

**August 1st, 1899**

The estate of Netherhall sits at the very edge of the town of Carnlochry, and enjoys proximity to the necessities of the town as well as the open fields surrounding it. Built in the Georgian style and comprising a large, square main house of three stories and five bedrooms, with two small outlying cottages across the yard, the estate was enough to house a large family, but instead would house we three. We arrived early in the afternoon, and spent several hours acquainting ourselves with one another, and, in the interest of completeness, I will briefly include a review of our newly-wrought fellowship.

Mr. Theodor Riedesel is a young man of 24 years, himself descended from a Hessian aristocratic family that lost their sovereignty: his forebears left the German Empire while he was a child, and he was raised in England for the majority of his years. He is sharp-witted, utterly committed to the values of the aesthetic, and reassuringly liberal in his outlook, all of which is reflected in his work: he is both a photographer and a painter, and his subjects of choice are his peers in the hedonistic bohemian circles of London and Brighton, often in states of wild undress and Bacchanalian “celebration of life”. Mr. Riedesel describes his work with such passion and glee that it is quite impossible to resist being swept up in his enthusiasm, and I find in him a keen sense of integrity and character along with his love for the sensual. He described to us a childhood where he rejected being raised as the girl his doctors had supposed him to be at birth, so becoming the man who joins us here at Netherhall today. I find that he makes for good company.

Mr. William “Willie” Gillespie is, contrarily, rather more standoffish and taciturn. Aged 33, Mr. Gillespie has travelled the world aboard ships on the Drum Line, most notably the SS Drumchapel, which ferries passengers and cargo between Glasgow, Liverpool, and Porto Alegre in Brazil. A Glaswegian himself, his family have always been involved with ships, either in their construction or in trading upon them, and so he enjoys a measure of skill in mechanical operations and such like. Mr. Gillespie is a careful man, though from what glimpses of his life he offered us this evening, he is also a man of depths — when provoked by Mr. Riedesel, Mr. Gillespie is able to match the various carnal indulgences the former enjoys with hints of his own lechery on board the ships of the Drum Line and in the ports of the world. These hints, I confess, are tantalising to me.

As for myself, I am a man of 41 years, raised in Pune, India. My family are Dalit, “untouchable”, though my mother and father raised me to recognise that my station is not to be found in the dust. Through ways and means, I was able to study medicine and anatomy, and through working with the Satyashodhak Samaj, I put these studies to good use in the neighbourhoods I served. I now live in Birmingham, though I regularly brave the distance to travel home every few years. I believe myself to be of good cheer, loquacious and well-mannered. I am very much an optimist and devoted to the world of the future: the 20th century is almost upon us, and I can only hope that the work we conduct at Netherhall can benefit many in the new age.

Still, I confess to a measure of anxiety, which I will describe presently: in the interest of the ideals of this new age, I must also commit into writing the unifying force that I believe prompted the House to bring Theodor, William and I together. We are of that breed that seeks its own company, and that self-determines what its own company is. We are what might be called in some circles sexual inverts, or Urnings, or homosexuals. We discovered our commonality our first night at Netherhall, where the conversation turned bawdy; where alcohol and good cheer lowered our inhibitions to the degree that we happened upon it quite by chance in discussion.

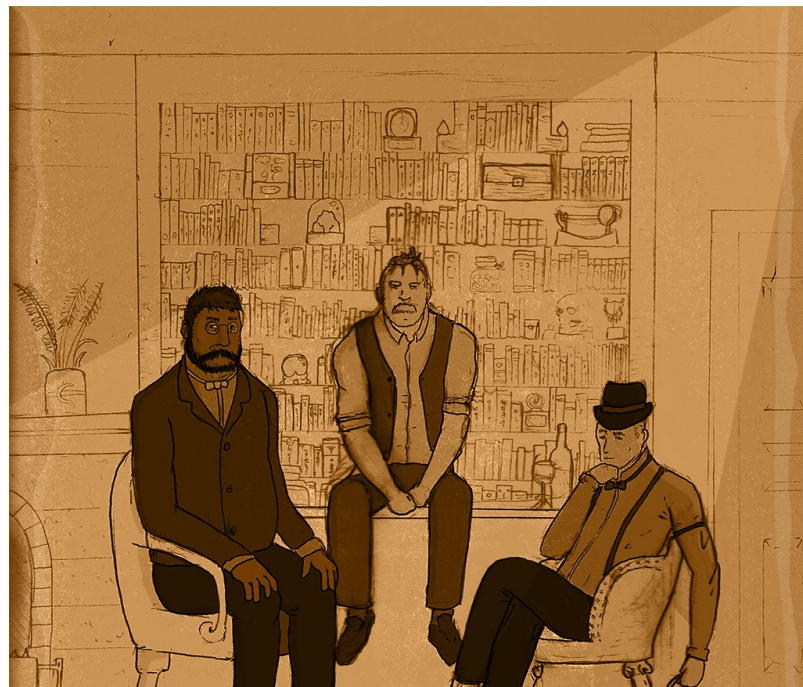
Early in the day, Mr. Gillespie and I met each other at the train station at Carnlochry as per our

