary felicity, without falling into mere archaism [pace Osbert Sitwell: see p. 4], in another he shows a melancholy, nostalgic vein that owes something to the influence of Delius, but is also most intimately his own, and in a third, which is more crabbed and self-conscious, he obviously but not very successfully followed Bernard van Dieren.'

Eric Blom, *Music in England* (1942)

Would readers care to contribute other 'summing-up' views which they may have come across, about Warlock and his music? Pro or contra, learned, humorous, obscure, outrageous... We're not eternally prostrate before an idol. Let's have some thought-provoking things in these Newsletters.

The Editor would like to thank Brian Cook, a member of the Society, for helping to type this Newsletter.

PUBLISHING NEWS

John Bishop writes:

Orders for Volume 2 of the Warlock Collected Edition have been despatched to all those who have asked to be sent each volume in the series as it appears. If for any reason you've been missed, or weren't a member when the series started, please write to me (14 Barlby Road, London W10 6AR) and the matter will be dealt with immediately.

We've also despatched all orders for the booklet *A Turbulent Friendship* by Ian Copley, about Warlock and D H Lawrence; copies are, however, still available, as they are of Volume 1 of the Collected Edition, and the two 'Sociable Songs' volumes.

Volume 3 of the Collected Edition is in an advanced stage and we expect publication in May. Volume 4 is unlikely to appear until early 1985.

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Members may be interested in other recent and forthcoming Warlock-related Thames publications. Already available is a volume of seven songs by Bernard van Dieren, introduced by Alistair Chisholm, and *Delius: A Life in Pictures*. This last is a paperback edition of a book which originally appeared in hardback some years ago - and is, I feel, outstanding value at £4.95.

In the press is a booklet on van Dieren and a collection of eight songs by Norman Peterkin (one-time music editor of OUP). Both of these should be published in the next few weeks.

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Outside my own catalogue, I hear that OUP is soon to publish a version of *Capriol Suite* for small brass ensemble. I also heard an interesting transcription of *Capriol* for guitar ensemble at a concert recently, and am considering publishing it.

SUMMER WEEKEND OF ENGLISH MUSIC

This is to be held at Oxford, July 20th to 22nd, under the auspices of the Gerald Finzi Trust, and anyone looking for a pleasant weekend would do well to consider it. Works by 30 composers are included: nine of them are living composers, and there will be three premières. Holst, Delius, and Elgar are well represented, and there is a choral workshop on Finzi's *Magnificat*.

The late night event on July 21, in Pembroke College Hall, is "Beethoven's Binge" - Peter Warlock and his friends, Moeran and van Dieren included. Clearly a sociable programme.

Among artists taking part will be Ian Partridge; and there's the Southern Pro Arte Orchestra, who will include Warlock's *Serenade to Delius* in one of their programmes.

Full details from Robert Gower, 4 Chestnut Avenue, Radley College, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 2HS.

OSBERT SITWELL AND PHILIP HESELTINE

In his article under this title in the last Newsletter, David Cox quotes Sitwell's unfavourable impression of the Warlock songs: they seemed to him, musically speaking, 'to have come straight out of Wardour Street'. More than one correspondent has pointed out that this was wrongly interpreted in the article. Wardour Street at the time was noted for its furniture shops which specialised in phoney reproductions of Tudor and Jacobean items. Patrick Mills adds that the gibe now falls rather flat, because the songs live on in their own right...

A MEMORY OF WARLOCK AGED 7

Shortly after Philip Heseltine's death, this letter, dated 8 March 1931, was sent to his mother.

Early in 1901 I was in charge of a theatre library in Sloane Street, and every morning I was visited by a little boy of about seven years of age, accompanied by his nurse. This little boy was perfectly charming and had very delightful manners. As he entered the office he would take off his hat in a most courtly manner, and say, "Good morning, Miss Watson, I hope you are very well this morning."

He was slim, a pale oval face, wonderful blue-grey eyes and soft fair hair, and had quite an unusual bearing for a child of his years. He was Philip Heseltine; known and loved by all musicians as Peter Warlock.

I used to tell him all about the concerts which were taking place, and collect for him circulars and posters relative to them. He was intensely interested in all matters appertaining to music, and would discuss with me the way the orchestra would sit, how many violinists there would be at such a concert, etc. When he was away from home I used to forward him all the literature of current musical events. I left the library to be married, and I have in my possession the most original epistle written to me by the little Philip from Norwich. He enclosed a row of corals which he sent as a wedding-present, saying he had chosen them himself as he thought they would suit me.

