



## *The Forest Philosophers*

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Carl Eric Bechhofer Roberts first met Gurdjieff in Tiflis in 1919 and visited Gurdjieff's Institute several times but "preferred to remain an intimate and disinterested spectator." The English spelling of Gurdjieff/-Gurdjiev was not yet fixed.

J. W. D.

Of all the mystics who have become prominent in Europe during the last twelve years or so, and especially since the war, when their numbers have been doubled, I cannot recall that any has attracted so much interest in so short a time as George Ivanovitch Gurdjiev, the founder of the "Institute for the Harmonic Development of Man" at Fountainebleau, near Paris. I exclude Rasputin from this statement both because his "mysticism" was of a somewhat peculiar nature and because his notoriety was due rather to political than to intellectual influence.

The wider public first became interested when Katherine Mansfield, the writer, died in the institute; immediately people were interested to know what mysterious sort of place this was where the clever young author had preferred to pass the last months of her life. And yet reliable information has been lacking. Except for one or two vague articles in two London papers, no account of Gurdjiev's institute has, I believe, yet appeared in print. I shall endeavour to set down here the main theories that underlie Gurdjiev's methods and the form they take in practice.

My first meeting with Gurdjiev came about from my renewing an old acquaintance with Mr. P. D. Ouspensky, a Russian mathematician, author, and journalist, at Rostov-on-the-Don, in the days when General Denikin, the anti-Bolshevist leader, occupied the city. I was with Ouspensky in a tumble-down barn, our joint home with a third man, who was dying, although we did not know it, from smallpox. He recounted to me how he had come across Gurdjiev in Moscow, and at first had been skeptical of his claims, but had at last been convinced of his great powers and knowledge. Ouspensky and a number of Gurdjiev's other pupils followed the master to Essentuki, a watering-place in northern Caucasus, where the whirl of the Revolution caught them. When life became intolerable there, they dispersed in various directions. Gurdjiev and a faithful group went to Tiflis, in the Transcaucasus.

When, after a few weeks, terrible weeks in which Denikin's hopes were shattered and his forces driven into the sea amid indescribable circumstances of horror and despair, I crossed the Black Sea and came to the Transcaucasus, it was natural that I should immediately pay a visit to Gurdjiev.

I found him without much difficulty in a small house in Tiflis, where a signboard announcing the "Institute for the Harmonic Development of Man" hung outside the story which it occupied.

He was altogether Eastern in appearance, short, swarthy, almost bald, but with long black moustaches, a high brow and piercing eyes. He spoke a halting and broken Russian; his native languages are Armenian and the Greek of the Transcaucasus, but his intellectual language, his thinking language, so to speak, is Persian. I spent many hours in his company then and in later months, watching him drill the members in their exercises and dances. Once we went together to the baths, and a naked Persian massaged us with his hands and arms and feet much in the manner that, five years afterward, I saw Gurdjiev employ to massage some of the members of the institute at Fountainebleau.

Once, too, I attended a lecture he gave; it was, I thought, a rather vapid and half-hearted affair, its solitary point of interest being the disputable statement that the mind of an infant is like a clean gramophone record on which every experience is traced, to be brought out again when circumstances arouse an association.

Even in those days he demanded and received absolute obedience from every one of his pupils. His word was law, and he reigned as a tyrant among devoted slaves.

In essence, it seems to me, nothing has altered from those early days at Tiflis to the present magnificence of Fountainebleau. The scale of the enterprise is enormously larger, the number of pupils is much greater, and they work in a far wider range of occupations; and now Ouspensky gives the semi-public lectures which attract strangers to the institute. But to one who, like myself, knew the baby institute at Tiflis, there is little new about Fountainebleau.

Meanwhile, two years ago, Ouspensky suddenly arrived in London. I understand that the co-operation of a radical editor [A. R. Orage], interested in mysticism and an old acquaintance of Ouspensky, and that of a society lady in England [Lady Rothermere], made this possible. The former provided an intellectual welcome for Ouspensky, the other the means for his journey. The two of them, the editor and the lady, whipped up an audience for him, and we used to meet either in her studio, an appendage to her splendid house, or in a theosophical lecture room in Kensington, or in a doctor's house in Harley Street [Maurice Nicoll, M. D.]. In the audience one saw doctors, psychologists, psychoanalysts, editors, writers, civil servants, theosophists of both sexes, clergymen, and a sprinkling of the men and women who are always attracted by the lure of the mysterious.

