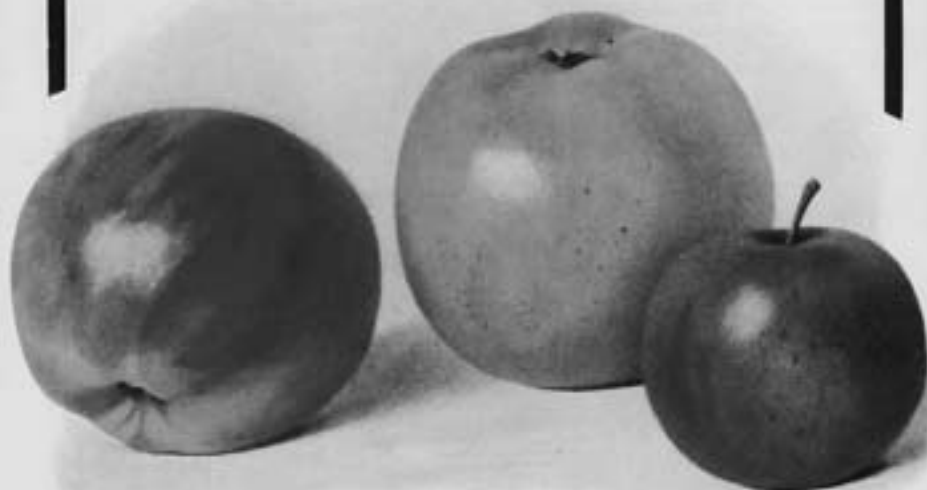


THE DOWNRIGHT EPICURE

BUNYARD'S FRUIT TREES



Three Excellent Apples

SANSPAREIL

EDWARD VII.

ROSS NONPAREIL

*Write for our Illustrated Catalogue of
Fruits, full of valuable information.*

GEORGE BUNYARD & Co., Ltd.,
Royal Nurseries, MAIDSTONE.

Frontispiece. 'Bunyard's Fruit Trees'. This advertisement appeared as the back cover of *The Garden*, LXXXV, no. 2583, Saturday, 21 May 1921. The same plate had appeared as Coloured Plate no. 1437 (Hudson & Kearns, Ltd., London, S. E.), 'Three Good Apples', the apples provided by and discussed by George Bunyard in *The Garden*, LXXV, no. 2084, Saturday, 28 October 1911, pp. 523-4.

The
DOWNRIGHT EPICURE

Essays on
EDWARD ASHDOWN BUNYARD
(1878–1939)

edited by
EDWARD WILSON

The down-right Epicure plac'd heav'n in sense
And scornd pretence.

Henry Vaughan, 'The World', *Silex Scintillans*, I, 1650



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Maurice Healy's obituary of EAB; Mrs Alyson Price, Archivist of the Harold Acton Library, the British Institute of Florence, kindly told me of Bunyard's letter to Edward Hutton and sent me a Xerox of it; Ms Claudia Wolfers, Artistic Trustee of the Estate of John Nash, gave permission for quotation of extracts from the letters of John Nash now in the Hyman Kreitman Research Centre, Tate Britain.

E. W.

Preface

Who knows whether the best of men be known? or whether there be not more remarkable persons forgot, than any that stand remembered in the known account of time?

Sir Thomas Browne, *Urne-Burial*, 1658, chapter v.

On 19 October 1939 Edward Bunyard died by his own hand. He had been, with his brother, Norman, in charge of one of the world's great nurseries; one of England's finest students and growers of old varieties of apples and roses; an inimitably distinctive writer on food and wine; and a great friend of the writer, Norman Douglas. Within a year of his death his roses (and later his apples), his outstanding horticultural library (save for those volumes purchased by the Lindley Library of the Royal Horticultural Society), were, like his ashes, scattered we know not where. It was not just one life over, but a whole world that vanished under the dark skies of the Second World War. Humphrey John Denham (1893–1970), who wrote under the name Humphrey John, already sensed in the 1930s that the old world of discrimination before commerce was slipping away, and he associated that *ancien régime* with Edward Bunyard. In his *The Skeptical Gardener Or Potterer's End*, published in 1940 but its 'Author's Apology' is dated August 1939, he wrote:

Disheartened by the lack of bouquet in the modern apples of commerce, which seemed to have only half the fragrance of the fruit of my boyhood, and fired by the tales of old men and the sound of forgotten names, I started off to make a 'stamp collection' of obsolescent names, selected solely by the one qualification of remarkable flavour. Many of them are still on the market in this country: Messrs Bunyard's catalogue, for instance, lives neatly up to Mr E. A. Bunyard's *Anatomy of Dessert*. (p. 192)

Yet though Bunyard partly slipped into that oblivion which was once one of the sequelae of suicide, he has none the less left some ‘footprints on the sands of time’. In 1944 the novelist Louis Golding (1895–1958), a contributor to *Wine and Food*, and André Simon (1877–1970), President of the Wine and Food Society and editor of *Wine and Food*, edited *We Shall Eat and Drink Again: A Wine & Food Anthology*, and reprinted EAB’s ‘The Wine List’ from *Wine and Food* (Winter 1936); Silvio Martini, *Geschichte der Pomologie in Europa* (Bern, 1988) included Bunyard, and of course he was discussed in Joan Morgan and Alison Richards, *The Book of Apples* (1993; revd. edn. 2002), Joan Morgan also writing Bunyard’s entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004); Bunyard’s *A Handbook of Hardy Fruits* was reprinted in one volume by Picton Publishing in 1994; the couturier Sir Hardy Amies (1909–2003) wrote to *Country Life* to assert that old roses had been reintroduced into cultivation ‘by Edward Bunyard in a book produced by – guess who – COUNTRY LIFE in 1936’ (22 May 1997, 95); *The Anatomy of Dessert*, in both the 1929 and 1933 editions is still cited: by Richard Girling in ‘Paradise lost’, a fine article on old varieties of apple (*Sunday Times Magazine*, 17 August 1997); by Rowley Leigh in an article on apricots (*Sunday Telegraph Magazine*, 8 August 1999); in *Waitrose Food Illustrated* (September 2000) s.v. Marjorie’s Seedling Plums, and still cited on the Web in 2005; by the Duchess of Devonshire in her *Counting My Chickens ... And Other Home Thoughts* (2001) where s.v. ‘Best Gardening Books’ in an extensive praise of the *Anatomy* she acutely observes, ‘There is no question of anything so vulgar as selling the delectable produce to people who might not appreciate their finer points’ (130); by Robert Palter in his magnificent and beautifully produced *The Duchess of Malfi’s Apricots, and Other Literary Fruits* (2002); by Tim Longville in his ‘Snippets’ in *Hortus* (no. 67, Autumn 2003); by Christopher Lloyd (1921–2006), doyen of garden writers, who in his ‘Essential Reading’ included the *Anatomy* as ‘a gem’ (*The Guardian Weekend*, 29 May 2004); and by Richard Mabey’s autobiography, *Nature Cure* (2005) which quotes (p. 204) ‘the 1930s fruit gourmet Edward Bunyard’ and his comment in the *Anatomy* on the gooseberry as a fruit for ‘ambulant consumption’. Graham Stuart Thomas (1909–2003) discussing Maud Messel’s work in preserving old garden roses at Nymans, Handcross, in Sussex, wrote discreetly and justly of EAB’s role: ‘Edward A. Bunyard, of the then famous nursery at Maidstone, had been helping her before his

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untimely death and had indeed produced a delightful book about them. Sadly I never met him but he was not only a good nurseryman but erudite about shrubs and plants in general, as his highly informative articles in *The New Flora and Silva* in the 1930s will prove' (Graham Stuart Thomas, *Recollections of Great Gardeners*, 2003).

Not forgotten but, in the view of the authors of this volume, insufficiently remembered for his work as a nurseryman, a worker in the new field of genetics, an epicure, a contributor to the clubbable pleasures of life, and in all matters a writer of distinction. To his 'Author's Apology' for *The Skeptical Gardener* Humphrey John added a 'Postscript', dated January 1940, in which he said that with the outbreak of War he had been told to revise what he had written about his garden, but he concluded 'I would ask leave to leave these pages untouched, to show what it was under happier skies'. *The Downright Epicure* has a similar purpose. In *Gardening Illustrated* (15 November 1930, 738) Bunyard had mused that for a memorial he would choose not the 'gloomy Cypress' but 'an avenue of Japanese Cherries'. I doubt that it was ever planted; this book will have to serve.

E. W.
Worcester College, Oxford,
15 September, 2006.

