Introduction American Notebook

George Gissing bought the small notebook (4.75 x 3 inches) now held by the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, at Chicago in early March 1877, when he was 19 years old, from H.D. Chapin's Cheap Book House at 91 Madison Street. A label giving the details of its provenance is pasted on the inside of its back cover. On the front cover Gissing wrote in Indian ink Notes - G.R.G. - 1877, thus naming the note-cum-commonplace book that has since come to be known as the American Notebook.

Pierre Coustillas and Patrick Bridgwater have suggested that the American Notebook be grouped together with five similar personal documents, all of which enable us to reconstruct Gissing's reading, the literary subjects he was planning, his responses to news items from papers and magazines, and the names and addresses of editors, publishers and the publications that he considered as potential outlets for his work. Thus the American Notebook is the first in a series to which also belong (a) a notebook Gissing started in 1895, now in the Huntington Library, (b) a scrapbook covering the period 1880-1903, held by the Lilly Library, (c) the Commonplace Book (1887-1903), (d) the Diary (1887-1902) and (e) the notebook entitled Extracts from My Reading.

Reading 4, in which Gissing exclusively entered quotations that he found worthy of preservation.

The American Notebook may be briefly described as follows: it is signed 1877, 92 pp., written on both sides, brown leather covers, numbered in the author’s own hand 1-47 (i.e. one number for two adjacent pages); there is no page 4 and the long entry consisting of a discussion of the authorship of the Iliad and Odyssey, together with translation notes on book x of the Iliad is in reverse order and upside down: it starts on p.44 L(left) and ends on p.35 R(right).

Gissing had suddenly left Waltham, Massachusetts, where he had not quite completed his second month as an assistant teacher at the local High School. A brief announcement in the Waltham Sentinel for March 9, 1877 stated that: “We regret to learn that Mr Gissing ... left town ... unexpectedly on Thursday of last week [March 1] in a distracted state of mind in consequence of a disappointment he had suffered. His departure is a great loss to the school for he was a man of great scholarship and his high character, and the interesting general manner of conducting the lessons of his classes won the respect and affection of his pupils. The School Committee will find it difficult to fill the position thus left vacant.”

The precise circumstances of his hasty departure from Waltham have remained a mystery until the present day, despite manifold speculations about the reasons for his disappearance, ranging from amatory disappointment to fears of discovery of his criminal record. The very first entry in the American Notebook confirms that he made his way to Chicago, where he spent the next four months and his movements during the remainder of his year in America can easily be traced from the itinerary that is found on pp. 1-2.


4 See: note 1.
Gissing had arrived at Boston, Massachusetts, on Sunday, September 10, 1876 after the most traumatic experience of his life. In his fourth year at Owens College, Manchester (the predecessor of Manchester University) where he had distinguished himself as perhaps the most promising classicist of his generation, he became infatuated with Nell (Marianne Helen) Harrison, who combined employment in the manufacturing of clothes with a life of prostitution. To make matters worse, she would over the years resort to alcohol with increasing frequency. The young Gissing, always an idealist, felt a strong urge to save this girl, whom he regarded as a victim of the social conditions of his days and to that end he began giving her sums out of his scholarship money. When his own funds had become exhausted, he made up the shortage by rifling the pockets of his fellow-students. These thefts continued through the spring of 1876, until he was caught red-handed on May 31, stealing money from another student’s coat. A week later he was convicted and sentenced to one month’s hard labour and expelled from Owens College in disgrace. This meant that he had in effect destroyed all his ambitious hopes of an academic career and one may fairly say that the disaster and its consequences marked him for the rest of his life. He never recovered from this self-inflicted blow.

As neither Gissing himself nor his relatives had any hopes of finding suitable employment for him in England after the débâcle, it was deemed advisable that he seek his fortune across the Atlantic. Through a fund set up by friends in Manchester and family friends in Wakefield (to which the Principal of Owens College also contributed) he was enabled to sail to America, leaving Liverpool on August 29th, 1876.

5 “Mr Gissing” is among the names on the passenger list published on the front page of the Boston Evening Transcript, September 11, 1876: “Arrival of R. M. S. Parthia. The Cunard steamship Parthia, Captain McKay, which sailed from Liverpool the 29th and Queenstown the 30th of August, arrived at Cunard wharf, East Boston, at 7.30 A.M. Sunday, having on board the English mails and 168 cabin and 149 steerage passengers.”

