The highest proof of virtue is to possess boundless power without abusing it.

T. B. Macaulay

ESSAY ON ADDISON
For making a sensible estimate of a writer's work, S.R. Ranganathan gives a valuable suggestion: "The reasons for which books are studied ought not to be very different from the reasons for which they are written."¹ Max Beerbohm's reasons in writing his own are evident: he wrote them to create aesthetic pleasure. In studying his writings, therefore, one ought to keep in mind that he does not aim at preaching or amending morals. As a matter of fact, his work owes its importance not so much to the 'contents' as it does to the expression of an innate sense of humour. He is one of the few modern writers who have given themselves a perfect comic expression. As a humorist, Max has double distinction - he has achieved the "delicate process of disarmament in humour", and has introduced to it variety and subtlety. The appreciation of Max's humour, thereby, forms a significant part of this study.

Max's humour, along with his "mental growth", may be interpreted as a developing phenomena. He took up writing as a satirist of the 'fin de siecle' trends and grew to be a gentle 'laughing philosopher' at human nature. In the nineties, Max was "one of those mischievous gadflies who annoy the serious-minded."²

He gave his motto in writing to The Works of Max Beerbohm in 1895:

Amid all the has been already achieved, full, we may think of the quiet assurance of what is to come, his attitude is still that of the scholar; he seems still to be saying before all things, from first to last, "I am utterly purposed that I will not offend."³

2. "J. Robson: Modern English Literature (OJ, Paperback, 1971) p. 43
3. The Works of Max Beerbohm, p. 1
It may be noticed that Max’s satire appears in the pleasant forms, such as parody, caricature, and mild irony. In a few cases where it takes the severe forms of lampoon, or the pungent irony, it remains under the check of the good-natured wit and kindly humour. It generally aims at amusing rather than at mocking. And this is, perhaps, the reason that the critics, like David Cecil or W. Cross, consider his writings as the creations of a humorist—"the best expression of a comic spirit."

In order to justify Max’s practice, it is better to study his humour in two parts: The Diffused Humour and The Pure Humour. In the former, Max’s satire and wit are included, for they cause the 'diffused laughter'; in the latter, the process of the 'pure humour' leading to the 'spontaneous laughter' are worth noticing. This Chapter, therefore, forms the study of Max’s satire and wit.

The term 'diffused humour' needs some explanation. Such a humour has the "mixed tones" of criticism and laughter. James Sully calls it "the refined humour"; and Harold Nicolson says that it stimulates "the reflective laughter." The latter observes that "the diffused humour' involves a greater mental activity as it results from perception rather than sensation. It requires more alert realisation of the values, and a more sensitive awareness of human relations. It 'carries with it some implied criticism either of life in general, or of the faults or pretensions of an individual.' While Sully considers it to be the natural province of "the social satire"; Nicolson observes that the 'reflective laughter' is caused by the seven forms of the satirical expression, such as Wit, Irony, Sarcasm etc. 1 In support of his argument,

Sully quotes the instance of Shakespeare, Cowper, Goldsmith, Lamb, Dickens, and George Eliot, and others. He observes that they have a kind of temperament and a mind that may rightly be called that of the humorists. Their laughter is "more diffused", and it is "not only quieter but has a slower movement, and it is charged with a deeper meaning." 1 Max's 'diffused humour' is not different either. Commenting on Thackeray's *Harville of Parinton*, he observes:

But whosoever loves the unattainable is bound to hate it also. The instinct of mankind against satire is really a very sound instinct. Satire always is dishonest. For it is always the expression of hatred for a thing hopelessly coveted. Who satirises humanity? None but he who, not having the common human advantages, is obsessed with admiration of them. Who satirises plutocracy? The pauper who is warned by the notion of wealth. Who satirises aristocracy? The man who wishes he had been born an aristocrat. Thackeray wished that... 2

Another explanation of the term 'Diffused Humour' is to be found in Hazlitt's 'theory of humour'. It has commonly been accepted after him that "the principle of contrast, however, is the same in all the stages, the simple laughable, the ludicrous, the ridiculous." Hazlitt is of the view that the severe attitude to "the ridiculous" is "the province of satire", and the mild one of the humour. 3 As a matter of fact, satire and humour operate upon the common milieu, and take the common stimuli. The satirist and the humorist observe incongruity in thought, action, and character, but they differ in their approach to the same. Like satire, humour does not possess the severity, the contempt for the object, and the wish for reforming.


Though satire and humour are two distinct artistic modes, in many cases it is not possible to draw a straight line between them. In the writings of the authors, such as Aristophanes, or Fax, they are inseparable. They produce 'the mixed tones' of criticism and laughter. They satirize things with an aesthetic aim, their satires as such are not reformative in nature, but they stimulate 'the reflective laughter', since, in their comic propositions, some kind of moral consideration is involved. In fact, they possess a 'moral sense' that implies "the instinctive recognition of whatever is beautiful, true, and good" - a sense opposed to 'the sense of ridicule' that aims at exposing "whatever is deformed, false, and the evil."¹ The following quote from Fax's broadcast on 'Advertisements' is illustrative of the point:

Meanwhile, if I were endowed with wealth, I should start a great advertising campaign in all the principal newspapers. The advertisements would consist of one short sentence, printed in huge block letters - a sentence that I once heard spoken by a husband to a wife: 'My dear, nothing in this world is worth buying'. But of course I should alter 'my dear' to 'my dears'.²

This sort of intermingling of criticism and laughter in Fax's observations strengthens G. Hight's view: "Satire" is a typical emotion which the author feels and wishes to evoke in his readers. It is a blend of amusement and contempt." But Fax's satire results in the 'diffused laughter' as in it "amusement far outweighs the contempt."³

² Mainly On The Air, p. 49
The other day, a motorist friend of mine was complaining to me bitterly, even violently, about the behaviour of the pedestrians. They were abominably careless and stupid... I said, 'No doubt we pedestrians are very trying. But you must remember that, after all, we were on the road for many, many centuries before you came along in your splendid car. And remember it isn't we that are threatening to kill you. It is you that are threatening to kill us. And if we are rather flustered, and occasionally do the wrong thing, you should make allowances, and, if the worst comes to the worst, lay some flowers on our graves.' 1

When one compares Max with G. B. Shaw, the contemporary satirist, one may realise that the former is a 'humorist', while the latter is a 'wit'. Their aims and approaches are entirely different, consequently, the latter attacks the social sham, and the former simply laughs at it. While Shaw wanted to bring in a reform, he did not tolerate the human vices, contrarily, Max wished to do none, he considered them sympathetically. It has, therefore, to be admitted that the one is the preacher; the other is the entertainer. Max, himself, confesses:

I do wish I had the... faculty of deterring people from culs-de-sac and setting them on the broad and shining high road. I can offer only light hints... and my hints are never taken. I suppose I ought to be content with the rather faculty of knowing myself just what I ought and oughtn't do in work. 2

Keeping in view, thus, Max's aesthetic bent one may appreciate his satire and wit as the components of 'the diffused humour'. Primarily, he works within a carefully chosen milieu. He limits himself to the familiar scene of the Edwardian age. Of course, he includes in his survey the first-half of the twentieth century, but he did not feel mentally attached to it. James Sutherland

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1. *Mainly On The Air*, p. 18
observes that Max's satire is
more a matter of tone and atmosphere than of the
palpable hit; it seems to originate in a fastidious
distaste for excess, extravagance, over-emphasis,
crudity, absurdity - for anything that disturbs his
delicately adjusted balance and his own poised
normality; and it is conveyed to us by a style which
expresses the subtlest shades of irony and the gentle
shrugs of protest. 1

It is evident from the thematic study of Max's writings
that he was fully abreast of the social, political, and literary
developments of the time, and that he expatiated on them from his
traditional standpoint. To his observant eye and the sharp critical
faculty, there was much in his age to expose and to make fun of. He
writes of the nineties:

Today we are living a decadent life. All the while we
are prating of progress, we are really so detestate!
There is nothing but feebleness in us...our sexes are
nearly assimilated. Women are becoming as rare as ladies,
and it is only at the music-halls that we are privileged
to see strong men. We are born into a poor weak age. We
are not strong enough to be wicked, and the Nonconformist
Conscience makes cowards of us all. 2

Satire has its direct relation to reality. It wishes to
expose and to criticise the incongruous and the absurd. Max's
observations of the dandy, the new woman, the decadents, the social
frauds and the fashionable cranes show an attempt at the same. For
instance, he comments on 'the new woman' thus:

Women appear to have been in [the Early Victorian days] utterley natural in their conduct... To Nature everything
had been sacrificed... Yet, if the women of those days
were of no great account, they had a certain charm, and
they at least had not begun to trespass on men's grounds;
if they touched not thought, which is theirs by right,
at any rate they refrained from action, which is ours...
Swiftly have they sped on since then from horror to
horror. The invasion of the tennis-courts and of the
golf-links, the seizure of the bicycle, and of the
typewriters, were but steps preliminary in that

2. The Works of Max Beerbohm, p. 54
campaign which is to end with the final Victorious occupation of St. Stephen's. 1

Satire is said to be "the art of persuasion." 2 The satirist wishes to drive his point home, he, thus, appeals to our reason:

She cannot rival us in action, but she is our mistress in the things of the mind. Let her not by second rate athletics, nor indeed by any exercise soever of the limbs, spoil the pretty procedure of her reason. Let her be content to remain the guide, the subtle suggester of what we must do, the strategist whose soldiers we are, the little architect whose workmen. 3

In order to write effective satire, the satirist must develop a "point of view", Max, himself, elucidates:

It is well for a satirist to have a point of view, and the point of view from which he can most powerfully direct his shafts is always that of a man whose soul is rooted in a classical tradition. 4

It needs hardly be stressed that Max's own was. "He talks", H. Jackson observes, "the quiet talk of culture, and his finely balanced essays betray conscious appreciation of the immemorial traditions of culture on every page." 5 Max holds faith in the Victorian standards, and even, looks back to the eighteenth century manners and morals. He compares and contrasts them with those of his own age, and detects much to deride at. In this role, the satirist behaves as "the magistrate on the bench" 6, whose office is to administer law and to assure a right ordering of the things;

In Georgian and Early Victorian days the imitation was always enforced. Grown-up people had good manners, and wished to see them reflected in the young. Nowadays, the imitation is always voluntary. Grown-up people have

1. The Works of Max Beerbohm, p. 90
2. James Sutherland, op. cit., p. 18
3. The Works of Max Beerbohm, p. 91
4. Last Theatres, p. 528
5. H. Jackson, op. cit., p. 120
6. James Sutherland, op. cit., p. 19
no manners at all; whereas they certainly have a very keen taste for the intrinsic charm of children. They wish children to be perfectly natural. That is (aesthetically, at least) an admirable wish. My complaint against the grown-up people is, that they themselves, whom time has robbed of their natural grace as surely as it robs the other animals, are content to be perfectly natural. This contentment I deplore, and am keen to disturb. 1

Max's satire becomes effective since he has 'the sense of proportion' - an asset with the satirist:

To be, let us say, perfectly natural in the midst of an artificial civilization, is an ideal which the young ladies of to-day are neither publicly nor privately discouraged from cherishing. 2

None the less appreciable is his "sense of justice," that gives his satire a lasting value:

I had forgotten men. Every defect that I had noted in the modern young woman is not less notable in the modern young man. Briefly, he is a boor. If it is true that 'manners make the man', one doubts whether the British race can be perpetuated. The young Englishman of to-day is inferior to savages and to beasts of the field in that they are eager to show themselves in an agreeable and seductive light to the females of their kind, whilst he regards any such effort as beneath his dignity. Not that he cultivates dignity in demeanour. He merely slouches. 3

Lastly, in the summing up, the amiable Max tones down the obviousness of his satire:

We can get rid of bad manners, but we cannot substitute the sedan-chair for the motor-car, and the penny post, with telephones and telegrams, has in its beautiful phrase 'come to stay', and has allowed the art of letter-writing irrevocably from among us... Will no one revise that 'Manual of Elegant Recreations, Exercises, Pursuits' adapting it to present needs?... A few hints as to Department in the motor-car, the exact angle whereat to hold the Receiver of the Telephone, and the exact Key wherein to pitch the Voice; the Conduct of a Cigarette... I see a wide and golden vista. 4
Since 'satire' derives from the Latin _satura_—meaning "medley" or "hatchet-pottage", Max conforms to G. Higget's view: "the best satirists have either known this or divined it."¹ Carefully observing the rule, Max provides his satire a lightness of touch that it does not "insult his audience's intelligence and outrage its 'sense of fairness.'"²

Max's satire is given various delicate shades by his 'bit'—a derivative of the Anglo-Saxon _bitan_ meaning "not unintentional." Notwithstanding that 'bit' has a long history of the changing concepts throughout the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, its original meaning persists. In fact, it is the nature of wit that has determined the nature of satire. The 'ill-natured' or 'profane wit' resulted in the writing of _invective_ and _lampoon_ in the Restoration period. 'The profane wit' aimed at defacing human character, maliciously. It imparted virulence, ferocity, and unkindness to the satire of Butler and Swift. The other is the "good-natured wit"—it functions in association with kindly humour. It led to the writing of the _mock-heroes_ and the _prose_ satires of the Augustan age. The satire of Dryden and Pope display the judicious and controlled use of wit, but the specimens of satire were produced by Steele and Addison in the _Tatler_ and the _Spectator_. They enlivened "wit with morality" and paved the way for introducing kindly humour to satire. In fact, the credit goes

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1. G. Higget: _Cf._, p. 18
2. _The Last Theatres_, p. 135
to Addison who assiduously pursued the problem of the right ordering of wit in various journals, and established that wit has the aesthetic quality of "surprise and delight." And it is his definition of wit that prevails in one form or the other in the modern theories of satire, wit, and humour. James Sully echoes the same view in his own words thus:

It illustrates [Fancy's] most lively and agile gait, and is characterized by readiness of mind, quickness of perception, ingenuity in following out hints of quite unexpected contrasts, similarities, aims, causes, reasons, and the other belongings of an idea. As tending to sportiveness, it loves an intellectual chase for its own sake, and revels in sudden transitions, doublings, and the whole game of verbal hide and seek.

