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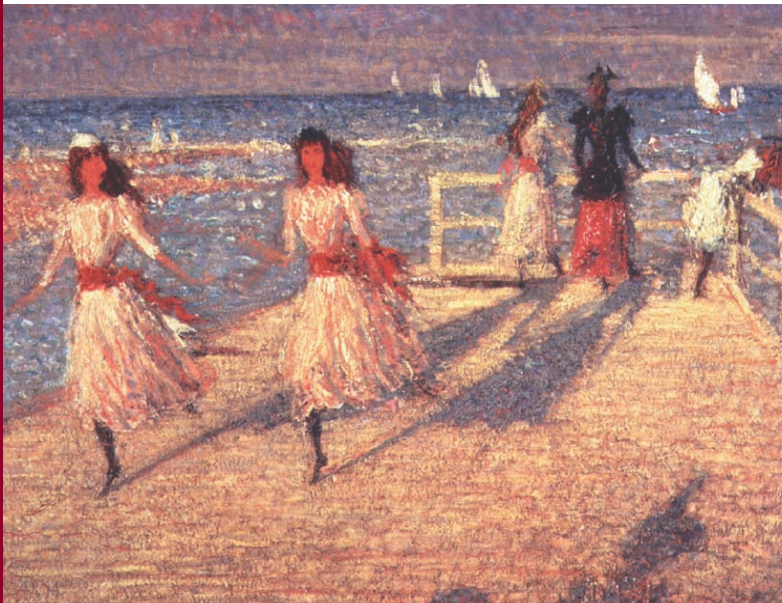
**MODERN
CLASSICS**

Marcel Proust

Within a Budding Grove

Part II

Read by **Neville Jason**



NA310612D

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST • IV

1	The Balbec doctor...	7:41
2	Robert de Saint-Loup – Mme de Villeparisis's nephew	6:16
3	Saint-Loup made a conquest of my grandmother	3:01
4	My old friend Bloch	7:36
5	An invitation from Bloch to dinner	5:36
6	The sensation of being watched	5:53
7	The Baron de Charlus	6:13
8	Tea at Mme de Villeparisis's room	10:28
9	A knock at my bedroom door	7:19
10	The family Bloch	9:07
11	My grandmother, her hat and the photograph	4:11
12	We desire, we seek, we see Beauty	7:54
13	An elderly banker	7:11
14	The happiness of knowing these girls was,...	7:45
15	Simonet and family	6:16

16	The famous painter Elstir	8:29
17	A fresh suit for a visit	6:15
18	A young bicyclist,	9:59
19	Strolling to the 'front'	10:13
20	Hope for further meetings	6:53
21	A small tea-party to meet Albertine	8:32
22	Andrée, with eyes of extraordinary brightness	6:35
23	A short stroll with Albertine	9:12
24	Andrée, Albertine, echoes of Gilberte...	14:10
25	Mixed messages	7:24
26	The moon and Albertine – and an invitation	7:16
27	At the Grand Hotel	5:51
28	Albertine, virtuous?	8:07
29	Back to wandering dreams	4:48
30	Solving the problem of existence	9:21

Total time: 3:45:46



Marcel Proust, painting by Jacques-Émile Blanche.

Marcel Proust

Within a Budding Grove

Part II

Madame Swann at Home

The opening of *Within A Budding Grove* finds Swann married to Odette, and greatly changed. Swann, the sophisticated man of the world, who once studiously avoided any mention of his connections with people of the highest social standing, now boasts loudly of every invitation he and his socially unacceptable wife receive. Another person greatly altered is Cottard, the foolish and insecure country doctor of the Verdurin's 'little circle'. Now a successful member of the medical profession, Cottard has become a notable and self-possessed figure in society.

Marcel's father invites home for dinner a colleague, M. de Norpois, a distinguished former member of the diplomatic service. De Norpois shows an interest in Marcel's aspirations to be a writer, and asks to see an example of his work. Marcel shows him a piece he has written, and is dashed by the old ambassador's dismissive response. However, Marcel's father is persuaded to believe in the possibility of writing as a career, and de Norpois is instrumental in Marcel being allowed to

attend a performance by the famous actress, Berma.

Having determinedly rejected Marcel as a suitable playmate for their daughter Gilberte, Odette and Swann become persuaded of his good influence on her, and welcome him to their house. Through Swann, Marcel becomes acquainted with his idol, the author Bergotte.

At last Marcel finds himself in the position he had dreamed of occupying – an intimate not only of his beloved Gilberte, but also of her parents, who have always seemed to him god-like beings.

Now that there seems to be no obstruction to Marcel's love for Gilberte, the influence of her parents, upon which Marcel always counted to influence her in his favour, begins to have the opposite effect. Marcel senses her irritation at feeling pressured by them to spend time with him, and vows never to see her again.