From one of his first letters from America, addressed to his brother William, we learn that he found accommodation in a “splendid boarding-house” with about 10 other people at 71 Bartlett Street, Boston (Mass.) and that he was hoping to get a place on the staff of the Atlantic Monthly with the help of one of his new American friends, who knew the editor. This is the earliest indication that he was thinking of a career as a journalist or freelance writer in order to support himself. Although by the end of October the Boston Commonwealth had published Gissing’s “Elaine”-Rosenthal and Tojetti,” his hopes of a more permanent position in the world of journalism did not materialize, so that when in December his funds were starting to run low, he began to look around for alternative employment, which he found as an assistant teacher of French, German, English and Latin at Waltham High School, 10 miles from Boston. He would be paid an annual salary of $800.

In view of the paucity of letters or any other personal documents related to the year he spent in America, it would seem to be high time for this, almost the last of Gissing’s known writings to have remained unpublished, to be made available to Gissing scholars and general readers alike, for the light it may throw upon biographical and professional questions connected with this crucial year, when he seriously embarked upon his career as a writer.

Above all the Notebook provides us with a detailed record of the books he was reading. There are references to over 100 titles in English, French, German, Italian, Latin and Greek. His major interests appear to have been French romantic literature (Sand, Musset and Balzac), political economy and statecraft and the relationship between a cultured elite and the populace. Two of these focuses may be regarded as a natural continuation of the twin emotions that had fuelled his love for Nell Harrison in the opening months of 1876 in the first place: his sense of outrage at the social injustice that turned innocent girls into fallen women and his infinite capacity for self-deception, resulting from a reckless tendency towards idealization at the expense of more sober appreciation of reality. Nevertheless, the frequent references

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to Arnold, the high priest of culture, whose emphasis on the need to establish first “the firm, intelligible law of things” before any radical change in the organization of society could be undertaken, may indicate that Gissing was not yet ready to join any of the groups or individuals that were advocating an immediate and radical social revolution.

In fact, it would be very hard to find any reference to social evils, quite apart from a desire to denounce them, in the short stories he was about to publish in America. The real awakening of his social conscience had to wait until his return to England and his move to London. Besides, his position as an English exile in democratic America made radical action not just improbable, but in fact impossible. That he did not unreservedly take to all manifestations of democracy in practice, he makes clear in another letter home: “... They carry democratic notions here to a great extent. It is quite common for a workman to go up & slap his master on the back & ask him how he is. Worse than that, no servant-girl will think of cleaning boots, so we have to have them blacked in the streets, & the result is that the Americans have almost always dirty boots on.”7 It would be hard not to notice the distinct distaste he felt at this instance of fraternization, which, apart from its most undesirable practical consequences (boots must be clean), is presented almost as a violation of one’s privacy.

Yet, the Notebook is more than just a collection of fine sentiments and lofty thoughts; it contains in addition a good many ideas for stories that he might like to write one day. Despite the brevity of these entries, Gissing’s preference at the time for material of a melodramatic nature seems clear: deceived husbands, orphans, poisoned wives, women of the town, suicides, secret marriages—they are all seen as instances of the inevitable pathos of human life and the reality and ineradicability of evil, which stimulated his imagination and continued to fascinate him as a writer for the rest of his life.

Insofar as we are able to assess the effects of his inglorious flight from England and the enforced farewell to the girl he loved upon his feelings for her, there is no doubt

at all of his continuing and deep affection for her. In the poem "A Farewell," dated August 1876, obviously addressed to Nell on the eve of his sailing for America, Gissing had written in the final stanza:

O peace, my love, and let safe sleep
Lie calm upon thy breast;
Forget thy sorrows, cease to weep,
And lay thy heart to rest.
In yon' new world I seek a home
Far, far from England's shore;
Wait but a while and thou shalt come,
With me to weep no more!\(^8\)