This kind of refined wit, in which all the subtleties of mind are at work, provides the modern satire "the violet of the most delicate irony", and makes it the most potential form of writing in the present times. It is remarkable that the quality of the minds of the modern satirists, such as Thackeray, Shaw, and Max, is subtle, their satire as such is sharp and delicate.

Sutherland writes of the modern satire:

... the red of the invective is now out of fashion, and that twentieth-century satire relies more and more on the indirectness of irony, innuendo, fantasy and fiction of all kinds.

Max's own appears in subtle irony, sarcasm, parody, burlesque, caricature, fantasy, and, in case or two, in lampoon and invective. These forms of satire owe chiefly to him, what Fraud calls, "harmless wit." Despite that there is pungency at places it provides his satire a pleasant character. Max's wit has the aesthetic quality: it surprises and delights. A few illustrations

1. cf. C. W. Tave: op. cit., p. 114
2. James Sully: op. cit., 355
3. James Sutherland: English Satire, p. 20
4. English Satire, p. 20
of Max’s wit shall not be out of place here. In the conclusion of a controversy with his teacher and the eminent Greek Scholar Dr. Herry he writes:

I trust that I have not seemed to you arrogant in this my meeting with Dr. Herry on his own ground. As I have said last week, I derived, in statu pudendi, much pleasure and profit from Dr. Herry’s lectures on Aristophanes. I feel now, not as a man feels when he is bearding a lion in his den, but rather as that fabled mouse must have felt in the privilege of disentangling from a snare the lion that he had erst befriended him.1

The present piece on Shaw’s ‘Misalliance’ is remarkable for the unexpected turn of idea:

To condemn a work of Mr. Shaw is for me a new and disagreeable sensation. I wonder if the fault is really all his...we know that a man may love a woman sincerely, and yet for no apparent reason, gradually or suddenly, cease to love her. Not less in his opinions about art is he at the mercy of inscrutable change. He may love this or that work, and then, without able to give any satisfactory reason to himself, grow cold. Can it be that I...No! I have given very satisfactory reasons why I don’t like “Misalliance”...Freed Street, Sunday morning, and a not bracing, a blighting, wind. 2

In no other form Max’s wit shows to a better effect than in Irony. It lends to kind of piquancy to his observations:

Indeed we do not wish our prince to be an exemplar of godliness, but a perfect type of happiness...In Royalty we find our Bacchus, our Venus. 3

That George IV was a moral man, in our modern sense, I do not for a moment pretend. It were idle to deny that he was a profligate. 4

‘Irony’ implies the double shades of meaning — one at the surface, and another, the subtler one, lurking beneath. It derives from the German aironia — meaning "dissembler" or "assumed ignorance." In all the modern satirists, such as Voltaire, Gustav

1. Lost Theatres, p. 140
2. Around Theatres II, p. 465
3. The Works of Max Beerbohm, p. 74
4. Ibid., p. 73
Flaubert, George Eliot, Shaw, or Max, there is a tendency to
dissembling. They strengthen Bower's view: "Ironic is not merely a
matter of seeing a 'true' meaning beneath a 'false', but of seeing
a double exposé (in the both senses of the word) on one plate";
and "[it] is a form of flattery for the intelligent reader, and
a veiled threat to the hypothetical opponent."1 The argument may
be substantiated with Max's observation thus:

The English are a naturally silent race. The most
popular type of national hero is the 'strong silent
man'. And most of the members of the House of Commons
are, at any rate, silent members, mercifully silent.
Seeing the level attained by such members as have an
impulse to speak, I shudder to conceive an oration by
one of these impelled ones... 2

In fact, irony denotes the power of a satirist. It helps him
in exposing, slyly, the false, the affected, and the pretentious,
and equips him with a mental power for detachment. The pleasures
of the ironical observations of Jane Austen, Meredith, and Max are
so great that one feels them as the judgements passed on things
rather than the mode of seeing:

Personally, I like to think that this passion for
simplicity was the sign of lessening complexity. But
wishes begat very poor thoughts. I write what I believe
to be true about this Victorian era. Good has been
followed by evil, evil by the love of mysteries, the
love of mysteries by the love of simple things. Observe
I write no fool's prattle about la fin du siècle... But
we may be allowed to laugh, when we see this century,
for which science promised a mature perfection, is
vanishing behind a cloud of white pinfores. 3

Often Max's wit takes the form of 'innumendo' - the way of
sly and oblique comparison. It is a kind of irony which imparts a
special charm to the passages as this, taken from 'Kolniyatsch' -
a satire on a mad Slav poet:

1. cf. Allan Rodway's English Comedy (Chattos & Windus, London,
   1975), pp. 38-9
2. Yat Again, p. 184
3. The Works and More, p. 239
First and last, he was an artist, and it is by reason of his technical mastery that he most of all outstands. Whether in prose or in verse, he compasses a broken rhythm that is as the very rhythm of life itself, and a cadence that catches you by throat, as a terrier catches a rat, and wrings from you the last drop of pity and awe. His skill in avoiding the inevitable word is miraculous. He is the despair of the translator.

In addition, Max's wit compasses the fantastic, and, thereby, satirises the objects concerned:

Yes! costume, dandiacal or not, is in the highest degree expressive, nor is there any type it may not express... The billycock of Mr. Jerome K. Jerome is a perfect preface to all his works... To have seen Mr. Hall Caine is to have heard his soul. His flowing formless clock is as one of his own novels, twenty-five editions latent in the folds of it. Melodrama crouches up on the brain of his sombrero. His tie is a Publisher's Announcement. His boots are copyright. In his hand he holds the staff of The Family Herald.