That was in August 1901, and I never saw him afterwards, but in 1929 he sent me a signed photograph of himself.

I can still most clearly visualise after all those years the picture of one of the sweetest little children I have ever known - the little Philip Heseltine.

Florence M Peck,
133 Pollard's Hill South
Norbury SW16

28. 11. 28.

Eynsham
Kent

Miss Jane Vowles
Eynsham

Dear Madam

"The Bayley" is an extract from a long poem from a manuscript in the British Museum. The whole has been printed in one of the German philological publications - Anglia or the Archiv für neuere Sprache - I forget which. It is completely incomprehensible - but Chambers and Siddons, from whose Early English Lyrics I took the fragment - printed the only lines that have any value as poetry. For me the charm of the fragment lies precisely in the fact that it means nothing, but suggests the loveliest images with a verbal music that foreshadows the procedure of the French symbolistes of the nineteenth century.

Many old ballads and songs have refrains, and even whole verses, which mean nothing that can be translated into prose, and are yet of the greatest poetical beauty.

"The Bayley" should be sung meaninglessly, as a child (but not as a grown-up!) sings a nursery rhyme.

Yours sincerely

Peter Warlock

THAT HEADING OF OURS

The Secretary, Malcolm Rudland, writes:

If you were thinking that the title heading of this Newsletter and the last one is remarkably similar to Warlock's real writing, you would not be wrong. Warlock, however, did not have the prescience or conceit to give us the whole title 'Peter Warlock Society'. His signature is taken from the letter to a Jane Vowles - reproduced above - and (as you will see) the word 'Society' has been skilfully contrived from a study of the composer's writing. That was the work of Christopher Matthews, at present Design and Production Manager to the British Library.

I have always been interested in graphic design since the days of running my own orchestra - the Academic Festival Orchestra (successor to my Prosdocius Players). I was searching for an image to give the orchestra some identity, and I came across the imaginative design of the Salomon Orchestra's publicity and managed to find out who had designed it. This turned out to be Christopher Matthews, a contemporary student of mine at the Royal College of Art. He helped me design the notepaper and rehearsal sheets for the orchestra, and a friendship has ensued to this day. My personal notepaper was the next commission, and the idea of a design of silver organ pipes won third prize in the British Letterheads Awards for 1983. When we thought of producing some notelets and Christmas cards for the Peter Warlock Society, Chris had the idea of using Warlock's signature as the heading. (Incidentally, these are still available, and an order form is enclosed with this Newsletter, showing the original design.) When we thought of re-doing the notepaper of the Society, I wondered whether somehow the signature could be incorporated. I gave Chris several Warlock letters and the final result is as we now see it on the heading to this Newsletter.