Although none of his letters to her have survived, we do know that they corresponded, because Gissing recorded in his Diary for March 1st, 1888, when he had gone up to London to arrange for Nell's funeral—she had died the day before—: "... I found all my letters, away back to the American time—"\(^9\) In this context the quotation from George Sand's Jacques on p. 2R can be read as a justification, slightly desperate perhaps, of the very real sacrifices he had made in his search for happiness with Nell: "Il n'est qu'un bonheur au monde, c'est l'amour; tout le reste n'est rien, et il faut l'accepter par vertu." (my italics). A similar sentiment is expressed in the Balzac quotation on p. 10L ("Les grandes passions sont rares comme les chefs-d'oeuvre ..."), but the passage that perhaps reveals most clearly the extremity of his youthful infatuation, is the one in which he illustrates his identification with Christ loving his enemies: "... mais quand tu te sentiras, toi, noble et honnête homme, violemment épris d'une misérable courtisane, sois certain que ce sera de l'amour, et n'en rougis pas! C'est ainsi que le Christ a chéri ceux qui l'ont sacrifié!" This seems to be as much a fleeting, but frank recognition of Nell's true nature ("miserable courtisane") as an admission of his own (proud) helplessness in the face of the violent passion that still held him in its grip.

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\(^8\) George Gissing, Verses by G.R. Gissing: 1869 to [1882], Manuscript notebook, Beinecke Library of Rare Books and Manuscripts, 76-78.

The chronology of the entries cannot be established with absolute certainty—for one thing, it is very likely that some of the earliest entries were copied from notes he had taken in the Boston Public Library—but the dates that are mentioned, in conjunction with some shrewd guesswork based upon indirect evidence, allow the reconstruction of the following time scheme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>ENTRY/EVENT</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>early March 1877</td>
<td>arrival Chicago</td>
<td>p. 1L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March-July 1877</td>
<td>stays at Chicago</td>
<td>p. 1L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 31, 1877</td>
<td>Punch poems</td>
<td>p. 5R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 11, 1877</td>
<td>Burns article in N.Y. Tribune</td>
<td>p. 6R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 20, 1877</td>
<td>Prize of Shakespeare article in [N.Y.] Tribune</td>
<td>p. 8L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 31, 1877</td>
<td>Romeo and Juliet in N.Y. Tribune</td>
<td>p. 9R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2, 1877</td>
<td>Tyndall’s speech</td>
<td>p. 11L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>early July 1877</td>
<td>goes to New York</td>
<td>p. 1R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mid-July 1877</td>
<td>Engaged by a travelling photographer at Troy N.Y., North Adams, Mass. and Greenfield, Mass. 11</td>
<td>p. 45R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 24(?), 1877</td>
<td>Back in Boston: end of photographic interlude.</td>
<td>p. 1R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>late August, 1877</td>
<td>Petremant (Boston)</td>
<td>p. 18L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boston Public Lib.</td>
<td>p. 18R</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 There is a discrepancy between the two dates given for Gissing’s visit to North Adams, on p. 1R and p. 45R respectively. As his hiring as a photographer’s assistant can be dated with some precision to the third week of July 1877 and the itinerary on p. 1R suggests that the business activities were started in North Adams, they must have travelled there straight from Troy. Gissing’s ineptitude for the commercial job is thus further demonstrated by his inability to date his orders correctly! The date given on p. 45R is therefore incorrect.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>late August, 1877</td>
<td>F. Radford, Boston</td>
<td>25L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mauprat, Valvedre, Lucrezia Floriani</td>
<td>23L, 23R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>late August, 1877</td>
<td>visit to Portland, Me.</td>
<td>20R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September, 1877</td>
<td>drawing: Off Portland</td>
<td>1L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 3, 1877</td>
<td>Returns to Boston</td>
<td>46L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lands at Liverpool</td>
<td>1R</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now if we attempt to correlate the time scheme above with what has long been recognized as a reliable, barely veiled autobiographical account of Gissing’s American experience, viz. the adventures related by the journalist Whelpdale in chapter 28 of New Grub Street, together with the results of recent research into these scantily documented months, the following points emerge: Gissing devoted most of his time and energy during his stay in Chicago to reading, writing and trying to find publishers for his first efforts in the field of fiction. In fact, it has been established beyond doubt by Pierre Coustillas and Robert L. Selig that some twenty stories in all were written during the nearly nineteen weeks he spent in

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13 After his very enthusiastic appreciation of all that the Boston Public Library had to offer, he must have turned with similar expectations to the Chicago Public Library. This had opened its doors as recently as January 1st, 1873, after the old Chicago library had been destroyed in the calamitous fire of 1871. The core of its new holdings was formed by a large collection of books donated by the people of England as “a mark of sympathy, and a token of that sentiment of kinship which ... must ever exist between the different branches of the English race.” One of the most zealous promoters of the cause of a free public library, was the Mayor of Chicago, Joseph Medill (1823–1899), who was to be the editor-in-chief of the Chicago Tribune from November 1874. His brother Samuel John Medill was the managing editor, who accepted Gissing’s first story for publication in the Tribune.