E. Hoer is of the view that Max "already mastered... the art of satirising, lambasting, insulting with impeccable decorum; the art of getting away with it." 3

Max's wit and irony also provide a peculiar relish to his 'caricatures in prose'. He is in fact the satirical connoisseur of character and the supreme master of the satiric fancy in our times. He draws 'Enoch Soames' thus:

He was an odd looking person; but in the 'nineties odd apparitions were more frequent, I think, than they are now. The young writers of that time era — and I was sure this man was a writer — strove earnestly to be distinct in aspect. This man has striven unsuccessfully

He stood patiently there, rather like a dumb animal, rather like a donkey looking over a gate. A sad figure, his. 4

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1. And Even Now, p. 53
2. The Works of Max Beerbohm, p. 19
3. The Ranty, p. 321
4. Seven Lamps, pp. 6-7
Of 'T. Fenning Dodworth', he writes:

Dear Old Dodworth?...I hope he will not predecease me. Of one thing I am sure: he will die game, and his last words will be '_____ and After?' and will be spoken pungently.

The satirist, at occasions, grows sarcastic:

...and of one thing I am sure; the eminent men of all kinds will sign a petition about him to the Dean of Westminster. But there is a tradition of Philistinism in that Deanery. The voices of the eminent man will fall on deaf ears there, and only the roar of the man in the street is heard. Dodworth will characteristically, not have the course succeed of lying in the Abbey. 1

The memory of the Dean's refusal for the burial of Meredith's ashes in the Abbey seems to linger in Max's mind. He, therefore, grows sarcastic at the discriminating behaviour of the Dean of Westminster. As a matter of fact, such satirists as Shaw and Max have well-founded reasons when they resort to sarcasm in their writings. Derived from the Greek Sarcasm meaning "tearing flesh", 'Sarcasm' is a sharp weapon of attack. Alexander Bain aptly defines it:

Sarcasm means precisely what it says, but in a sharp, bitter, cutting, caustic or acerbic manner. It is the instrument of indignation, a weapon of attack. 2

At times, it borders on the invective or lampoon, but the satirist's sense of proportion keeps it under check. In 'Sarcasm', one notices the severe wit and the pungent irony. The point may be illustrated from Max's observations thus:

'On High Life': I suggest that Lord Rosebury should not let slip the chance of fostering now that other pleasant illusion which I have mentioned - the illusion of general hollowness and unreality in "high life"... Let him asseverate that in Society no true self ever comes to the surface; that every one there wears a mask behind whose pink and white surface is a very sallow skin; and that through those eyelets peep eyes void of lustre, and under those tinselled robes are the stomachs unannourished by any fare but Dead Sea fruit. 3

1. Mainly On The Aim. p. 172
2. cf. Dr. B.S. Tivari, Hindi Ka Sanskritvyottar Vyaya Aur Vyagya (Kanpur, 1978). Foot Note. p. 72
3. Around Theatres II, pp. 253-4
'On Wealth and Poverty': Most of other persons who happen to be not rich, and to be of middle class, have comfortably convinced themselves that wealth is a burden indeed - an excoriant pack for poor pilgrim, to stagger under; and that "high life", moreover, is a kind of juggernaut - horrible over-riding diety, insatiable of sacrifice of virgin souls.!

It has to be specified that all the satirists use a special kind of language that makes their attack felt, but the genuine satirists display fastidiousness as well as restraint in the use of it. In Max's case his Good Nature and Mirth keep him in the game. One may notice it in the satire on a cheap novelist Mr. Flimflam:

Poor fellow! why should he not receive his heart's desire?...For my part, I should like him to have a life-peecage. We have our Law-Lords - why not our Novel-Lords? It matters not what title he receive. So it be one which will perish, like his twaddle, with him.2

The subjects, on which Max is sarcastic, fall within the limits of the vulgar and the absurd in life as well as art. He was a critic of English monarchy - its lack of literary taste and of the intellectual standard. For instance, he observes of 'Edward the Seventh' thus:

The prodigious life of the Prince of Wales fascinates me above all, and indeed, it still fascinates me. What experience has been withheld from his Royal Highness? Was ever supernatural a type, as his, of mere pleasure? 3

It has to be appreciated that Max's practice in satire resembles Aristophanes's, who mocks at friends and foes alike, and 'the fun is not the less deliciously made for being made affectionately.' Max was a Tory, but he mocked at monarchy. "I have often (in my writings as well as drawings) mocked at it", he writes, "as I do at all things of which I am fond." 5 One may notice

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1. Around Theatres. II. P. 252
2. More. P. 123
3. The Works of Max Beerbohm. P. 133
4. Last Theatres. P. 135
5. cf. Barry Carmen's 'A Friend in one's room' (The Listener, 20 January '77) p. 79
it in the comment on 'Oscar Wilde':

Bearbohm...bents up the forgotten Mr. Wilde, now living in obscure retirement in Chelsea, as "the survivor of the by-gone day." There he finds the old gentleman is a neighbourhood fixture... "As I was ushered into the little study, I fancy I heard the quick receding frum-frum of tweed trousers, but my host I found reclining, hale and hearty, through a little dishevelled on the sofa."

The satire has a sting as it is a dig at Wilde's homosexuality. But the piece is written in such an oblique manner that it does little offence.

Max's survey of the social humbug and pretensions in the Edwardian society also is well within the bounds of 'Sarcasm'. From his sceptic standpoint, there issues forth raillery, though controlled, at the 'prophets':

Even if the war have taught us nothing else, this it will have taught us from its very outset: to mistrust all prophets, whether of good or of evil. Pray stone me if I predict anything at all.

A comment on the relationship of the 'masters' and the 'servants' is no less severe:

Nature has decreed that some should command, others obey; that some should sit imperative all day in airy parlours, and others be executive in basements. I daresay among the sitter aloft there were many whose indignation had a softer side to it... Pity, after all, is in itself a luxury.

Nowhere Max feels so indignant as at the moves of the 'town improvement'. He could never see a point, aesthetically, in tampering with the historical buildings of London. Their removal meant for him the ruin of 'the historical past' of London. In all the essays concerning the subject, one may notice his powers and subtlety as

1. 'A Peep into the Past', cf. R. Moers' 'Dandy', op.cit., p. 8
3. ibid., pp. 167-8
The satirist:

'The Rebuilding of London' proceeds ruthlessly apace. The humble old houses that dare not scrape the sky are duly punished for their timidity. Down they come, and in their places are shot up new tenements, quick and high as rockets. And the little old streets... we are making examples of them, too. We loose our way in them, can they? Very well then. Down with them! We have no use for them. This is the age of 'noble arteries'.

The satirist falls into a philosophic resignation:

There is a tiny residue of persons who don't swell or sparkle. And of these grim bystanders at the carnival I am one. Our aloofness is mainly irrational, I suppose. It is due mainly to temperamental Toryism. We say 'The old is better'.

