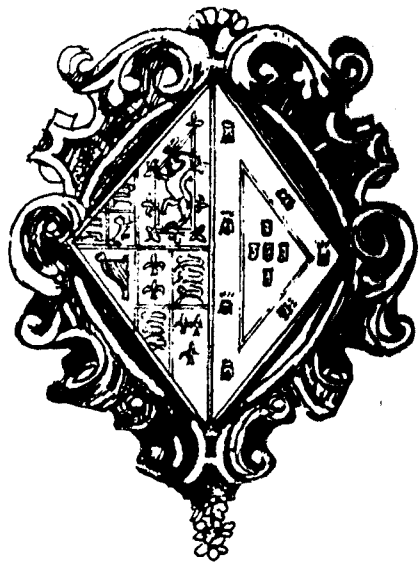


**THE BRITISH  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
OF PORTUGAL**

TWENTY SEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT  
AND REVIEW 2000

Quinta Nova  
Carcavelos  
2777 PAREDE



## THEY WENT TO PORTUGAL ROSE MACAULAY'S VIEW OF THE ANGLO-PORTUGUESE ALLIANCE<sup>1</sup>

by Luisa Alves

Whenever we want to mention a general book about England and Portugal, we think of this book. Published in 1946<sup>2</sup>, it is still the best-selling and best-known book on the subject, as well as the most famous of its authoress, who was, above all, a novelist. Before the publishing of *They Went to Portugal*, a so-called "basic work for beginners", there was a study about Portuguese literature in England, published in the twenties by Félix Walter<sup>3</sup>, and in the thirties Professor Prestage started the historical studies concerning the Alliance that have been continued thenceforth<sup>4</sup>.

Rose Macaulay's work doesn't lay its emphasis on the historical perspective but on her own point of view; therefore, the association between the two countries is reported in a literary way, although history is the obvious scenery and the view is, as well as the writer, genuinely English. In consequence, we shouldn't expect this book to be an history of the Anglo-Portuguese Alliance,

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<sup>1</sup> This paper in Portuguese ( "*Inglese em Portugal - A Visão de Rose Macaulay da Aliança Anglo-Portuguesa*" ) was originally part of the International Conference Group on Portugal's *Alliance '93 Conference* held in Cambridge in September 1993 and later a lecture in English was given at the British Historical Society of Lisbon during the month of February 1994.

<sup>2</sup> MACAULAY, Rose, *They Went to Portugal*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1946; Penguin Books, 1985.

<sup>3</sup> WALTER, Félix, *La Littérature Portugaise en Angleterre à l'Époque Romantique*, Paris, Honoré Champion, 1925.

<sup>4</sup> PRESTAGE, Edgar (ed), *Chapters in Anglo-Portuguese Relations*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1935.

something it was never intended to be. **An a matter of fact**, it isn't at all what scholars classify as an **history work** in the specific meaning of the word, even considering a *corpus* constituted by eight centuries of Portuguese and English history.

On the other hand, *They Went To Portugal* is nowadays part of the **Penguin Travel Library**, but it is **neither a travel-account** nor a travel-guide — it deals much more with the residents than with the visitors. In the second volume - *They Went to Portugal Too* (1991)<sup>5</sup> - the publishers, Carcanet Press, seem to have solved the problem of gender definition including it in the series **Aspects of Portugal**. Actually, it is a comprising work, a *mélange*, as a critic called it, interdisciplinary, cultural in shape and literary in mark, the way its maker wanted it to be.

Dame Rose Macaulay (1881-1958), was a very prolific writer: many novels, poetry, essays, travel books, articles and reviews in periodicals. She had a particular fancy for motorcars and in 1947, aged 66, she went by car, on her own, along the Iberian Mediterranean coast. This journey is described in *Fabled Shore* (1949)<sup>6</sup>. She travelled quite a lot, but Portugal as a visited land is only mentioned in the book above, even if the country as a whole deserved a very different place in her life and work.

