

however, is embarrassingly circumscribed in its meaning. It cannot be applied at random to any period whatever, without danger of the Sciolist, or the Merest Tyro, going to the British Museum and getting at Haydn's "Dictionary of Dates," and catching you out. Still, it does not do to be too positive; seeing that the P. W. has here—and can show it you in the house—what seems a description of the Restoration as "Pre-Cromwellian." There it is, before him, as he presently writes, on the shiniest paper that ever made an old foggy wish he had been born fifty years earlier.*

To fulfil the conditions which literary usage appears to dictate, and to signalise his conformity with public opinion, there is no doubt that the writer of "An Affair of Dishonour"—or, shall I drop the thin veil adopted to avoid egotism, and say I myself—should have made that work not only Early Victorian, but Suburban. For, as I understand, I am expected to be Suburban. This is less difficult, as suburbs do not depend on chroniclers, like periods, but remain to speak for themselves. One knows when one is being Suburban. Among epochs one treads gingerly, like the skater on ice that scarcely bears him. I may take as an instance a book I wrote, called "Somehow Good," whose cradle, as it were, was the Twopenny Tube. The frequent reference to this story as an "Early Victorian" tale has impressed me that Early Victorianism is an abstract quality, which owes its fascination neither to its earliness, nor to its epoch. I am stating the case broadly, but as this is entirely between ourselves, very great niceties are hardly called for. We may leave the Sciolist, and the Merest Tyro, to fight about niceties. On the other hand, outside opinion, though a little vague about Early Victorianism, has not been inconsistent about Suburbanity. It has shrewdly identified, in my first four novels, the Suburban character of Tooting, Balham, Hampstead, Putney,

* I will be just and generous to this writer simultaneously. The Protector was born in 1599. Pre-Cromwellian days were the sixteenth century, clearly. In the sixteenth century St. James's and Piccadilly would not be includable in residential quarters, because the latter was not born or thought of. If by Pre-Cromwellian this writer means Pre-Commonwealth, the inclusion of Piccadilly in the description of a country girl's conception of swell London, written a hundred years later, when Piccadilly was "just accompli," seems to me not unnatural. I am bound to say, however, that when I first read the passage (p. 181)—immediately after I had written it—I thought "those days" meant the days of the story. Analysis of London topography would have been out of place in treating of the cogitations of a country girl unfamiliar with the metropolis.