Max moves from stage to stage; from sarcasm to self-criticism, and from self-criticism to sentimentalism. It may be seen in the poetic raillery on the 'changes' in Mayfair:

...My lady powderbox? Alas! everyone of your tabernacles is dust now — dust turned to mud by the tears of the ghost of the Rev. Charles Honeymoon, and by my own tears.

The satirist becomes a humorist who can only shed 'tears' at the modernisation process, but cannot check it, though none can mistake the subtle irony and wit in the passages such as this:

Many of the Squares and streets have been more or less vandalised. All of them are threatened. I gather that the arch-threatener is the University of London. I understand that there are no limits to its desire for expansion of that bleak, blank, hideous and already vast white sepulchre which bears its name. Simultaneous tens of thousands of youths and maidens yet unborn will in the not so very far distant future be having their minds filled there and their souls starved there. Poor things! (And I'm sorry for the dons too).

It is striking that the passage appears in a writing done by Max in 1940. It displays his unflagging satiric spirit even as an old man. The satire springs from his confirmed view that the

1. *Yet Again*, p. 201
2. ibid., p. 201
3. ibid., p. 203
'tradition' can not be clean forgotten, and all begun afresh - an answer to his decadent and other friends as well as the moderns.

However, Max observes that "satire should be irresponsible, tilting at the strong and the established as well as the momentary follower of the day." Max's satires on the whims and limitations of his contemporaries in literature as well as in theatre are perfectly illustrative of the view. They sprang from his great distaste for 'the low and vulgar' in art. His expositions of Clement Scott, Rudyard Kipling, Jerome K. Jerome, A.W. Pinero and others are revealing as well as characteristic of the satirist.

Of these writings, the one that requires specific attention is the piece To Bough - a 'lampoon', written to let down Arthur Bourchier, the illustrious actor-manager of the Garrick Theatre. It is a 'personal attack' on Bourchier's mania for 'self-praise' and 'self-advertisement'. Max employs all the delicate resources of a modern satirist to serve his end, by the help of irony, wit, sarcasm, fantasy, and innuendo, he produces an utterly ludicrous picture of the vain man. The satire does not lose its edge since Max's humour does not shun him for a moment.

He begins the piece recounting that the great names, such as Pulci an, Hansom, Jeremiah, Machiavelli, have enriched the English vocabulary with the nouns, verbs, or adjectives. In modern times, he proposes, a 'verb' can be coined from the name of Arthur Bourchier:

I modestly rise, clear my throat, and propose the name of Mr. Arthur Bourchier, M.A., Oxon, sole lessee of the Garrick Theatre, Charring Cross road W.C. 2

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1. *Verks and Lores*, p. 142
He observes that none can equal the man in the art of self-
praising and self-advertising. Quoting the instances of Mr.
Bourchier's assiduous attempts, Max drives at:

To advertise oneself with great industry but without
discretion, to advertise oneself in such a way as to
make people tired of one or sorry for one—what verb
have we to describe compendiously this intricate and
not common form of activity? It is a great inconvenience
that we have no such verb. It is a great convenience
that we have in Mr. Arthur Bourchier one whose fatiguing
industry and pitiable lack of discretion in self-
advertisement are so signal as to supply our need
henceforth. We shall get along with the verb 'to bouch'.

He finds 'to bouch' phonetically sounder rather than to
'Bourchier' or to 'Bouch'. Max chafes at the gentleman that he has
no proper friends to advise him on giving up the weakness. He
feels happy that there is none, else the public might have been
deprived of the entertainment. His wit appears in an acerbic form:

To bouch is a young and tender plant. I have planted
it, Mr. Bourchier must water it, and so I say to Mr.
Bourchier, as Napoleon said to the nigger 'continuens'.
I say earnestly to him 'go on bouching'.

Finally, Max, by the means of 'innuendo', heightens the
effect:

I look forward to the time when in every dictionary
there shall be between the explanation of 'Bottany'
and 'Bouchet', 'Bouch', v.n. To advertise oneself with
great industry, and without discretion; to advertise
oneself in such a way as to make people tired of one
or sorry for one. Deriv.= Bourchier, an English actor.
Bouchier, s. 'one who Bouche'.

It is noteworthy that in the piece, Max anticipates
Whistler's manner in The Gentle Art of Making Enemies. 'To Bouch'
supports Sutherland's view:

1. Last Theatre, p. 260
2. Ibid., p. 262
3. Ibid., p. 263
Invective (or Leopon?) on an extended scale, or
invective as a satirical maid - of - all - work is
no longer in fashion, but given the hour, and the
men, and the consenting audience, it can still be
as devastating as ever. 1

3

Max's satire assumes three more prominent forms - caricature,
parody, and burlesque. In them Max, as a satirist, is at his best.
'Caricature' or the Latin Caricature is a grotesque representation of
prominently laughable physical features of a person. Max's own view
of the caricature seems to be an echo of the same:

The most perfect caricature is that which, on a small
surface, with the simplest means, most accurately
exaggerates to the highest point, the peculiarities of
a human being, at his most characteristic moment, in
the most beautiful manner. 2

In practice, Max has subtler designs; he aims at caricaturing
deftly 'the peculiarities of a human being' - both physical and
mental. His beautifully coloured drawings bear the part, witty
comments, mostly the brilliant phrases, that expose a man within.
In fact, the Caricatures are the sources of wonder and delight for
a student of the art of caricature as well as of satire. They
expose, in a subtle manner, the English character - its hypocrisy,
vanity and rellicence. They give proofs of the caricaturist's
intense awareness of the current social, political, and literary
issues of the day, and they visualise his ironic perception of the
subjects, such as the English Imperialism, and Militarism, the war,
the problems of the ethical and philosophic nature, and the human
nature in its entire complexity. For instance, one may refer to his

1. English Satire, p. 71
2. A Variety of Things, p. 216
cartoon, The Future as the Twentieth Century sees it, that accurately describes the dilemma of the post-war I generation:

The picture of a haggard young man looking disconsolately upon a looming mist; nothing can be seen beyond it, but on the face of the mist reflecting the dominant quality of the young man's mind - appears a large mark of interrogation. 1

In fact, "A Beerbohm drawing", according to Robson, "wittily sum up a critical essay. Beerbohm's whole talent lay in criticism." 2 It is evident in the neat 'pencil-sketches' of 'Enoch Soames' and the other characters in Sevenian. Each caricature sums up in line the caricature in letter.

It may be an exaggeration to say that Max is the "most savage radical cartoonist after Gillray," 3 but one does mark in the drawings an acute critical sense engaged in obtaining highly aesthetic results, though of a reflective nature. A.G. Ward aptly remarks that "the effect of Max's phrases" inscribed to the caricatures, "was as incisive as a diamond upon a thin glass." 4 In a true sense, the unrelenting satiric spirit dominates some of Max's caricatures of the Edwardian period. Of them, the drawings of Edward the Seventh are too severe. The amiable spirit of the humorist saturates the rest of them.