Presumably encouraged by Ouspensky's success in England, Gurdjieff now decided to come to this country. But the Home Office was at that moment terrified of Bolsheviks and suspected them in all groups of Russians. Permission to enter was refused to the colony, and Gurdjieff set about finding suitable premises for an institute in France. After much trouble he discovered what he wanted in the priory at Avon, near Fontainebleau, thirty miles out of Paris. This is a large old house, that had once been inhabited by a royal mistress and later by Dreyfus' advocate; it was from the latter that the estate was bought, consisting of the priory itself, with large gardens and many acres of woodland, set in a beautiful valley on the fringe of the forest. There the colony was duly installed, while Gurdjieff went to London to inspect the disciples that Ouspensky had collected there for him.

To these he must have seemed a strange figure as he looked them over, addressing them in imperious phrases of broken Russian, which Ouspensky translated, and treating them with every sign of superiority; however, they promptly accepted him as a person of a higher psychical world, living on a plane of consciousness far above their own. Several sold all that they had and gave him the proceeds for the institute, and prepared to follow him back to Fontainebleau, among them two psychoanalysts, who disposed of their Harley Street practices; the radical editor also resigned his post, sold his share of his paper, and gave this also to the cause. Others gave according to their means, which, in the case of one or two rich people, represented a considerable sum. And then one little party after another went to live in the institute, convinced that they were on the threshold of a new vision which would lift them beyond the limits of everyday consciousness and make them, finally, beings of a higher order.

Thus, at the end of 1922, the "Institute for the Harmonic Development of Man" began serious work at Fontainebleau with sixty or seventy disciples. Of these perhaps nearly half were Russians from Tiflis and Constantinople, men, women and children; one or two survived even from the earliest Moscow days. Others were Russians from Berlin and London, people whose means of livelihood had been removed by the Revolution, and who, besides being attracted by anything avowedly

mystical, realized that life in the institute was probably not less agreeable than that of Russian emigrants outside.

Most of the remainder were English. If I am not mistaken, the only two French people in the colony were the wives of an English and a Russian pupil; no French men or women seem to have felt an independent call to the new faith. The inhabitants of Avon accepted the institute as an economic asset, but dismissed it otherwise as being simply a *maison de fous*, a mad-house.

Among the English, as among the Russians, women predominated, most of them theosophical types. Of the men, the most important were the editor, two psychoanalysts and two members of the civil service. There were also a few young men, patients of the psychoanalysts, to whom the latter had suggested a visit to the institute.

Of course there were a few people who did not fit into any category, as for instance, the society lady who arrived in state every now and then in the earlier days of the institute and used to perform the harmless, if not very psychical, service of carrying cups of coffee out to Gurdjiev in the grounds. But alas, after fluttering for a while like a charming butterfly through the austere halls of Fontainebleau, she soon tired of it and ever in search of new experiences, flew away, so I am told, to seek spiritual comfort by working for the cinematograph.

Visitors, Russian and English, used also to come to see their friends among the colonists; and frequently people, as it were, on probation from Ouspensky's circle in London, would help to crowd the institute's buildings.

On my visits to the institute, I have usually made my headquarters in Fontainebleau or Paris, but more than once I have been admirably lodged in the priory itself, in a room next to Gurdjiev's own, with my needs attended to by some of the hard-working colonists. I have often been pressed to enter the institute, partly for my own spiritual salvation, which has always exercised my friends, but principally in order that I might act as interpreter between Gurdjiev and his English pupils and between the English and the Russians generally. But I have preferred to remain an intimate and disinterested spectator, keeping in touch with all the members of the institute, from Gurdjiev to the latest joined Englishman, and thus collecting gradually a mass of impressions and information, which I am here for the first time setting on paper.

## II.

The reader may be interested to know in brief outline the principles on which Gurdjiev's "Institute for the Harmonic Development of Man" is based. I may begin by pointing out once again that, to me, as to all the other English people acquainted with the institute, it is Ouspensky and not Gurdjiev who has been the exponent of the philosophy. But we have his definite and repeated declaration that he has

learned his ideas from Gurdjieff, who brought them back with him from long journeys in the interior of Asia, where he studied in mysterious monasteries, Mongolian and Tibetan, and other secret places of the East.