The idea of making a book about Portugal came to her mind during a terrible time in her private affairs and also in the middle of the Second World War, and it turned out to be a way of keeping busy, forgetting sorrows and fleeing the war with the writing of a non-fiction work. It gave her the opportunity of leaving England for two months. She writes in a letter to her friend Rosamond Lehmann, dated the 20th August 1942:

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<sup>5</sup> MACAULAY, Rose, *They Went to Portugal Too*, Manchester, Carcanet Press, 1991.

<sup>6</sup> MACAULAY, Rose, *Fabled Shore - From the Pyrennees to Portugal by Road*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1949.

I would like to go to Portugal, and see sun and miss spies and refugees and Portuguese<sup>7</sup>.

Her first interest was the bad-manners of the British in foreign lands, so fatuously priggish and often so stuck-up about the dirt and superstition they encounter abroad<sup>8</sup>, a fact that points to a forthcoming evaluation of her countrymen rather than an assessment of the Portuguese.

Through a friend writer, Mary Lowndes, she went to Susan Lowndes, her daughter, who had married a Portuguese man and lived in Lisbon. Mrs. Susan Marques was her unwearing hostess, lending her a very helpful hand in the research she did in the British Council Library, at the time under the direction of Professor George West. She spent March and April 1943 in Lisbon, and on her return to England she doesn't hesitate to write:

Portugal was lovely! I had two months there and enjoyed it all the time. Very interesting architecture; glorious weather; charming towns: wine, fish, and lots of material for my great work on the English in Portugal<sup>9</sup>.

Great, indeed, and long — 750 pages, and two more years of study in the British Library in London. By the end of the war the book was ready, but the publishers said it was too long and she had to leave half of it behind. The second volume had to wait until 1991 to be in print.

As far as the structure is concerned, we agree it was a clever way of dealing with so much data — the chapters are arranged by themes, each one consisting of various biographical sketches. In the **Preface**, she explains:

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<sup>7</sup> in EMERY, Jane, *Rose Macaulay - A Writer's Life*, London, John Murray, 1991, p.277.

<sup>8</sup> Letter to Gilbert Murray, dated the 16th October 1946, *Ibidem*.

<sup>9</sup> Letter to Gilbert Murray, dated the 10th May 1943, *Ibidem*, p. 278.

If I ever had the notion of putting into this book all the British people who have been to Portugal down the ages about whom I could discover anything, I soon abandoned it. They are too many; they have gone too much; so, out of the eight centuries, *I selected some*: some tourists, some soldiers, some ambassadors and consuls, some merchants, some kings, <sup>10</sup>queens and princes, some missionairies, some exiles, a murderer .

What makes this a truly interesting work is the way she assumes a certain dramatic honesty and dignity in her wish of questioning the preconceived ideas and the snobbery of her own countrymen, while giving a detached new perspective of the occurrences, showing both the positive and negative sides of the English character, always with a great sense of humour and irony. The objective is to please the readers and also to inform them accurately: at the end of each chapter there's a bibliographical list, thus proving the high level of serious scholarship of the investigation made.

Although many critics tend to find numerous mistakes in this book, the fact remains that it stands out as the main reference for all the non-Portuguese speaking scholars. All we can say is that, nevertheless some imprecisions, they are of minor importance comparing with the reliability shown. People shouldn't try to turn this work into something which it is not — an Anglo-Portuguese History. It should be looked at through a cultural and literary angle, as a divulgation work, notwithstanding it deals with historical events and characters involved in the oldest Alliance in the world. We will try to demonstate this perspective in the following approach to the text.

Apart from the sixty biographical sketches, already mentioned, the work has a few generic chapters, where the stress is not laid on relevant characters but on events, associations or communities. Thereupon, in the times previous to the Alliance there

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<sup>10</sup> MACAULAY, *Opus cit.*, vol.1, p.12.

is a chapter about the **Early** nameless **British Visitors** in Phoenician, Celtic, Roman, Saxon and Norman times, another one about the **Crusaders** in the 12th and 13th centuries, and another one about the **Merchants** between the 12th and 16th centuries. There are also two chapters about the **British** associations in **Lisbon** ( namely, the English College, the English Factory, the English Longroom, the English Cemetery, the English Church and the British Hospital ) and one about the Community in **Oporto**.