Though Max considers caricaturing as a secondary interest and a pastime, he has earned an all-time reputation as a caricaturist. Some of the caricatures have become 'classics'. Max owns a significant place in the history of Art - he is placed with

1. A.G. Ward: op.cit., p. 207
2. W.W. Robson: op.cit., p. 44
3. Quoted in An Analysis of Max Beerbohm', p. 85
Max's 'caricatures' in Letter are no less important. Seven Men is the best of Max's satiric fancy. Through the 'characters' of the book, Max ridicules the whims and follies of the minor men of literature during the Edwardian age. E. Hoars points out:

By indirection, by sly comparisons, by careless aside and by irony, always irony... he rube the sheen from the pretensions of the 'nineties. 2

Against the realistic background, each 'man' is seen as the perfect image of absurdity. 'Enoch Soames' is the shrewdest satire, the most acclaimed, too, that exposes the vanity, diabolism, and the cheap standards of art of the minor decadent poets. Having gone through Soames' poems - especially 'Nocturne', a piece expressing faith in 'Diabolism', Max expresses his reaction in his characteristic manner thus:

I looked out for what the metropolitan reviewers would have to say. They seemed to fall into two classes: those who had little to say and those who had nothing. The second class was the larger, and the words of the first were cold, in so much that

Strikes a note of modernity throughout... these tripping numbers - Preston Telegraph.

was the sole lure offered in advertisements by Soames' publishers. 3

'Enoch Soames' is Max's outstanding achievement of satire and humour, since the hero is absurd but pathetic and touching. The words Max wrote in praise of Aristophanes seem to be equally meaningful in his own context:

1. cf. S. N. Behrman's - op. cit. Behrman quotes B. Berenson's words: "Max is the English Goya", p. 166
2. Ellen Hoers: The Dandy, p. 319
3. Seven Men and Two Others, p. 16
He loved stupidity as a wholesome thing, but he always saw that it was a ridiculous thing, and he did not attempt to tone down the ridiculousness of it. 1

Though the forces of parody and burlesque are active throughout Max's work, A Christmas Garland is his sustained effort in the field of parody. It contains parodies of the seventeen modern styles. Having "an aptitude for Latin prose and verse", Max formed a habit of "aping, now and again, quite sedulously" the living authors. Though he did so in the hope of learning something from them, he rather formed some "skits" on the styles that he published in The Saturday Review in the nineties. 2 He was apprehensive that they might offend the veterans like Henry James and Edmund Gosse. However, they acclaimed their parodies adoring greatly the young parodist. The other parodies were written at Rapallo. Max gave them to A Christmas Garland in 1912.

Each author in the book is made to write, in his characteristic manner, on the single theme 'Christmas'. Max has attempted the parodies so skilfully that despite the ludicrous representation, one cannot mistake one writer for the other. A.K. Tuell aptly comments:

In the Christmas Garland, we agree, are met in a singular naturalness all the human company of our modern prose writers, each delightfully "bedevilled", each delightfully possessed of his faculties and his authentic voice. 3

'Parody' or the Greek paroikia = meaning "a beside" or "against song", is a travesty or ridiculous imitation of the

1. Last Theatres, p. 136
2. 'Preface' to A Christmas Garland, 1912 (Reineman, 1922)
3. A.K. Tuell: 'The Prose of Mr. Bereillen' (The South Atlantic Quarterly, New York, 1921, p. 192
original style. G. Highet defines it as "imitation, which, through
distortion, and exaggeration, evokes amusement, derision, and
sometimes scorn." Parody is in fact a valuable form of
"creative criticism." It cuts the formal criticism, and by
indirection, by controlled but humorous exaggeration of the salient
characteristics of a style, produces a ludicrous effect. A
parodist is "a synthesist, a builder-up, a combiner of part with
part." He does not essay "the exact imitation" but where it is
essential. 

Like the caricaturist, who dwells upon the saliently
laughable features of the human physique, the parodist dwells upon
the saliently laughable features of a style. While the former
exaggerates them, minimising the normal ones, the latter builds
the weakness in proportion to the strength of the style. The
parodist, thus, creates an 'illusion' of a real style, despite the
ludicrous representation.

Max, the parodist, is not so simple an artist. Like the
caricaturist, the parodist, too, aims at fixing the body and soul
of a writer. In short, his skill lies in parodying and burlesquing
a writer as a whole. "Burlesque" or Latin Burla, which means
"ridicule", is a sister form of parody. Parody imitates a writer's
mannerism; burlesque the ideas. In the former, the strength and
weakness of a writer's style are so upset that the latter seem
blatant to the eye, in the latter, the exaggeration is often too
indiscriminate. Burlesque is bolicetic - it combines high with
low in ideas as well as style and, often, ridicules the strength
as well as the weakness of a writer. In short, it consists in the

1. Anatomy of Satire, p. 69
2. A.C. Ward - Twentieth Century Literature, p. 203
sober narrative of trivial incidents, or in the sober treatment of the ideas utterly common-place.

Theoretically, it is easy to draw a line between parody and burlesque, but practically, they pass into each other, since both "at once lay bare the weaker side of the victim's mental and artistic equipment as displayed in his writings." In the parodies, Max keeps in view the writer's mode of thinking and his philosophy of life, since the style is the means of illustrating them. "Like Lucian," W. Gross observes, "Beerbohm usually begins with parody and ends in burlesque." 1

Max's procedure in the parodies is that he begins with a gentle pastiche, end, gradually, heightens the effect distorting and exaggerating the writer's idiosyncrasies. In the most valued parody of Henry James - The Note in the Middle Distance, he begins with a Jamesian complex sentence:

It was with the sense of a, for him, very memorable something that he peered now into the immediate future, and tried not without compunction, to take that period up where he had, perspectively, left it. 2

The jerking, incoherent, and meditative sentence is written to describe the puzzled mental state of Dieth, the boy, who, lying in bed-covers with his sister Eve, sees their stockings, silhouetted. They were hung on the foot of their bed. Max parodies James' "Early Manner" in fiction - its complex sentence - structure, parenthetical, italics, direct speech, compound adjectives, imagery and cadences. Max exploits James' fine imagery thus:

'The note in the middle distance'? he asked, 'Did you ever, my dear, know me to see anything else?' I tell you it blocks out everything. It's a cathedral, it's a herd of elephants, it's a whole habitable globe. Oh, it's, believe me, of an obsessiveness! 3

1. W. Gross: The Humor of Max Beerbohm, p. 216
2. i. Christmas Garland, p. 3
3. ibid., p. 7
It is evident that in producing a ludicrous effect, Max matches the low with the high: the 'mote' with the lofty objects. He, thus, parodies and burlesques Henry James' whole stock-in-trade. The climax is reached when the children decide not to peep into the stockings and verify what Santa Claus, on the Christmas eve, put there for them:

...she said, 'Of course, my dear, you do see there they are, and you know I know you know we wouldn't, either of us, dip a finger into them... 'one doesn't,' she added, 'violate the shrine...pick pearl from the shell.'