Chicago, thus tallying with the claim he made in a letter to his brother, that he “wrote a story every week, whilst in Chicago.”

In addition, Gissing’s preoccupation with getting into print is amply illustrated by several references to newspapers, periodicals and other publications and their publishers and editors in the opening pages (p. 2R and p. 3R) of the Notebook: the National Weekly (Chicago) and its proprietor, J. M. Hill, the Independent (New York), Galaxy (New York), Saturday Night (Philadelphia), its editor Lemuel Clarke Davis and its proprietor James Elverson, Frank Leslie (New York), one of the most prominent newspaper tycoons of the period, who owned such successful publications as Frank Leslie’s New York Journal, Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, and Frank Leslie’s Sunday Magazine, and lastly, John Wien Forney (Philadelphia), the owner of the Philadelphia Press, Sunday Morning Chronicle, and the Daily Morning Chronicle. Although no Gissing stories have so far been reclaimed from Philadelphia papers or periodicals, a thorough and exhaustive search of the files might yet prove rewarding.

The dates and the duration of Gissing’s stay in Chicago may be determined by the following considerations. As there is nothing to suggest that he did not travel straight to Chicago from Waltham, he must have arrived there no later than Saturday, March 3rd. The discovery of the pirated tale in the Troy Times can be dated to the day of its appearance, viz. July 14, 1877, or very soon thereafter, which would make it at least 19 weeks after his arrival in Chicago. We should, however, bear in mind that Gissing made the discovery in New York, where he may have arrived only a few days before, so that the length of his stay may be put at not quite 19 weeks. Having decided to hurry on to Troy N.Y., “up the Hudson by steamboat,” in the hope of selling more of his stories to an editor, who apparently had thought one of them good enough to steal it, he was rudely disappointed and reduced to keeping himself alive on peanuts, before he was engaged by the photographer, whose clearly


fictitious name is given by Whelpdale as Mr Freeman Sterling. The liberal generosity and unfailing kindness of the man is effectively evoked by his apt name and he must have reminded Gissing of that other American benefactor, Samuel J. Medill, the managing editor of the Chicago Tribune, whose practical sympathy and "compassion had saved a desperate Gissing from starving in the streets of Chicago."  

Some time during the third week of July 1877 Gissing must have been taken on by the photographer and embarked on his short-lived and rather fruitless commercial mission, which consisted in house-to-house canvassing, in search of orders for the reproducing of old portraits. When in New Grub Street Gissing, through his mouthpiece Whelpdale, confesses: "I don't think I got half-a-dozen orders," the accuracy of that claim is fully substantiated by the entries that we find on p. 45R of the Notebook, which appears to have been used as Gissing's order book. Although he has optimistically entered the numbers from 1 to 6, there are in fact only four names of clients, one of whom, besides a copy of his own portrait, also ordered a reproduction of his wife's portrait. Another client apparently ordered two reproductions of the same portrait, which brings the total number of reproductions ordered through Gissing to six. What is, perhaps, most revealing of all is that one cannot escape the conclusion that Gissing seriously tested his suitability for the job of commercial traveller only during the first few days of his engagement. The orders he got in North Adams, their first stop after Troy, are mistakenly dated August 25, on p. 45R. The itinerary on p. 1R, however, reads correctly: North Adams, Mass. July/77. As there is no record of any further orders after July 25, he must have given up almost as soon as he started, which makes Freeman Sterling's continued willingness to support his hopelessly inadequate assistant over the next five weeks all the more remarkable. They finally parted at Boston, on or around August 24, giving Gissing a chance to make the final arrangements for his return to England, which

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19 See: footnote 10.
among other things, must have involved storing his belongings and negotiating a loan to pay for his return fare from Robert Petremant, a fellow-lodger at the Bartlett Street boarding-house in the previous autumn. Having embarked the steamer Spain\(^{20}\) at New York on September 22, 1877, just over a year since he had set out from England, he reached Liverpool on October 4, 1877.

