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Celebrating 175: Romaine Brooks, Manuscript, No Pleasant Memories, circa 1930s (2)

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LONDON.

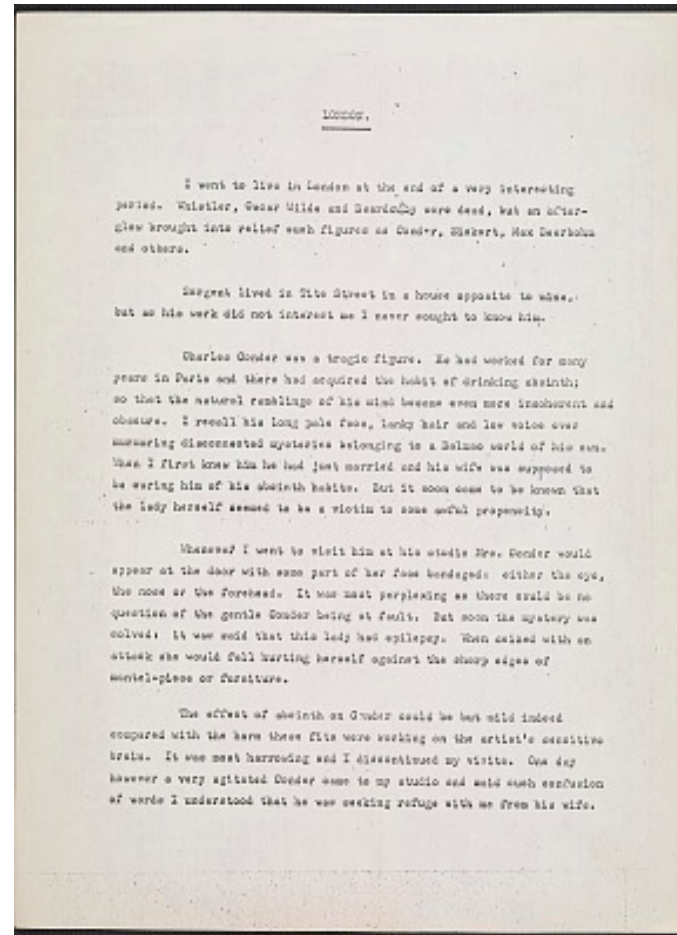
I went to live in London at the end of a very interesting period. Whistler, Oscar Wilde and Beardclay were dead, but an after-glow brought into relief such figures as Conder, Sickert, Max Beerbohm and others.

Sargent lived in the Tite Street in a house opposite to mine, but as his work did not interest me I never sought to know him.

Charles Conder was a tragic figure. He had worked for many years in Paris and there had acquired the habit of drinking absinth; so that the natural ramblings of his mind become even more incoherent and obscure. I recall his long pale face, lanky hair and low voice over murmuring disconnected mysteries belonging to a Balzac world of his own. When I first knew him he had just married and his wife was supposed to be curing him of his absinth habits. But it soon came to be known that the lady herself seemed to be a victim to some awful propensity.

Whenever I went to visit him at his studio Mrs. Conder would appear at the door with some part of her face bandaged: either the eye, the nose or the forehead. It was most perplexing as there could be no question of the gentle Conder being at fault. But soon the mystery was solved: it was said that this lady had epilepsy. When seized with an attack she would fall hurting herself against the sharp edges of mantel piece or furniture.

The effect of absinth on Conder could be but mild indeed compared with the harm these fits were working on the artist's sensitive brain. It was most harrowing and I discontinued my visits. One day however a very agitated Conder came to my studio and amid such confusion of words I understood that he was seeking refuge with me from his wife.



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