If one wishes to understand Henry James as a whole, one ought to read The Note together with Guerdon (1916)—Max's parody of James' 'Later Manner' written in 1916. It has already been established that Max had deep reverence for James' genius—his 'finer aestheticism,' and his 'lyrical as well as moral conscience.' The parodies mark Max's fond pursuit of James—his 'bent' of making fun of the loved and the hated alike. Their worth may be judged from the fact that Max was the only parodist James tolerated.

In sharp contrast to James' parody is that of Kipling.

P.C., p. 36. It opens, unlike James' quite opening, at a note of jingoism:

Then it's Collar 'im tight,
In the name O' the law!
'Ustle 'im, shake 'im till 'e's sick!
Wot 'e would, 'e? Well,
Then yer've got ter give 'im 'ill,
And truncheon, truncheon does the trick,
Police Station Bitties.

Judhip, the police constable, of the parody is the duplicate of Dick Hadler, the hero, in the story The Light That

1. A Christmas Garland, p. 8
2. A Variety of Things, pp. 135-8
3. A Christmas Garland, p. 11
Falstaff and the Kitties imitate his maddening, virulent yell—
"Give 'em Hell, men. Oh, give 'em Hell." Max presents a ridiculous
picture of the sensational atmosphere of Kipling's story
exaggerating and distorting the peculiarities of his style—
"meiosis and hyperbole", slang, colloquialism, erratic spellings,
sentences, and the jarring expressions:

Life ain't a bean-feast. It's a 'arsh reality. An' then we makes it a bean-feast 'as got to be 'arshly
dealt with accordin'. That's not the Force is put 'ere for from Above. Not as 'ow we ain't fallible.
We makes our mistakes. An' when we make 'em we sticks to 'em. For the honour O' the Force, which same is the
jool Britannia wears on 'er bosom as a charm against
hierarchy. That's not the brarsted old Beaks don't
understand. 1

The climax in the parody is reached when Judlip, hungry
for action, arrests Santa Claus, on the Christmas eve, treating
him a burglar. Max heightens the effect describing: "And the
kick that Judlip then let fly was a thing of beauty and, a joy
for ever." 2

It need not be stressed that P.C.E. aims at a
devastating criticism of Kipling's obsession with Imperialism,
Militarism, and Jingoism. The parody may properly be understood
if one reads it together with Max's essay "Kipling's Entire".

The parody of Shaw, A Straight Talk, is no less interesting
than Kipling's. Written as a 'Preface to Sant. George: A
Christmas Play', it travesities Shaw's form and substance in the
Prefaces to the Plays. Parodying his 'polemical style' – the short
punchy sentences, the familiarities, the Anglo-Saxon vigour, and
the calculated irreverences. Max burlesques the Shavian ware —

1. A Christmas Garland. P. 14
2. Thid., p. 16
* See Chapter III, pp. 89-99
the Reason-based philosophy and didacticism, and wit and humour. Shaw explains that, like Shakespeare, he, too, stole the plot of the play from Hardy's "Return of the Native." But that he was unable to invent one but -

Depend on it, there were plenty of decent original notions seething behind your marble brow. Why didn't our William use them? He was too lazy. So am I. I

Shaw gave nothing to the play, but his "dissident conscience that makes a man of [him] and (incidentally) makes the play a masterpiece." Though it is a tragedy, its effect is comic. He counts it to be a step ahead Shakespeare and Dickens. The play is not imbued with "a soothing doctrine of despair" - the dominant note in Shakespeare's tragedies. Rex reproduces a ludicrous version of Shaw's argument thus:

I refuse as flatly to fuddle myself as the shop of 'W. Shakespeare Druggist', as to stimulate myself with the juicy joints of 'C. Dickens, Family Butcher.' Of these and suchlike pungent establishments my patronage consists in weaving round the shop-door a barbed-wire entanglement of dialectics and then training my moral machine-guns on the customers. 3

Rex creates a highly ludicrous effect when he distorts the True, the Good, the Beautiful in a Shavian statement, explaining the purpose of the play:

I therefore departed from the original scheme so far as to provide the Turkish Knight with these attendant monsters - severally named the Good, the Pugnacious, and the Ter-rav, and representing in themselves the current forms of Religion, Art and Science. These three Sat. George successively challenges, tacles, and flattens out - the first as lunacy, the second as heriotry, and the third as witchcraft. 4

2. Ibid., p. 144
3. Ibid., p. 145
4. Ibid., p. 147
In fact, A Straight Talk evokes amusement as well as derision. Max has laid Shaw threadbare. Macdonald points out:

Bearbohm goes deeper into peculiar combination of arrogance and self-deprecation, of aggressiveness and naughtiness, so that the audience is at once bullied and flattered; shocking ideas are asserted as if they were a matter of course between sensible people. Bearbohm's expose of this strategy is true parody. 1

In real sense, none of the parodies in A Christmas Garland is lesser than "the considered verdict of an acute and detached critic." 2 Each of them exposes the idiosyncrasies of the writer concerned. None has been spared so far as he is extravagant, or excessive in form and substance. Max deals ingeniously with Chesterton's 'paradox', Goss's 'naughtiness', Moore's 'fickleness', Wells' 'Futurism', and so on.

The last of the parodies Euphemia Glassthouth is a 'skit' on Meredith's prolificity. Max reproduces his periods, similes, and metaphors. A ludicrous version of 'Euphemia', the maiden is an image of "the pagan womanhood, six foot of it, who spanned eight miles before luncheon." 3 It is an inverse comment on Meredith's own habit of such walks.

A Christmas Garland is Max's acknowledged work in the art of parody. The critics acclaim the book as well as the author. David Cecil treats it as one of the "forms" Bearbohm entertainment takes. 4 W. Cross observes that after Thackeray's parody of Walter Scott's Ivanhoe, Max's work has proved a refining influence.

