

talked constantly of Veranilda, and of armour and weapons and the Goths.

And this book, "Veranilda," that is so much of George Gissing, is unfinished, indeed, and unrevised, but so far done that even the end for his two principal characters, the Princess and Basil, is practically told. The book exists as a unity and as a whole, its truncation withdraws nothing essential from the design. One has one's minor uncertainties of course; what sinister treasure was to reward the search of Sagaris and Stephanus, what fate lurked ready to spring upon the Lady Heliodora and the reasons of the Lady Aurelia's long absence from the stage. But the main threads run clear to their end; in a moment the tumult of the assailing Goths, terrible by reason of their massacre at Tibur, would have become audible, and the wave of panic that left Rome to the dogs and vermin have swept us to the end. And the end was morning, a sunlit silence upon the empty Forum, upon the as yet unruined Palatine Hill, upon the yet unshattered Basilica of Constantine. For just that one tremendous moment in her history Rome lay still.

But in spite of all that is lacking this romance exists sufficiently for its total effect, and one sees for the first time clearly what indeed "The Whirlpool" and "The Year of Jubilee" went far to suggest to the experienced critic, and that is George Gissing's extraordinary power of comprehensive design. All the characters move living to a synthesis of impression. It is the picture of a magnificent decay—of the last days, of the last hours of the tradition of Imperial Rome. Every figure partakes of that transition and is significant in the scheme: the sombre figure of the dying Maximus, with which the book begins; the ragged Decius, with his unenvied treasure of manuscripts, with his whispered doubts whether, after all, Virgil's Fourth Eclogue was a prophecy of Christ; the deacon Leander, incessant and acquisitive, politic, blindly devoted, building up the wealth and power of the Mediæval Church amidst a universal ruin; the senator, Venatius, a senator half-