The philosophy can be described from several angles. I shall concentrate on that side of the theory that finds direct expression through the work of the institute. First then, in developing certain of man's faculties, civilization has wholly atrophied or destroyed other higher ones. Those faculties that remain are grouped around three main centres: the intellectual centre, which thinks, plans, formulates; the emotional centre, which feels, likes, and dislikes; and the physical or instinctive centre, which acts, moves, creates. In every man one or other of these centres predominates; he is predominantly intellectual, emotional, or physical.

Next, as men are now, every human thought, feeling and act is a purely mechanical reaction to outside circumstances. It is not I who thinks, but something thinks through me; it is not I who feels, but something outside me determines my feeling; it is not I who acts, but exterior conditions call forth the appropriate action. Man is like a ship out of control, following a devious course through the waters of life according to the various currents that carry him with them and appoint his course.

How may a man become master of himself? It is this that Gurdjieff sets out to answer.

First, he must learn to know himself as he is, namely, a tripartite machine wholly subordinate to circumstances. To realize this, he must observe himself at every and any moment of his life, when he is working or resting, happy or unhappy, vigorous or weary; he will soon see that it is not he but outside circumstance that controls his actions, emotions and plans.

The next thing for him to do, when he has realized his lack of self-mastery, is to set to work to harmonize his three centres. They ought to enter equally into everything in which he is concerned; when this is the case he will be harmonized. Then he will be immune from reactions, and he will himself be responsible for his acts. He will no longer be rudderless, automatic, a toy of the outside world.

Since the path to this is first through self-observation and self-awareness, Gurdjieff sees to it that in the institute you shall be constantly observing yourself under variable conditions. Thus he sets his intellectuals to hard manual labour, so that they may observe themselves under that unaccustomed strain. If a bricklayer were to join the institute, he would presumably be set to loafing or reading, so that he might observe himself so. Gurdjieff starts out also to break you of your habits, which are the strongest mechanical processes to which you are subject, and, he says, the more petty the habit, the harder it is to be got rid of. He does this by showing you your particular habits and making you aware of them.

The editor [Orage], to take an easy example, was an inveterate smoker; Gurdjieff promptly cut off his tobacco. If any one expresses a preference for sweet

food, he is suddenly put on an unsweetened diet or is surfeited with food that is all sweet, until he sickens of it. In this way, and of course, in others more subtle, Gurdjieff seeks to teach his pupils to cast off their habits and so become more and more masters of themselves.

All personal barriers must be broken down. If a man is proud, Gurdjieff humiliates him deliberately before all the other pupils. If he has a special affection or aversion, it has to be eradicated. There was for instance, a man in the institute who when he entered, hated the sight of blood; he was at once set the task of slaughtering the animals for the stock-pot. There is another very important method that Gurdjieff uses to promote the harmony of the centres—dancing. He endeavors to teach his pupils to become aware of their body as of their mind, and in their exercises and dances they learn how intimately both are bound together. This is why the institute devotes much time to ballets and group dancing as well as to physical exercises.

To sum up then, the aim of the institute is the development of the innate faculties of its members by first breaking down the artificial barriers of their personality and then by developing and harmonizing their various mental and physical centres, the means of doing this being self-observation; a practical course of dancing; manual and physical exercise; psychical analysis of every kind; and a series of tests, mental and physical, applied by Gurdjieff to fit each individual case.

In this way a man, becoming "harmonized," may proceed from our normal three-dimensional plane of consciousness to the fourth-dimensional, and even further, developing or, rather, recovering the control of newer and ever superior psychic centres.

The reader would perhaps like an example of the difference between an ordinary three-dimensional and a harmonically developed four-dimensioned mind. Here it is. I meet Jones, whom I dislike, in the street. Immediately I feel a sentiment of hatred for him, an emotional act called forth mechanically and outside my power to prevent. I clench my fist as if to hit him, which is a physical act of the same nature. But I decide that it would be indiscreet to attack him, as he is much bigger than I, a similar intellectual process. If, on the other hand, my three centres were balanced or harmonized, I should regard Jones with equanimity; I should not instinctively clench my fist and even if he hit me, I could, as did one who was, according to Gurdjieff, a great fourth-dimensional mystic, "turn the other cheek." I should, in short, be master of myself.