1. H. Dwight: Parodies: An Anthology (Faber, 1960) p. 560
2. A.C. Roberts: 'Max Bearbohm' (Essay by Diverse Hands, 30, 1960) p. 123
3. A Christmas Garland, p. 176
4. 'Introduction' to The Bodley Head Bearbohm, p. 11
since he has refined the art of parody to "an art unequalled since Thackeray." He assesses A Christmas Garland in terms of its achievement:

Usually a just comparison between the authors of an age is difficult, for they do not write precisely the same subject, or take for their novells and plays the same phase of life... Seelohn simplifies the problem for us by assigning to his authors an identical theme so that we may pass easily from style to style and at the same time gauge the mind of one writer by the side of another, comparatively. It was a shrewd device. Within the compass of a single small volume we have here before our eyes, as it were, the whole world of letters. Each story, each essay, so far as it goes, is complete in itself, and it is usually very interesting also. 1

Lastly, A.C. Ward rates A Christmas Garland highly. He is of the view that a book of parody as this may be crowned with "an unwritten sub-title: "Criticism Without Tears." Considering Max as "a parodist of genius", he holds the book responsible in setting —

The fashion of the revival of the art of parody, which brought in J.C. Squire, E.V. Knox, J.C. Priestley, and others. 2

Considering Max's satire, one can not ignore his 'verse-parodies'— collected in Max In Verses. They, too, are the offsprings of Max's satiric fancy. In fact, they belong "to the category of exquisitely made divertissements." G.E. Lewis is of the view:

To a real lover of literature an exquisitely made divertissement is a very much more respectable thing than some of the 'philosophies of life', which are foisted upon the great poets. 3

Of these parodies, 'Seventy' Brawn is quite significant. It was written in parody of the "pseudo-Shakespearean verse —

1. A.C. Cross: 'The Humour of Max Beerbohm', p. 217
2. A.C. Ward: Twentieth-century literature, p. 203
3. cf. J.C. Riewaldt 'Introduction' to Max In Verses (Heinemann, 1966), p. xix
drama ever written," but, at places, it contains pastiches of
Shakespeare himself. For instance, the description of the monk
'Savonarola' seems to be after the 'Ghost' of Hamlet's father:
'Tis e'en so,
Brother Filippo saw him stand last night
In solitary vigil till dawn
Lept o'er the Arno, and his face was such
As many men wear in Purgatory — nay,
S'en in the inmost core of Hell's own fires. 1

Pope's eulogy on the dead Cesare Borgia — Lucrezia's
brother, seems to be an echo of Antony's on the death of Brutus
in Julius Caesar:

  This was the noblest of the Florentines,
  His character was flawless, and the world
  Held not his parallel. O' bear him hence
  With all such honours as our State can offer. 2

The parody reproduces the characteristic atmosphere of the
Restoration tragedies. But its theme — Lucrezia's lust for the
monk Savonarola; due to the unrequited love, her resolution for
revenge herself on him — seems to be a mock-representation of
the theme in Oscar Wilde's Salome'.

The parody contains subtle ironical observations too. This
one, for example, is a gibe at Masaniello's obsession with Liberty:

  Freedom! there's nothing that thy votaries
  Grudge in the cause of thee. 3

In the 'Scenario', Max rails at the people who sought refuge
in —

That fix'd abode of freedom which men call
American;

and think —

To start afresh in that uncharted land
Which ye stern not from out the antipod,
Austral! 4

1. Seven Ian., p. 185
2. ibid., p. 214
3. ibid., p. 211
4. ibid., p. 217
On the whole, the parody sprang from Max's dislike for the poetic drama. The critics, like Riewald and R. Lynd, admit it to be Max's 'tour de force' in the verse-parody. ¹

Though the parodies in Max In Verse aim at making fun of this or that aspect of English life and literature, the two of them are worth mentioning. They are the parodies of Galsworthy's The Prayer and Drinkwater's Cottage Song. The parody of Galsworthy's poem runs thus:

A Prayer

If I popped in at Downing Street
And Eddie were at home,
What is the name whereabouts I'd greet
Him? I will write the poem:

O Eddie, dear old boy,
O C.M.G., C.B.
Make firm in me a heart too coy
To write a poem for thee! ²

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1. cf. Riewald's Sir Max Beerbohm, p. 113
   & R. Lynd's Essay on Life and Literature, p. 150

* The text of Galsworthy's The Prayer:

If on a Spring night I went by
And God were standing there,
What is the prayer I would cry
To Him? This is the prayer:

O Lord of courage grave
O Master of this night of Spring,
Make firm in me the heart too brave
To ask thee anything.


2. Max In Verse: (Ed.) J.C. Riewald (Beinemann, 1964) p. 150
The parody of Drinkwater's lyric goes thus:

**Some Cottage - but another Song of Another Season (1917)**

Morning and night I found
White snow upon the ground,
And on the tragic wall
Grey ice had cast its spell
A dearth of wood and coal
Lay heavy on my soul.

My garden was a scene
Of weeds and nettles green,
My window-panes had holes
Through which, all night, Lost Souls
Peared from the desert road,
And starved cocks faintly crowed.

My path of cinders black
Had an abundant lack
Of visitors, till time
Made us with Boxes climb
The train that Hurries on
To the warm old Paddington.

In sharp contrast to the charming lyrics, Max's parodies

give a cold sense of the harsh realities of the wartime England.

* The text of John Drinkwater's Cottage Song:

Morning and night I bring
Clear water from the spring,
And through the lyric noon
I hear the lark in tune
And when the shadows fall
There is providence for all.

My garden is alight
With currants red and white
And my blue curtains peep
On starry courses deep,
While down her silvery tides
The moon on Cotswold ridges.

My path of power grey
Is thoroughfare all day
For fellowship, till time
Bids us with candles climb
The little whitewashed stair
Above my lavender.

Quoted from *Max In Versa*, p. 73

1. *Max In Versa*, p. 73
'Eddie' (Sir Edward Howard Marsh, the Private Secretary to Winston Churchill), in the earlier parody, signifies the 'political idols' of the day, who have to be worshipped, instead of God, in the present-day world. Hence the 'poem for Eddie'. The other parody—"a wicked echo of so lovely a poem", 1 recalls the ghastly world war I years, and the austere conditions of the life then. It gives proofs of the author's own tribulations during the period, though he was mostly self-composed and cheerful.

To sum up the account of Max's satire and wit, one may refer to his own observation: "Good sense about trivialities is better than the nonsense about the things at matter." 2 It need not be stressed that the words contain the gist of Max's intention in writing satire. It springs from his own admirable 'sense'. His wisdom and wit are instrumental in causing the 'reflective laughter'. One learns from his writings that they record the sharp reaction of an intellect to the things incompatible with its own standards, but the manifestation of the reaction is invariably amusing. The Chapter may be closed with Sutherland's apt remark:

If I were giving a dinner party in Elysium I should certainly not place Max Beerbohm anywhere near Samuel Butler. I should prefer to seat Jane Austen on one side of him and Miss Ivy Compton-Burnett on the other, and the three would get along beautifully. 3

1. Max inscribed to the parody: "For J. D. from H. D., August 4, 1917, with 1000,000 apologies for this wicked echo of so lovely a poem."

Max in Verse, p. 150


3. English Satire, p. 143