Marcel's friend Bloch takes him to a second-rate brothel, where the Madam attempts to introduce him to an intelligent Jewish girl, Rachel. Marcel has given his aunt's furniture, which he inherited and for

which he had no space, to the brothel, but cannot bear to see it in such surroundings.

Place Names: The Place

Marcel and his grandmother depart for Balbec. Marcel is disappointed at finding, instead of the wild, storm-swept coast he expected, a sunny, comfortable seaside resort. His grandmother meets an old friend, Mme de Villeparisis, and through her, they are introduced to the Princesse de Luxembourg. Marcel observes the mutual suspicion of the two separate worlds, the bourgeois and the aristocratic.

‘The facts of life have no meaning for the artist, they are to him merely an opportunity for exposing the naked blaze of his genius.’

In writing these words Marcel Proust might well, but for his extreme modesty, have been referring to himself, rather than to his creation, the painter Elstir. For nowhere in literature is there a greater example of artistic metamorphosis than in Proust’s transformation of the facts of his brief and troubled life into the fictional world of *Remembrance of Things Past*.

Born into a well-to-do bourgeois family at the end of the last century, the course of Proust’s life was, on the surface,

unremarkable. But he possessed a unique ability to reveal what lay below that surface.

Remembrance of Things Past is so original a work that it is difficult to categorise. Whilst written in the form of an autobiography, it is far from being a literal account of the author’s life, and he denied many times that the Narrator was himself, or that the characters he described were portraits of people he knew.

But the characters and events of the book are nonetheless true in a deeper sense. They are the essence of the author’s experience, distilled in the fire of his genius. Proust has created from the raw material of his life an enduring work of art. The facts of his life are in themselves of no especial interest; what transforms them is his vision. And he has the capacity to convey that vision to us, to allow us to enter into his internal world; for, as he writes in *Within a Budding Grove*:

‘...the march of thought in the solitary travail of artistic creation proceeds downwards, into the depths, in the only direction that is not closed to us, along which we are free to advance, though with more effort, it is true – towards a goal of truth.’

In *Remembrance of Things Past*, Proust addresses such varied subjects as painting,

music, aesthetics, philosophy, psychology, medicine, and love – but never in a theoretical or impersonal way. His thoughts and meditations always arise in response to the experiences he describes, and form an integral part of the narrative.

If time is the thread which runs through the novel, another, equally important, theme is love in its various forms. The quality both time and love have in common, that which obsesses Proust, is their elusiveness. Proust's search for lost time is accompanied by his search for lost love.

From the Narrator's childhood experience of being sent to bed without the benison of his mother's goodnight kiss, arises his awareness of the impossibility of his complete possession of his mother's undivided love. Thus, within his nature, love and yearning become inextricably combined; desire attaches itself to the inaccessible, and becomes the cause of his pain and loneliness.

In *Within a Budding Grove*, we follow the course of Marcel's search for love. His childish passion for Gilberte, the daughter of Swann and Odette, has faded, leaving an amorous vacuum, and Marcel sees in every pretty young girl a potential lover. His illness has forced him to abandon his proposed trip to Venice, and instead he has accompanied his grandmother to the

northern coastal town of Balbec. Here, he is disappointed to find, not the savage, storm-swept coast of his imagination, but a tranquil seaside resort of suburban villas, inhabited by members of the local bourgeois society and a sprinkling of Parisian aristocrats.

So, having expected to learn from the wild, untrammelled forces of nature, it is instead the luxurious Grand Hotel which becomes the setting for Marcel's subsequent lessons in life. Here he comes into contact with high society in the form of Madame de Villeparisis and her friend the Princesse de Luxembourg, vulgarity in the form of Bloch and his family, predatory homosexuality in the person of the arrogant Baron de Charlus, friendship in the sympathetic attentions of Robert de Saint-Loup, and love in his infatuation for, initially, the entire 'little band' of girls, but which eventually settles on Albertine.

Yet even behind the beauty and energy of these young girls, the author senses the implacable progress of time. Andre Maurois has written: '*The Jeunes Filles en Fleurs* are more than an image. They define a season in the brief life of the human plant. Even while he is gazing in wonder at their freshness, he is already noting the tiny signs which announce the successive stages of fruiting, maturity seeding and dessication.

"As in the case of a tree whose flowers blossom at different periods, I saw in the old ladies who thronged the beach at Balbec the hard, tough seeds, the soft tubers, which those girls would sooner or later become..." *

The experiences of Marcel the narrator afford Marcel the author the opportunity of sharing with us his thoughts and feelings, and as a result we are enriched by the depth of his wisdom, the keenness of his observation, the generosity of his humour, and the poetry of his language.

