'I Never Walk'*

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt

'17th July [1894]—A brilliant luncheon with Margot and her husband at 30, Upper Grosvenor Street, and I took her her Wedding Ode, which I had written for her amusement. The other guests were Mrs. Grenfell, Mrs. Daisy White, Ribblesdale, his brother Reggie Lister, and Oscar Wilde, all immensely talkative, so that it was almost like a breakfast in France. Asquith alone rather out of it. I sat next to him and was rather sorry for him, though he was probably happy enough. Afterwards, when the rest had gone away, Oscar remained, telling stories to me and Margot.'

This is a very poor account of an interesting, and in the sequel a tragic, incident which has remained strongly impressed on my mind, as it was one that showed Oscar Wilde at the height of his social glory, and as the last occasion on which I found myself in his company. Of all those present, and they were most of them brilliant talkers, he was without comparison the most brilliant, and in a perverse mood he chose to cross swords with one after the other of them, overpowering each in turn with his wit, and making special fun of Asquith, his host that day, who only a few months later, as Home Secretary, was prosecuting him on the notorious criminal charge which sent him to hard labour in prison. I remember, too, as a characteristic trait of his dandyism, that when at the end of the half hour we remained on talking, we went away together from the door, I to walk back to my rooms in Mount Street, and he to pay a visit in the same direction, hardly farther. I said, 'We will walk together as far as Grosvenor Square.' 'No, no,' he said, and called a passing hansom. 'I *never* walk.'

* *My Diaries; Being A Personal Narrative of Events 1888–1914* (London: Martin Secker, 1932) Part 1, pp. 145–6. Editor's title.

NOTE

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (1840–1922), English poet, traveller, and champion of lost causes who married (1869) Byron's granddaughter, Lady Anne Noel. He first met Wilde in 1883.