To the fourth-dimensional man all worldly problems are clear, for his mind is simultaneously aware of cause and result. For this reason his power over things and men is enormously superior to that of the most powerful ordinary man.

Gurdjieff is supposed by most of his disciples to be himself a fourth-dimensional man, with his centres balanced and harmonised, and to be able to assist others toward the same desired condition.

### III.

It may be well to illustrate the practice of these ideas during a typical day at Fontainebleau. The inmates wake at about eight or nine o'clock of the morning. This may sound a fairly late hour for so monastic an institution, but you must remember that they probably went to sleep only about four or five o'clock. It is one of Gurdjiev's doctrines that out of the seven or eight hours' sleep of the normal man half are wasted in the process of "falling asleep," whereas the only period that matters is passed in "deep sleep." This last can be gained equally by spending less time abed and being more prepared to fall quickly into it from fatigue.

Looking round any of the rooms, you will be astonished at their bareness. The beds are rough couches—I am speaking, of course, of the colonists', not of Gurdjiev's—covered with one or two coarse blankets. There may perhaps be a trace of fire on the hearth, but the chimneys are so foul and fuel is so scarce that a fire is almost more trouble than it is worth. There are quite often one or two stoves lighted in the corridors, but the priory remains damp and chilling in the colder months of the year. There may be a ragged scrap of carpet on the floor; two rickety chairs and a fragment of a mirror are probably all the remaining furniture of the room.

The two or three inmates of the room, then, throw on what clothes they have removed for the night and stumble drowsily downstairs to their work. They may be tending the pigs or cows or sheep or whatever other animals Gurdjiev may recently have bought. (It may be stated in parenthesis that animals do not prosper there. The institute may perhaps know about the welfare—physical, moral and psychical—of human beings, but it certainly does not know how to keep animals in good condition.) Or they may be engaged in carting stones in wheelbarrows from one end of the estate to the other. If they carry too many, as the editor and another man did one day when I was with them, they are told that it does not matter; they can carry the surplus back again.

They may instead be building a wall for a new structure that Gurdjiev has in mind, perhaps destined for a theatre, a Turkish bath or a new pig-sty. There are always new buildings going up. I remember when Katherine Mansfield was alive, Gurdjiev proposed to build a balcony on the cowshed, so that she might lie there and inhale the odour, which he assured us, would help to remedy the consumption from which she was suffering.

Worse still, they may be set to cleaning out the sties or the poultry-yard. Or they may have to cut trees or repair a fountain or perform any other of a thousand tasks. It may even indeed, be the turn of one of them to be the waiter and dishwasher for the mess; all the inmates take this duty in rotation. The women, who mess apart, have a similar rotation of service in the scullery. It should be noted that, except for a few married couples with children, the sexes are strictly and effectively segregated in the institute; virtually the only time they meet is at the dancing and at the work, in which the women perform tasks nearly as onerous as the men's.

While our friends are at their work they may look up suddenly to find Gurdjiev, in his round, brimless Caucasian hat of black fur and his dark shabby clothes, standing beside them, cigarette in mouth.

"Skorry! Queeker! queeker!" he snaps in his broken Russian and English. "Work ver' good; make you better; you start think better; ver' good!" Or he himself will take a hand at the work, impressively demonstrating how it ought to be done.

I used to hear what a wonderful worker Gurdjiev was. Rapt disciples told me with bated breath of the abnormal speed and skill with which he built paths, for example, or sawed wood, laid bricks and designed ovens and even a kipping-kiln. But recently I have noticed an element of doubt in these accounts. The paths wear badly, the walls crack, the ovens do not function, and the kiln no longer kippers. Is it possible that Gurdjiev is not the super-artisan he was supposed to be?

Perhaps; but there is also another explanation for these mischances, which has often been put forward by the editor. "It is a test," he declares, explaining that Gurdjiev could, of course, do it all much better if he wished, but he is anxious to test the faith and devotion of his pupils.

At last, at midday, comes dinner. The workers troop in to their mess and sit down with hearty appetites. They receive a meal consisting of one course only, usually a soup with a little Russian porridge, of which they may eat whatever quantity they desire. The only times I have eaten in the institute I have shared Gurdjiev's own fare in the comfortable old kitchen of the priory; thus I am not in a position to speak of the quality of the pupils' soup. Some favoured ones are allowed also a mouthful of rice pudding or similar delicacy. I was much impressed in the mess by the eager, almost greedy glances that were turned upon the fortunates by the others. It was all rather like being back at school.