Although *Within a Budding Grove* is but a part of this marvellous cycle, it stands on its own as one of the most touching and revealing evocations of the growth of young love in literature. It was awarded the Prix Goncourt in 1919, the first official recognition of the rare genius of Marcel Proust.

*Andre Maurois, *The Quest for Proust*, London, Jonathan Cape 1950

Notes by Neville Jason

The Author

Marcel Proust was born on July 10, 1871. His father, a distinguished professor of medicine, was from a Catholic family, while his mother was Jewish. Although intent on becoming a writer from an early age, Proust was riddled with self-doubt.

During his twenties he co-founded a short-lived review, *Le Banquet*, contributed to *La Revue Blanche* and had his first book published in 1896, a collection of essays entitled *Les Plaisirs et les Jours*.

He became an enthusiastic admirer of Ruskin and translated his *Bible of Amiens* and *Sesame and Lilies* into French. A novel, *Jean Santeuil*, which was the precursor of *Remembrance of Things Past*, was abandoned, and eventually published long after Proust's death, in 1954.

For much of his youth Proust led the life of a man about town, frequenting fashionable Paris drawing rooms and literary salons, which were to form the background of a number of his early stories and sketches, and subsequently of *Remembrance of Things Past*.

The death of his adored mother in 1905 resulted in a nervous collapse and aggravated his chronic asthma and insomnia. But despite his grief and the sense of loss from which he never recovered, his mother's death freed him with regard to his homosexual emotional life, and allowed him

to address homosexuality in his writing, albeit in a manner which treated such experiences as happening to others rather than to himself.

In 1907 he moved into an apartment in the Boulevard Haussmann where, in the bedroom which he had had lined with cork to keep out noise, he embarked upon his great work *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (*Remembrance of Things Past*).

This long autobiographical cycle was originally published in eight sections: *Du Côté de Chez Swann* (*Swann's Way*) in 1913; *A L'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs* (*Within a Budding Grove*) in 1918; *Le Côté de Guermantes I* (*The Guermantes Way I*) in 1920; *Le Côté de Guermantes II* and *Sodom et Gomorrhe I* (*Cities of the Plain I*) in 1921; *Sodom et Gomorrhe II* in 1922; *La Prisonnière* (*The Captive*) in 1923; *Albertine Disparue* (*The Sweet Cheat Gone*) in 1925; *Le Temps Retrouvé* (*Time Regained*) in 1927.

Proust was obliged to publish *Swann's Way* at his own expense, and even after it had appeared, had trouble finding a publisher for the next part, *A L'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs*. However, when it appeared in 1918 it received considerable acclaim, and was awarded the Prix Goncourt the following year.

By the time Proust died, on November 18, 1922, the first four parts of the cycle had been published, leaving the others

to appear posthumously. The English translation from which this abridged version has been prepared was made by C.K. Scott Moncrieff.

Notes by Neville Jason

**The music on this recording is taken from
the MARCO POLO catalogue**

D'INDY PIANO TRIO/PIANO QUINTET Ilona Prunyi, piano, New Budapest Quartet	8.223691
BRETON PIANO TRIO György Oravecz, piano, New Budapest Quartet	8.223745
GRIEG PIANO MUSIC Vol. 13 Einar Steen-Nokleberg, piano	8.553399
FAURE NOCTURNES 1-6 Jean Martin, piano	8.550794
CIURLIONIS PIANO WORKS Múza Rubackyté, piano	8.223549

Music programming by Neville Jason

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Marcel Proust

Within a Budding Grove Part II

Read by **Neville Jason**

In Part II of *Within a Budding Grove*, young Marcel falls under the spell of an enchanting group of adolescent girls. At first, intoxicated by their beauty and athletic energy, he finds it difficult to choose between them. But gradually he finds himself drawn to the beautiful Albertine – though without guessing how much she is to mean to him in the future.

Within a Budding Grove is the second book of Marcel Proust's monumental, quasi-autobiographical novel *Remembrance of Things Past*. It was awarded the Prix Goncourt in 1919.



Neville Jason trained at RADA where he was awarded the Diction Prize by Sir John Gielgud. He has worked with the English Stage Co., the Old Vic Company and the RSC as well as in films and musicals. In television he has appeared in popular serials such as *Maigret*, *Emergency Ward 10* and *Dr Who*, as well as playing classical roles such as *Orestes* and *Horatio*. Formerly a member of the BBC Radio Drama Co., he is frequently to be heard on radio. As well as *Remembrance of Things Past*, he also reads Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* for Naxos AudioBooks.

CD ISBN:

978-962-634-116-2

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Abridged by Neville Jason. Produced by Nicolaas Soames
Post-production: Simon Weir, The Classical Recording
Company,
and Andy Karamallakis
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