Warlock as I knew him

-7-

ERIC FENBY in conversation with David Cox

- D C : In your book, 'Delius as I knew him', you tell us about meeting Philip Heseltine more than once, when he came over to Grez-sur-Loing to see Delius - and in London at the time of the Delius Festival (1929). Did you see enough of him to form a definite impression of his personality and outlook?
- E F : O yes, certainly. During my time at Grez (starting 1928) he first came over to try and persuade Delius to become interested in Beecham's plan for the Festival - to persuade him that his presence was vital to the whole project. As usual, I was given my instructions as to what to do with guests. I was particularly interested when Philip came along. Naturally, I had a copy of his book on Delius with me - and I knew some of the 4-handed arrangements he had done of some of Delius's works. But the meeting with Delius was going to be something of an embarrassment, because the youthful enthusiasm for Delius's music which I had had and which Philip had had was no longer the same.
- D C : His views on Delius's music seem to have been very changeable. Actually, you both started in the same sort of way - first of all admiring from a distance, then writing to Delius, out of the blue, and then finding yourself there. In fact, I believe it was suggested previously that Heseltine should go there himself and help Delius as amanuensis, in the way that you did. But he would surely never have had the patience, would he?
- E F : No. The life-style which suited me was absolutely foreign to everything that Philip was doing at the time. He would never have been able to stand the solitude. Anyway, I was very interested when he turned up. I was not at all disappointed in the man. There was a distinction there - so obvious, at a first meeting - and he had a brilliant mind; and he was one of that remarkable group of people of his own age who were such wonderful talkers about music - Cecil Gray, Constant Lambert, Bernard van Dieren ...
- D C : Did you feel that Heseltine was the sort of charismatic personality who, when he comes into a room, becomes at once the centre of interest and attention?
- E F : I would have thought so. His appearance - the beard and everything - it was like talking to some distinguished chap out of the 17th century. When he spoke, there was a quiet authority, and a sort of twinkle there, which was very engaging. He was indeed one of the best talkers on music that I've ever heard... Philip had a very beautiful speaking voice - though often the interesting things he was saying were rounded off by some Rabelaisian remark - which was apt to happen too often. He had the most trenchant criticisms for the people who had edited the early music. He could be absolutely livid... He was too apt - as Delius was too - to be having an interesting conversation and then suddenly turn the whole thing upside down by some remark which torpedo'd the whole thing.
- D C : And were Heseltine and Delius often at loggerheads over music? You mention in your book some differences of opinion - for example, over Bartok's fourth quartet.
- E F : I saw very little convergence in my time!... Philip was particularly interested in my love of Gesualdo, and the early music of the Church - as distinct from Bach.
- D C : In your book you speak of his interest in plainsong and the early music of the Church. With all that, did you gather what his views on Christianity were? He could hardly be described as croyant et pratiquant!
- E F : At times, in fact, he found himself the target of Delius's frequent outbursts against Christianity.
- D C : Really?
- E F : He used to say 'I can't stand Fred when he's in these moods. It's absolutely unbearable. How you stick it here is beyond my understanding.' I (as an R.C.) of course came in for it too. Delius could be extremely tiresome on these occasions. He seemed to think: here's a young chap, he's gifted musically, and he's being ruined by all this Christian business - just in the same way that it's ruined Elgar... His main criticism of Philip was - here was a young man of some substance, and his mother wanted him to do nothing but stay in the country home in Wales and write music - and that's just what

Delius wanted him to do - whereas it was just the one thing that Philip did not want to do! By the time I came along (1928) it was clear that he was becoming more and more dissatisfied with his own position in music. I think he'd almost come to an intellectual cul-de-sac.

D C : That was towards the end. I remember your saying he told you that he could not bear to be alone. Was that always so, do you think?

E F : Absolutely. And he surrounded himself with - I thought - unworthy company. There was a certain nobility in his nature, but he seemed to allow himself to be dragged down. I've been with him sometimes and some girl has appeared and given him the glad eye - and in the middle of a sentence he would break off, take her arm, and off they would go.

D C : I imagine he was very attractive to women.

E F : Oh yes, very.

D C : Did you meet some of his regular lady friends? Did he bring them sometimes to Grez?

E F : Well, no. On one occasion - Delius was quite annoyed about it - he turned up with a whole crowd of people - Anthony Bernard, the young Wordsworth (the composer), 'Old Raspberry' (E. J. Moeran)... Delius said 'Why on earth does Philip bring all this crowd of people?' And Jelka asked them all to lunch - a very good lunch!

D C : What's your view of the 'split personality' idea, which stems from Gray's biography? Did you get the impression of somebody who was switching from being a scholarly, very-interested-in-music person to someone who was crude - the kind of character portrayed in Aldous Huxley's 'Antic Hay'?

E F : Yes.

D C : Or was it that everything he did - the high and the low - he did with maximum enthusiasm?

E F : I would say that as well. The thing about Philip was - you hadn't any idea what he was going to do next. And of course the people he mixed with drank inordinately. And that was a great problem for me, because I was always a person of moderation. I would go out with them and drink - but they would drink pints and pints, and then wait for the pubs to open for the evening session!

D C : There was some suggestion in Richard Shead's book on Constant Lambert that if Lambert hadn't known Heseltine, he would not himself have become a victim of drink and drugs.

E F : I'm sure. And with Philip, Delius blamed Augustus John.

D C : What - as a powerful influence over all of them?

E F : Yes, exactly. And Philip got mixed up with models of John. There were all sorts of scenes and love-affairs. A terrible business... But with Philip, there was a charm. Of that there is no doubt. It was there to the end. It was wonderful. He would bring up some particular motet, say, of Victor, and we'd talk about it; he would point out some of the beautiful passages that had struck him, and so on. At those times, he was a most wonderful companion. And that's what upset me, because I saw what he could have been. He could have been a most remarkable person... Towards the end, drink was taking its toll. He was tending to be rather bloated, and looking a little rough.