After the year of 1373, the first prominence of the work obviously goes to Philippa of Lancaster, the **English Queen of Portugal**. It is well known that for many Portuguese she is considered the "only good thing England ever gave us" - an excellent wife and mother, learned and pious. Rose Macaulay reaffirms these facts, and when mentioning her famous children she rejoices:

Thus was English Plantagenet blood infused into the Royal line of Portugal<sup>11</sup>, perhaps to justify the greatness of Prince Henry, the beloved "adopted" son of England. However, there is also the other side of the story, and she makes the following comment about life in the Royal Court:

History does not relate that any of them were so English as to be continually drunk; possibly, in this respect, their Portuguese blood, breeding and environment prevailed over their northern strain<sup>12</sup>.

A few chapters later, to show the opposite reputation, the authoress chose a black sheep of an honourable English line<sup>13</sup>, Mr. Allen Hutchinson, a **Murderer**( 1675 ).

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p.43.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p.41.

<sup>13</sup> MACAULAY, *Opus cit.*, vol 2, p. 50.

According to the Treaty signed in 1642, the English citizens had special privileges in Portugal, for instance, judicial autonomy — they could only be arrested by order of an English Judge. Yet, that didn't happen all the time. In this case, Mr. Hutchinson murdered a countryman, a member of the Factory in Lisbon, but ended up with a special allowance given by the Portuguese Crown because of his conversion to Catholicism. A shame for England this gentleman, who literally got away with murder with Portugal's connivance.

Not so disgraceful for the English, but not very dignified within the Alliance context, were the raids of Sir Francis Drake (1587) and the Lord of Essex (1596), described in the chapter called **Enemies**. Undoubtedly, Portugal had lost her independence to Spain then, and the English were only protecting their interests, so they tell us. But when referring to the stolen Library of the Bishop of Faro, nowadays part of the Bodelian Library in Oxford, Ms. Macaulay's opinion is that Lord Essex's initiative wasn't so bad for the Bishop's interests after all, because his beloved books were installed with care on the shelves of learned libraries<sup>14</sup> thus implying that probably they would no longer exist, had they stayed in Faro. As always, England was doing her best on Portugal's behalf.

The majority of British Exiles were Catholics on the run. One of them was also a man of arms, whose relationship with Portugal (1578) is narrated with delightful irony: Sir Thomas Stukeley, a soldier of fortune, a notorious mercenary, known throughout the world, valued less by others because over-prized by himself<sup>15</sup>.

He made use of Her Majesty's ships without permission, among a variety of treacherous events that gain him the reputation of a pirate. Twice he tried to invade Ireland and everywhere he went he introduced himself as Duke of Ireland. Claiming he was a persecuted Catholic, he went to the Pope to get troops to conquer

Ireland. Afterwards he came to Lisbon with the same intent, but Dom Sebastian "diverted" his services to fight in Africa with the Papal troops under his command<sup>16</sup>.

He died in the battle with the king and thence became a literary character at least in two plays, but apart from heroic death his memory is far from glorious, so she points out: To remind Lisbon of him, there remained a mass of unpaid debts[...]the memory of an imposing figure[...] and a crucifix that had been blessed for indulgences by his Holiness, at the instance of the devout Thomas Stukeley<sup>17</sup>.

As far as **Writers** are concerned, the important names are quoted, among them the most celebrated poet of them all, who in a few stanzas did harm Portugal more than many others in entire books: Lord Byron (1809). The hate he felt for the Portuguese remains inexplicable. It was a bad time for the Alliance ( Beresford Regency ) and Byron carried lots of personal problems with him. Rose Macaulay minimizes the importance of the well-known verses of *Childe Harold*, attributing them to the natural ill humour, ill manners and callow prejudice of a vulgar adolescent in a temper with life<sup>18</sup>.