Sometimes, of course, Gurdjiev commands some of his students to fast altogether. In these cases they continue to work, but go without food for whatever length of time—days or weeks—he declares necessary.

After dinner comes a short rest and then a return to labour until the evening, when, with the exception of those on special duties, the colonists retire to their rooms until the dancing begins. Then at nine or ten in the evening they gather in the largest room of the priory and begin anew the long series of exercises that they have been rehearsing monotonously for months beforehand; in the case of the Tiflis survivors, for years. Occasionally, but rarely, Gurdjiev varies the proceedings with a lecture that is rather a number of replies, more or less oblique, to questions put to him by the more inquisitive or sceptical of his pupils.

The dances are of two kinds—exercises and ballets. The former consist of various motions of the limbs and certain tests of endurance, such as walking round the room with arms outstretched, which some of the more experienced colonists can continue to do for more than an hour without pause.



Another kind of exercise is derived from the Dalcroze method. In the middle of a complicated movement Gurdjiev suddenly shouts, "Stop!" Instantly every one becomes still in the attitude he or she is in, however uncomfortable it may be; and so they stop until he releases them. This, of course, is designed to help them to contemplate themselves in action. Still another exercise combines physical motions with mental arithmetic; proficiency in it is again largely a matter of practice.

The ballets, on the other hand, are claimed by Gurdjiev to be for the most part reproductions of sacred dances of the East. Each of them has therefore, according to Gurdjiev, a secret significance not usually obvious to the layman. It is understood that Gurdjiev has seen and studied these dances in his wanderings through the East, and that he reproduces them exactly as he saw them, and with the original music, which is played in the institute on a piano by a Russian musician who has been with him ever since Tiflis.

Technically, the dances are interesting; Gurdjiev has apparently a fine memory for what he has seen or heard and a considerable gift of improvisation. In his own field I should rank him high among contemporary ballet-producers. It is true that, from the stylistic point of view, the figures contain too many broken movements, but this is a minor defect easily to be overcome.

With a rehearsal of the exercises and some or all of these dances, then the night's work at Fountainebleau ends in the small hours, and the weary colonists go off one by one to bed. But sometimes, on very special occasions, a birthday for instance, of some popular member, a feast is given by Gurdjiev to the colonists in the composition of which his Asiatic tastes have full play. Dozens of dishes, bearing anything from a suckling-pig to Turkish delight, and innumerable bottles are stood upon the floor; and there, squatting on carpets, all the members of the institute sit round and take a welcome respite from their daily duties. But on the morrow the work begins again.

#### IV.

It is certainly much easier to understand the psychology of the members of the "Institute for the Harmonic Development of Man" than that of the master, Gurdjiev.

So far as the Russian members are concerned, as has already been pointed out, life in the institute is for many of them not worse than life outside; moreover, being Russians, they are mostly prepared to accept without question the mystical claims Gurdjiev, or anybody else, puts forward.

It is all the more curious that some of the Russian men, but not the women, take every opportunity to dodge the manual tasks they receive; they believe, one must presume, in the efficacy of faith more than of good works. I remember in this connection an amusing remark of the English editor about a glaring dereliction of duty on the part of one of the senior Russians.

"Poor fellow," the editor remarked to his English neighbour and to me, as they rested wearily on their wheelbarrows, "I suppose we must forgive the old man. After all, he has had his centres balanced!"

This joke shows fairly well I think, the half-tolerant, half-sceptical tone that is typical of the English members' attitude toward Gurdjieff and his institute. They began their careers there without anything more than a hope to find his claims justified. To give him a fair chance of success with themselves, they conscientiously carried out all his instructions and like mystical Micawbers\* waited patiently for something super-conscious to turn up.

Before long, I fancy, doubts began to develop among certain of them. It is, after all, not very difficult to maintain an obscure mystical prestige, but the presence of two such experienced doctors as the English psychoanalysts was a constant menace to Gurdjieff's position. I have no means of knowing whether they still acknowledge his claims, though it is an open secret that both have left Fountainebleau, but one of the severest trials he has had to face during the last year was his dispute with one of the two.