D C : Did you ever feel that Heseltine liked to manipulate people? I was thinking of Huxley's portrayal: in one scene he has a youth in tow whom he is obviously leading into debauchery. Did you ever see any signs of him wanting to have control over people?

E F : No...He was always rather careful in his treatment of me - perhaps because he thought it would all go back to Grez!

D C : I remember Steuart Wilson once saying about Heseltine - 'He was the one person I ever knew who was wholly evil'. I wonder what Heseltine had done to make him think that!

E F : As an R.C., I have associated with many very remarkable men whom I regarded as holy men - that is to say, remarkable men who had a presence. Now Delius had a presence which was quite different from theirs. That wasn't evil. But I had a most uncomfortable feeling when I was with Philip - always this

uncomfortable feeling - that there was something there which I couldn't quite put my finger on. There was also something of the same with Percy Grainger. A certain...sinister something.

D C : Even when you were simply conversing about music in the ordinary way?

E F : Well...

D C : There was something in the background?

E F : Yes. It was a darkness which I was not able to penetrate.

D C : Do you think he sympathised with Delius's Nietzschean philosophy?

E F : Oh I think so.

D C : More so than with your Christian point of view?

E F : Oh yes: because he thought that 'The Mass of Life' was the greatest of works - infinitely greater than Bach's B minor Mass.

D C : But that doesn't necessarily tell us about his religious sympathies as such.

E F : I can't believe that Philip had any spiritual life - what I would call spiritual life.

D C : You think it was all through the music?

E F : All through the music. Of that I'm quite sure.

D C : In a foreword to Gray's biography of Warlock, I recall that Augustus John tells of an incident in a church involving something resembling black magic --

E F : I'm not surprised.

D C : John speaks of Heseltine's beliefs in 'principalities and powers mustering their unseen array' (or something of the sort). It is, of course, often said that blasphemy depends for its effect on a background of belief. So it's possible that he was a believer, but was constantly cocking a snook at the Deity.

~~D C~~ : Oh yes. I would go along with that... I would say, as regards myself, he always showed respect - he would never say anything that I could take exception to. The fact is, I don't think I would ever have fitted into that particular milieu had it not been for the fact that I was of their opinion as to the enormous value of the early music of the Church.

D C : Did all of that group show respect for your moderation and your religious beliefs?

E F : Yes. And behind the whole thing they were very grateful for what I was doing at Grez. They would say 'You're doing something we could never do'...

D C : With all Heseltine's friends blossoming out into large-scale works - Lambert with 'The Rio Grande', Moeran and Walton with symphonic works, vanDieren... and so on - do you think that Warlock felt a kind of inferiority because his own art was small-scale?

E F : Oh, I think so. My opinion of those terrible last days, when he took his life - I don't think it had anything to do with love-affairs at all. I don't think he cared that much [snapping fingers] about women really.

I : He was using them --

E F : Using them - and the more the merrier. And some of them were very coarse. Oh, he was hopeless in that way! As soon as a pretty girl appeared, he was finished.

D C : Are you of the opinion, then - which I think was expressed by John Ireland at the inquest after Heseltine's death - that he was disappointed as a composer?

E F : That is my opinion. I thought he was in distress and almost in despair and that he'd come, as I said, to a sort of musical cul-de-sac; I think he had been influenced too much by the letter of Delius's music rather than by the spirit. If he had only imitated the artistic integrity, rather than get into this cul-de-sac where he was strangled and couldn't do any more. His composer-friends were all flowering, whereas Philip was just dissipating his whole life... Delius was always saying that he should have gone back to his home, or at least established some sort of normal life; but it was useless... He was always complaining about money. But his grandfather once said that Philip was hopeless: if you gave him £100, it would be gone by the evening!...

D C : Of course, if Warlock had expanded into large-scale works, as his friends were doing, it would not necessarily have been right for him - whereas what he did do is something very perfect, at its best.

E F : Yes; he was very definitely a miniaturist. He had also that certain magical

lyrical quality which is so essential - and which is often lacking - for example, I would say, in John Ireland.

D C : Heseltine wrote on one occasion that if there had been no Roger Quilter there would be no Warlock. Something of an exaggeration. That came after the Delius influence. And then there was the Bernard van Dieren influence, which brought with it a kind of artificiality.

E F : There was that, yes. And it was wrong - that was foreign to his natural tastes.

D C : It never stifled his natural lyricism, however - did it?

E F : No - that's true - but it was there...