She too had to deal with troublesome situations, when she first visited Portugal, yet she doesn't seem to care to find excuses for Lord Byron's spitefulness.

There is, of course, a chapter about Lisbon **Earthquake**, a tragedy that was the foremost motive for the very large number of **Tourists** who visited the capital in the beginning of the 19th century. They wanted to see the new city and feel the romantic picturesque of the South. Some of them wrote travel-accounts, and these books are classified thus by Dame Macaulay:

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p.356.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p.358.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p.174.

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<sup>14</sup> MACAULAY, *Opus cit.*, vol.1, p.425.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 356.

They were pretty poor stuff, written by mostly stupid and insular travellers, who found the Portuguese difficult to know, found their religion superstitious and their political system reactionary. They admired the scenery, Cintra, the aqueduct, the peasantry, the women, the Tagus and Camões, they liked the wine and the fruit and the English burial-ground, they had a romantic passion for the unfortunate Inez; for the rest, give them England<sup>19</sup>.

We may choose Mrs. Baillie as an example. Her husband was a business man and they lived in Lisbon for three years (1821-23). She was a writer as well, and in her three-volume work she describes society and courtly life; she wrote a poem about Sintra, not good at all\*, comments Rose Macaulay, she hated Dom Miguel, she was very interested in Portuguese politics and with all her limitations she conveys a vivid picture of those years\*.

Once again showing an humane point of view, the authoress concludes:

She always felt homesick, but she bade farewell to her Portuguese friends with regret<sup>20</sup>.

Of all the Clergymen — Jesuits, Tractarians and Anglicans, Bishops and Priests — the Methodist George Whitefield ( 1754 ) is perhaps the most extraordinary figure portrayed. For him, passing through Lisbon was a chance to flog Catholic superstitions one more time and to write a book about it, a very selective view, as Ms. Macaulay remarks:

What Mr. Whitefield saw in the streets all the way from Belem to Lisbon were wayside shrines with crucifixes and images of saints [...] not the Tagus, the Jeronimos, palaces, orange groves,

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<sup>19</sup> MACAULAY, *Opus cit.*, vol.2, p.184.

\* <sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, pp-186-187.

churchs and gaily coloured houses, not even the Portuguese women<sup>21</sup>.

One year after this visit the Earthquake occurred in Lisbon, and Mr. Whitefield was quick enough to consider it a divine punishment. Rose's final note is, in the least, sarcastic:

Less than twenty years later Mr. Whitefield's college was destroyed by fire. No doubt this visitation was regarded by Roman Catholics [...] as a judgement on the shocking superstitions of Calvinistic Methodism<sup>22</sup>.

Among the diplomats, Ambassadors and Consuls, Sir Richard Fanshawe was surely the one who tried harder both to help Portugal and to defend England ( 1661-1666 ). Being fluent in Portuguese, Spanish and Italian, he translated *The Lusads*. His first assignment was to settle the marriage of Catarina de Bragança and Charles II; later on he had to deal with the influence of France in the Portuguese Court, as well as with the complaints of the British Factory.

He was of that noble and simple type, rare among ambassadors, which has to be awakened little by little to the sordid realities of life and human nature. He never really understood the irresponsible selfishness, for instance, of his king, or his lack of intention to be further embroiled in the parlous affairs of his wife's country<sup>23</sup>.

He did everything he could to protect Portugal from Spanish domination. He wanted a peace treaty signed by Spain, England and Portugal, but he failed in the attempt. Notwithstanding, the authoress shows her deepest admiration for the honourable Cavalier:

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<sup>21</sup> MACAULAY, *Opus cit.*, vol.1, pp.204-205.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p.206.

<sup>23</sup> MACAULAY, *Opus cit.*, vol.2, p.256.