This occurred as the result of a painful seizure on the part of one of the women colonists, during which, according to one of these English doctors, she vomited blood; according to Gurdjieff it was not blood. The doctor, without examining her, stated that he thought she was suffering from an intestinal ulcer; Gurdjieff denied this, and offered quite a different diagnosis. A month or so later the lady was operated on in London, and the cause of her illness was shown to be indeed an internal ulcer. When the doctor put this to Gurdjieff, the latter merely rebuked him for his lack of trust; and when he spoke of the incident to the editor [Orage], his room mate, the latter merely insisted that, as usual, it had all been a "test." Gurdjieff, he suggested, knew perfectly well that she had vomited blood but it was part of his method to make the doctor think he (Gurdjieff) did not know.

It would be wrong to imagine from this naïve incident that the editor is a man without experience of the world and one who sees everything and every one through rose-coloured spectacles. He is on the contrary, a remarkably lucid and well-informed writer, possessed of a vast experience of men and affairs and at times, of a mordant wit. Few readers of this article would fail to recognise his name were I to mention it here. He has in his career followed many ploughs, of which theosophy was the first, and is now, in its Fountainebleau form, apparently the latest. But even he, I presume, is still only willing to believe in the authenticity of Gurdjieff's claims; he is however, giving him a longer run than most of the other Englishmen have done.

Not greatly, I imagine, did Katherine Mansfield's attitude differ from his. When I saw her last, a few evenings before her death—a frail, fated figure, watching the dances at the institute—she assured me that she was entirely happy there. She was so confident of recovery that she told me her plans for her next book, and for the

one after that and I rather fancy, for yet another. She did not suggest that Gurdjieff and his colony would appear in them, but it seemed to me, perhaps quite wrongly, that the old sardonic smile in her eyes hinted that sooner or later she would turn these experiences into laughter.

In general, however, may we not say that the institute seems to leave its members pretty much as it finds them? They gain in physical strength, but lose in mental poise, becoming almost the automatons of their master. They learn to dance, and grow rusty at their old trades. They break their old habits and form new ones. The more they change the more they remain the same. Or so at least it appears to the onlooker.

Are we to consider Gurdjieff as a true mystic, a genuine initiate of the esoteric doctrines of the East?

Perhaps; but this is not a thing that may be either proved or disproved. There is, after all, a certain amount of presumptive evidence to bring against the hypothesis. In the first place, would a teacher of an admittedly secret faith blazon his mission from the housetops, as Gurdjieff has done? Secondly, it is hardly to be believed that a real initiate, if such exists, would advertise his name and his features in connection with the sacred lore. And yet, on the cover of a Russian pamphlet Gurdjieff issued a few years ago about his Tiflis Institute, not only is his name prominently displayed, but even his face is portrayed in the centre of the mystic geometrical figure that symbolises the base of the occult wisdom.

Thirdly, it is difficult to imagine that a true mystic would demand fees from his disciples. Whereas it is the case that many of the Russians are supported by him, it must not be overlooked that he in turn has received very considerable sums from English sympathisers, nearly sufficient indeed to cover the expense of purchasing the priory and its estate, as well as the cattle, carpets, motor cars and other things he has acquired. Whether the remainder has been made up by smaller contributions from his English paying guests or by thank-offerings for the healings he undertakes independently in Paris, no one but himself appears to know. In any case, I do not think we may accept as proved the hypothesis that Gurdjieff is a mystic, charged with a mission by a higher occult authority in Asia.

The second and opposite notion, that he is a deliberate charlatan, is not for an instant to be credited by any one who has come into personal contact with him. He is much too interesting and picturesque a figure to be a mere swindler; besides, there is the interesting philosophy that he and Ouspensky have set out. No, this crude suggestion does not explain Gurdjieff or even begin to explain him, and need not, therefore, be discussed.

A third theory within the bounds of possibility is that Gurdjieff suffers from a form of megalomania in which he sincerely believes that he has done and can do all that he claims.

I foresee that each of these three theories about Gurdjieff will continue to have its adherents. Perhaps none of them is correct, and others may have to be brought forward to provide a satisfactory explanation of his motives in founding the "Institute for the Harmonic Development of Man."



Note \* pg. 10 'mystical Micawbers' —a reference to Dicken's character Wilkins Micawber, an incurable optimist and projector of bubble schemes in *David Copperfield*.