Though the extent to which Whelpdale's account of his American adventures is matched by the factual record of Gissing's movements during the late spring and summer of 1877, as preserved in the American Notebook, will not surprise those of his readers, who have learned to expect and recognize the intimate interdependence of his life and work as one of the most appealing aspects of his fiction, there is nevertheless something puzzling about the repeated references to the threat of starvation and complete lack of money at the time. One wonders whether these particular hardships—so frequent and constant a feature of Gissing's life over the years—were in any way based upon the young writer's own serious shortage of funds. For, let us consider the evidence: a conservative estimate of Gissing's income for the period January–September 1877 alone amounts to a sum of around $500. There was his teacher's salary for January and February, $130 for two months, plus the proceeds of the twenty short stories he published\(^{21}\) (estimated at ca. $325), and the sum of $45 that he received for the sketch he wrote for Appletons' Journal, which comes to a grand total of $500. If we leave out of account any additional income he may have earned from his photographic "efforts", the fact remains that $500 ought to have been more than sufficient to keep a single person. If we put the rate of exchange in 1877

\(^{20}\) The steamer Spain arrived in Liverpool on October 4\(^{\text{th}}\) 1877, at 4 a.m., having crossed the Atlantic in thirteen days, leaving New York on September 22. On p. 1 R of his American Notebook Gissing gives the date of his arrival as October 3, 1877. (See: index to Lloyd's List for 1877 and passenger list in: The [Liverpool] Daily Courier, October 4, 1877). Also, cf. note 139.


As it is doubtful that Gissing should have got $18 for the stories he published in the obscurer magazines, I have put the total income from the stories at $325. Also, see: Robert L. Selig, George Gissing: Lost Stories from America (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992) 10.
at £1 = $4.80, Gissing’s American income would have been equivalent to ca. £105 in nine months.

Now, with regard to the size of incomes in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in England, it has been established that the average earnings of a workingman’s family of four and a half persons was reckoned at about 30s. a week (£7.8) in 1882. In 1875, of the 215 white-collar workers employed by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, in middle-class occupations such as commercial clerks, accountants, cashier and book-keepers, 179 received no more than £150, and 96 of these were in receipt of less than £100. Furthermore, to put Gissing’s “poverty” in perspective, the average salary of a professor at Owens College in Manchester in 1875 was £500. And, to end with a striking example of the level of contemporary American incomes, the first Secretary and Acting Librarian of the Chicago Public Library, who entered upon his duties in July 1872, was appointed at a salary of $600 per annum.

Gissing in his first letter from America reported to his brother William that he paid $10 per week for room and board. And, after his move to Waltham, he found himself a very comfortable place, living with a private family, for which he only paid $8 a week, including washing. Given Gissing’s fairly minimal needs, one is hard put to account for the persistent complaints about threatening bankruptcy, actual or imagined. Or should we resort to educated guesswork in order to explain his poverty, such as his continuing to send money to Nell in Manchester? Or, missing a month’s

22 Cf. Gissing’s letter “To William,” October 5, 1876, “... You get grapes for 10c (5½) ....”
26 It is tempting to think of the arrangements Arthur Golding makes on behalf of Carrie Mitchell prior to his departure for America, in Gissing’s first novel Workers in the Dawn (1880). In his farewell letter to Carrie, Golding writes: “... lest you should come to want in the future I shall make arrangements that you may receive one pound per week—as long as I am able to pay it.” (Workers in the Dawn, vol. II, part III, chapter XVI). It has long been recognized that for many factual details in his narrative Gissing drew chiefly from his own experiences. According to Pierre Coustillas in his introduction to the novel “the Arthur-Carrie relationship derives from his [Gissing’s] own grim experiences with his first wife, Marianne Helen Harrison [Nell].”
salary in Waltham, as a result of his sudden departure? The riddle remains.