A lovable, earnest, humorous, **great man** — with a splendid simplicity about him: it might be called nobility<sup>24</sup> .

Finally , there are a number of **Soldiers** continually tangled in the affairs of this country — **needless to say that** in all the great battles of Portugal British troops were always in the field. Let's take a look at the most hated by the Portuguese: Marshall Beresford (1808-1824) . Rose Macaulay had no doubt in assuring he fulfilled his duty as English Officer, even when Gomes Freire's trial is mentioned:

He was concerned about Freire's having fair-play<sup>25</sup> , and she immediately transmits the residents' concerns:

The British in Portugal welcomed the court back with relief[...] they were looked at askance by their Portuguese neighbours[...]social life had been almost suspended<sup>26</sup> .

She finishes the chapter with a reference to Beresford's children and lover, the Viscountess Juromenha:

The Viscount died in 1828, but his widow refused to marry her faithful British lover<sup>27</sup> .

A melancholic end for such a powerful man.

Throughout these examples, we selected from the extensive gallery of portraits this work turns out to be, it is easy to see that the English hardly ever mixed, they had autonomy, special prerogatives, national associations and well organized communities. We have a good description of the British interests, both commercial and political, and it is crystal clear their concern about Portuguese

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p.263.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p.208.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p.213.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p.230.

independence to restrain Spanish power. For us the English were a minor evil, better than the Spaniards, our hateful neighbours. Indeed, this is the simple and true history of the Alliance; but according to Ms. Macaulay's view there's much more to it:

- Henry, the Navigator, wouldn't be the tenacious undertaker of the discoveries without his English mother, but would he be the visionary impeller he was without his Portuguese father?

- Byron thought Sintra was too good to be owned by the "poor paltry slaves", but he didn't get a ticket to his "glorious Eden" anywhere else in the world.

- And what about the bigotry of the Catholics, was it more or less disgraceful than Protestant prejudice?

This is the image transmitted by the work — the Alliance is both a strange and unique relationship, and that message is conveyed through a nice, pragmatic, unprejudiced, enjoyable and ironic style. *They Went to Portugal* is full of life, of human reactions, of emotions, because the authoress elected those as fundamental in the complementary rapport between the two peoples, much more than political facts.

Shall we go now a little bit under the surface and ask: is it real? How truly does it express the writer's actual feelings towards Portugal?

According to cultural imagerics studies, image is the result of a view, which is conditioned by the writer/viewer. The fact of her being permitted to travel to Portugal in 1943 might look like an irrelevant detail, but it unveils a determinant point: it was not easy at all to leave England during the war and to travel to the Continent. We are sure the British Government allowed Rose Macaulay's research taking into consideration that a book about the old Alliance would be a good means of thanking Portuguese neutrality in the world conflict. In 1936, Salazar reaffirmed that the English Alliance

exists and will exist<sup>28</sup>, and during that year Churchill asked permission to make use of the military base in the Azores, in the name of the Alliance<sup>29</sup>.

The idea of such a book would seem very useful, but perhaps too restricted in the approach, because the result would have to be nice to Portugal without being unpleasant to England. This doesn't imply that the authoress was forced to a certain point of view, but the peace and quietness she found in Lisbon while London was bombed everyday was more than sufficient to make her feel appreciation and tenderness for the happy neutral and western oasis<sup>30</sup>, as revealed in the articles she then wrote for the *Spectator* and *The Anglo-Portuguese News*. In our own point of view, this condition can also be perceived in three other pre-eminent factors:

1- When the division of the work for publishing was necessary, it is clear that the more polemical sketches were left out. Such are the cases of Beresford, Drake and a great many of those about politicians, ambassadors and consuls. Surely, that was not a coincidence.

