

myself as a sort of literary *Datas*, rather than as a mask veiling the nature of a novelist. You know from many hours of talk that if I were to set down all I could remember of my childhood, the book would not by this time have reached much beyond my fifth year. Obviously in so far as I chose my own public school and my own college at Oxford there has been autobiography, but I fancy it would have been merely foolish to send Michael to Cambridge, a place of which I know absolutely nothing. Yourself assures me that nowadays it is a much better university than Oxford, and in thinking thus you are the only Oxford man who has ever held such a heresy. Obviously, too, it was unavoidable in writing about St. James' that I should draw certain characters from the life, and for doing this I have been attacked on grounds of good taste. I do not recognize the right of schoolmasters to be exempt from the privilege of public men to be sometimes caricatured. Therefore, I offer no apology for doing so. With regard to the Oxford dons I felt it really would be unfair to apply to them what is after all much more likely to be a true impression of their virtues and follies than those formed by a schoolboy of his masters. Therefore, in this second volume, "Sinister Street," there is not a single portrait of a don. As a matter of fact, dons are to the undergraduate a much less important factor than the schoolmaster is to the schoolboy, and the few shadows of dons which appear in this volume are as vital as most dons in the flesh seem to the normal undergraduate.

The theme of these two stories is the youth of a man who presumably will be a priest. I shall be grateful if my readers will accept it as such rather than as an idealized or debased presentation of my own existence up to the age of twenty-three. Whether or not it was worth writing at such length depends finally, I claim, upon the number of people who can bear to read about it. A work of art is bounded