written instructions from the House, and accompanied each other to Netherhall, whereupon we met Mr. Riedesel. He showed us around the house and the grounds, and, after we had organised which rooms we would take for the measure of our stay, the three of us sat in the larger of the lounges conversing. We covered our own backgrounds and experiences, as well as our suspicions about the House and the letters we had received inviting us to take part in a curious set of experiments. It was all very amiable — the three of us got along very well indeed — and before long, we were sharing our secrets as though we were old friends, which led to the confessing and conceding of our love for men. Quite how the House knew any of us shared this in common is a mystery that Mr. Riedesel insists I ask about in this correspondence.

The House, as I understand it, aims to explore this area of human experience through experimentation with various objects of a discretionary nature, and considers this to be the especial provenance of our kind, in that we are in and of ourselves pioneers of the world beyond the boundary of ordinary gender. Thus the three of us found one another — after answering the letters we had received, addressed from the House — and thus we pledge to begin our experimentation with the first of these objects, the Patterning Engine, in a matter of hours.

It is my understanding is that, in the name of exploration and of science on the part of the House, the reports of the Netherhall Experiments will fall foul of neither comstockery, nor the Labouchere Amendment that so plagued Mr. Oscar Wilde and others. I have been told by the House that the censor's hand will not touch this report. So too am I told that there is scope in our investigation for unconventional reportage, speculative musing, and insights into our lives around our experiments. In accordance with this, we will spare few details, and may take recourse to conveying our findings unconventionally where we feel this necessary. Those sensitive to impropriety, consequently, may wish to forego the remainder of this document.

I look forward to a fruitful investigation.



*Figure 1: Dr. Vishal Pasi, William Gillespie, and Theodor Riedesel.  
The Netherhall Estate, August 1st, 1899*

**Experiment I: The Patterning Engine.**  
**August 2nd, 1899.**

I quote first from the notes from the House that were delivered to us in the mail at Netherhall before our arrival:

*“The House has elected to deliver to you the **PATTERNING ENGINE**. This machine was crafted by an eccentric clockmaker in Aberdeen, Scotland. A patent war resulted in the machine never seeing use and falling into obscurity upon its creator’s death, but it reappeared at the auction of the material possessions of a group of travelling showpeople who had all been arrested during a scandalous performance. The machine is said to be capable of wondrous feats of hypnotism when one is seated before it upon the turning of the wheel.”*

Though the remainder of the instructions we received from the House were sparse -- "in the interest of encouraging novel experimentation", according to their missive -- we were able to assemble the device, owing in chief to the capabilities of Mr. Gillespie, whose experience in handling mechanical assemblies onboard the various seacraft he sailed on expedited the task considerably. It was a wooden box, almost four feet in height and two feet on either side, with numerous brass wheels or cogs installed on its face, each painted with a spiral. The spirals were of different gauges and lengths, some turning clockwise and others counterclockwise, some tight and others loose. We could tell, from a small window in the side, that there was an internal system of rods, pulleys and wires. Other than this, we had little clue of what it was, or what to expect, aside from what was told to us by the House. We did understand that there was some element of hypnotic trance involved when the machine was powered by turning the main wheel crank, so we decided to elect one of our number to be the first subject in the experiments, while the other two observed.

The three of us decided that Mr. Gillespie would be the first to face the Patterning Engine. He is physically, mentally and spiritually robust, and his long career as a mariner had granted him the opportunity to have this robustness tested under the most extreme parameters.