Another unsolved problem connected with the American Notebook is the difficulty of deciding how much of it was written in America, and where the English entries begin. For there is no doubt that Gissing continued to use the Notebook after his return to England. There appear to be good reasons for assuming that from p. 25L onwards we are dealing with entries made, either during his return voyage on board the steamer Spain, or after his arrival in England. Another crucial factor in my argument is the date of Matthew Arnold’s recommendation of Stopford Brooke’s Primer of English Literature. Arnold’s article, praising Stopford Brooke’s book, was entitled “A Guide to English Literature”\(^\text{27}\) and appeared in December 1877 (my italics). Gissing had been back in England since October 4th, which only allows one to conclude that the entries on p. 25L and after (with a few obvious exceptions) were indeed made in England.\(^\text{28}\) The references, drawings and addresses on the few last pages of the Notebook, specifically, pp. 45L, 45R, 46L, 46R, 47L and 47R, clearly form an exception, in that they unquestionably belong to the year in America.

However, many of the references to books on English and European constitutions, political systems and political economy (pp. 29L, 30R, and 32R) would seem to belong to the first few months after his return to England and his move to


\(^{28}\) In Gissing’s letter to Algernon of May 4, 1881, he is pleased to record at long last the arrival of those possessions of his that he had left in America as a security for the loan to pay for his return voyage to England:

“First & foremost I have to give you astonishing intelligence. At length my packages have arrived from America, & I have spent two days in setting my new acquisitions in order. It is like a present to me, so completely had I forgotten what the boxes contained. Now at length I feel the satisfaction one has in completing a long & miserable phase of one’s existence: with all my possessions once more around me I feel that in a certain sense a new period begins for me. Among the papers are all my stories published in America, & a vast heap of MSS of, I fear, but little positive value. I am also glad to have once more father’s old portmanteau, with all its various associations. Such of my clothing as was left has come in a fearfully moth-eaten condition, excepting a few articles of under-clothing which I can use ...,” in: The Collected Letters of George Gissing, vol.2, 1881-1885, eds., Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, Pierre Courtillas (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1991) 31-32.

The editors in a footnote to this letter mistakenly conclude that Gissing’s diary (i.e. the American Notebook) was among the papers he got back in May 1881.
London, when he tried without success to find regular and congenial employment, and had to settle for occasional tutoring and working as a part-time clerk at a London hospital. About this time he must have seriously started his preparations and preliminary reading for the first novel he ever wrote, which may well have been on a social/political subject, set in London. We can never be sure of the subject and title of Gissing's first venture into novel writing, because he destroyed the manuscript after failing to persuade the publishers to print it. It is against this background that the books on London streets (p. 32R) strike one as quite probably the fruit of research undertaken in the British Museum Reading Room, with regard to his projected novel. The date of Gissing's application for admission to that august institution is November 23, 1877, only six weeks after setting foot in England, thus neatly supporting our theory.

All in all, there seem to be sufficient reasons for assigning the entries from p. 27L onward to November and December of 1877, when he had become a regular visitor of the Reading Room. This conclusion is further confirmed by the references to less accessible, and specifically English, periodicals and publications like the Examiner and the Retrospective Review on p. 33L, and Leisure Hour on p. 34L. In addition, there is incontrovertible proof that an entry was made in the spring of 1878: the quotation from the Natal Mercury in the Dispatch of March 31, 1878, on p. 34R.

Finally, there is the question of the dating of the translation notes to Homer's Iliad. From Gissing's correspondence we learn that in the period June-September 1878 he was sending translation notes to his brother Algernon, to help him in his preparations for the B.A. examination. Although the first notes he sent were on bk. xxiv of the Iliad, it does not seem unduly rash to assume that Gissing compiled the Greek notes on bk. x of the Iliad (pp. 44L-35R, in reverse order and upside down) from Paley's book in the British Museum for the benefit of his brother. They may therefore be taken to belong to the summer of 1878, and they must have formed the last entry

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29 In a letter to his brother Algernon (January 30, 1878) we have the first reference to it: "Am getting on well with my novel, which progresses at the rate of about 12 pp. (foolscap) a day." [CLGG, vol.1] 73.

in the little notebook that he had bought in Chicago.

Thus, besides the American entries, which make up about 60 per cent of the American Notebook, at least 40 per cent of its contents may with a reasonable degree of certainty be assigned to the early London period from October/November 1877 to the summer of 1878, when Gissing was trying to establish himself as a writer under very difficult circumstances. As a record of the most formative sixteen months of his life the notebook is unique, documenting not only the practical aspects of a writer's life, but also, and more engrossingly, those singular character features, the prodigious intellect and emotions, that were to remain unchanged and unbroken, the inspiration and foundation of his art, despite their often self-destructive impulses, through all the vicissitudes of his brief life.