D C : You say in the book, he always looked you straight in the eye when he was talking to you.

E F : Yes. That was a very endearing thing about him.

D C : One person that knew him said he had an odd kind of shyness. Was he perhaps forcing himself to get through that by looking you straight in the eye?

E F : It could be. I regarded it as part of his sincerity.

D C : Would you say he was naturally extrovert rather than shy?

E F : Well, yes. I would think so. But he was very obviously a person of moods - very strong moods.

D C : Which could change very suddenly?

E F : Oh, yes indeed... But a very endearing soul. Delius was deeply saddened by the way he had simply gone downhill.

D C : Delius must have felt that he had to some extent moulded him.

E F : Yes. In those early years - it was almost a father-son relationship.



Woodcut by Hal Collins
Used for Christmas cards by Philip Heseltine in 1925
Reproduced on original cover of 'Maltworms', OUP 1926

Beachcomber Revisited

'Beachcomber', in the Daily Express of 4 November 1929, begins his 'By the Way' column as follows: 'I notice that Mr Philip Page's recent reference to warlocks, or heseltines, has brought up an old discussion in more than one quarter.' Then, for about a fortnight, in his column, Beachcomber became pleasantly obsessed by the idea - returning to it repeatedly. He produced, he thought, sufficient evidence to show that the heseltine is no mere mythical figure, and that 'belief in these weird creatures still exists in country places, and even in the Sloane Square neighbourhood of London ...'

Some scholars, of course, dismiss the whole thing as superstition. For others, a heseltine is merely a warlock. 'Villagers off the beaten track in Somerset still leave a large empty barrel outside their doors on May-eve, to keep the heseltines away.' A Sydenham reader is said to have told Beachcomber that when he was a small boy his nurse frightened him by threatening him with 'hooded heseltines', who on stormy nights came down the chimney - 'small, malignant people who drank all the cold tea in the house, and then flew away with insolent laughter'.

Another correspondent enters the column with a quotation from Dr Currie's 'Folklore in Southern England'. In Kent, near Paddock Wood, in a local inn, 'several of the hop-pickers were discussing a curious apparition. They described it as a thin, bearded figure, which danced about and rubbed its hands with glee while the hops were being picked.' Obviously, a heseltine. Hence the rhyme:

When heseltines be near,
Good hops do make good beer.

At this point (Nov. 8th), the incarnation of the Warlock, in beery pseudonymity, wrote a correcting letter:

Beer Deachcomber,

Your notes about warlocks and heseltines are interesting, but somewhat inaccurate. I have always understood that heseltines are chiefly in evidence, not on May-eve, but in hazel-time, and the philological significance is obvious.

I know an old man in Hampshire who remembers the Michaelmas-tide custom of "hunting the heseltine", when the little creatures were lured from their lairs by the repeated beating of pewter upon wood in the copses.

The Master of the Hampshire Heseltine Hunt was a noted mesmerist named Ben Skinn, who lived at Marriner's Farm, and was capable of reducing the most diabolical heseltine into an uninterruptedly comatose condition between sunset and midnight.

If you will ask for me at the "H. H." inn at Cheriton (again the philological significance is obvious), I shall be pleased to give you any further information which you may, or may not, require.

Yours faithfully,
RAB NOOLAS

But Beachcomber was delighted to come across this poem:

Up the airy mountain,
Down the sombre chines,
We dare not go a-hunting
For fear of heseltines.

And he dug up something relevant from Shakespeare - presumably from 'Henry IV, Part 2': 'Marry, I had rather be left with a yoke o' bullocks at Stamford Fair than have these same heseltines in mine inn, Hal.'

Yet another correspondent told him he once saw a heseltine in the country

around Sloane Square. 'Directly I attempted to touch him, however, he vanished.'

Finally, Beachcomber received two telegrams. The first read:
'HAVE CAPTURED A HESELTINE AND HAVE IT IN BOTTLE CAN YOU COME DOWN AT ONCE. NOOLAS.'

The second, a few minutes later, read:

'SORRY RETURNED TO FIND HESELTINE VANISHED TWOPENCE TO PAY ON THE EMPTY. NOOLAS.'

Note: So far, we have been unable to trace the Philip Page reference which set Beachcomber going. Perhaps somebody who reads this can give us a clue.



Drawn by Antony Wysard 1929
Inside 'The Antelope', Eaton Terrace, SW1
Bruce Blunt, Augustus John, and Peter Warlock