

BY V. SACKVILLE-WEST

*Fiction*

THE EDWARDIANS

*Travel*

PASSENGER TO TEHERAN  
TWELVE DAYS

*Poetry*

KING'S DAUGHTER  
THE LAND (*Published by Wm. Heinemann Ltd.*)

# ALL PASSION SPENT

V. SACKVILLE-WEST



*Published by Leonard and Virginia Woolf at  
The Hogarth Press, Tavistock Square, London*

1931

HENRY LYULPH HOLLAND, first Earl of Slane, had existed for so long that the public had begun to regard him as immortal. The public, as a whole, finds reassurance in longevity, and, after the necessary interlude of reaction, is disposed to recognise extreme old age as a sign of excellence. The long-liver has triumphed over at least one of man's initial handicaps: the brevity of life. To filch twenty years from eternal annihilation is to impose one's superiority on an allotted programme. So small is the scale upon which we arrange our values. It was thus with a start of real incredulity that City men, opening their papers in the train on a warm May morning, read that Lord Slane, at the age of ninety-four, had passed away suddenly after dinner on the previous evening. "Heart failure," they said sagaciously, though they were actually quoting from the papers; and then added with a sigh, "Well, another old landmark gone." That was the dominant feeling: another old landmark gone, another reminder of insecurity. All the

events and progressions of Henry Holland's life were gathered up and recorded in a final burst of publicity by the papers; they were gathered together into a handful as hard as a cricket-ball, and flung in the faces of the public, from the days of his "brilliant university career," through the days when Mr. Holland, at an astonishingly early age, had occupied a seat in the Cabinet, to this very last day when as Earl of Slane, K.G., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., etc. etc.—his diminishing honours trailing away behind him like the tail of a comet—he had drooped in his chair after dinner, and the accumulation of ninety years had receded abruptly into history. Time seemed to have made a little jump forward, now that the figure of old Slane was no longer there with outstretched arms to dam it back. For some fifteen years he had taken no very active part in public life, but he had been *there*, and on occasion the irrefutable suavity, common sense, and mockery of his eloquence in Parliament had disturbed, though it could not actually arrest, his more extreme colleagues upon the brink of folly. Such pronouncements had been rare, for Henry Holland had always

been a man to appreciate the value of economy, but by their very rarity they produced a wholesome sense of uneasiness, since men knew them to be backed up by a legend of experience: if the old man, the octogenarian, the nonagenarian, could bestir himself to the extent of stalking down to Westminster and unburdening himself, in his incomparable way, of opinions carefully, soberly, but cynically gestated, then the Press and the public were compelled into attention. Nobody had ever seriously attacked Lord Slane. Nobody had ever accused Lord Slane of being a back-number. His humour, his charm, his languor, and his good sense, had rendered him sacrosanct to all generations and to all parties; of him alone among statesmen and politicians, perhaps, could that be said. Perhaps, because he seemed to have touched life on every side, and yet never seemed to have touched life, the common life, at all, by virtue of his proverbial detachment, he had never drawn upon himself the execration and mistrust commonly accorded to the mere expert. Hedonist, humanist, sportsman, philosopher, scholar, charmer, wit; one of those rare Englishmen whose fortune it is to be