2- The *corpus* of the work has its limit in the middle of the 19th century, during the civil war between D. Miguel and D. Pedro, when Lord William Russell was the Ambassador. The writer says she avoided people still living because that always raises questions too delicate<sup>31</sup>, a statement that explains the missing 20th century but doesn't clarify the omission of the second part of the 19th. Likewise, this is no innocent coincidence; as a matter of fact, along the 19th century the relationship between the two allies went on

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<sup>28</sup> Speech to the Portuguese Army, the 19th October 1936, in ALMADA, José de, *Para a História da Aliança Luso-Britânica*, Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional, 1955, p. 74.

<sup>29</sup> Note of the British Cabinet, dated the 16th June 1943, *Ibidem*, p.75.

<sup>30</sup> MACAULAY, *Opus cit.*, vol.2, pp. 305 - 311.

<sup>31</sup> MACAULAY, *Opus cit.*, vol.1, p. 13.

deteriorating and by the end of the century, with the African dispute and the consequent Ultimatum (1891), the rupture was almost eminent. In *They Went to Portugal* there is only one single line about the Ultimatum, a fact proving that, as far as this aspect is taken into account, the book is no different from the traditional English view of the problem - it tries to withdraw importance from the so-called "incident".

She refers to the two visits King Edward VII made to Lisbon before and after the Ultimatum (1876/1903), as if to show that nothing really important ever happened between those dates, and when she mentions Ramalho Ortigão's *Epístola a John Bull*, a ferocious anti-English work, she is clever enough not to mention the Ultimatum, and therefore she succeeds in turning ridiculous the anglophobia expressed there. Ortigão is portrayed as a furious and irrational radical, whereas she omits that those times were anti-English and anti-Alliance, as the Republican Movement was gathering strength and popular support, due to the submission of the ruling House of Braganza to the will of England. Ramalho doesn't transmit only a personal hate or a literary peculiarity. He is certainly the Portuguese voice of the blackest ten years in the history of the Alliance. While electing Ortigão as the sole target of criticism, Rose Macaulay once again triumphed both in supporting her country's wishes and avoiding direct confrontation with the Portuguese.

3- In her private letters, published posthumously, we discover other revealing clues. In 1943, she wrote to Murray:

I liked the Portuguese, but they are rather stupid, yet animated and amiable<sup>32</sup>.

Later in 1947, during the second visit, the one described in *Fabled Shore*, she writes to her sister:

The extreme inefficiency and lack of brains in most Portuguese is put down by scientists to their negro blood — a census

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<sup>32</sup> *Vide nota 8.*



of 50 years ago showed 43% of negro blood [...]. Since the great influx from Africa began, in the 15th and 16th centuries, the Portuguese have been backward mentally — discovered and invented nothing, created nothing, and been unable to organize their country intelligently<sup>33</sup> .

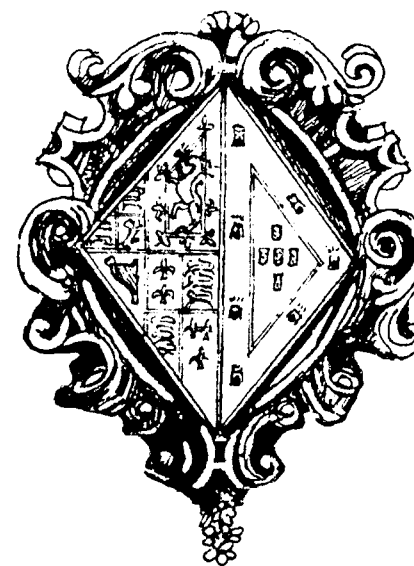
A most excellent statement for someone who criticized her countrymen for being snob and prejudiced against the Portuguese. However, these opinions appeared in her private correspondence, which shows she was much aware of the difference between those commentaries and the ones for publishing. Indeed, this small detail is the whole question.

To end our talk, we think that the three factors we have just examined support the conclusion that *They Went to Portugal* is, above all, a diplomatic work — unequivocally meritable, well written, full of fair-play and humane concerns. All of that, and more; it is not only the best attempt till now to depict the way two widely different countries socialized during eight centuries, but also a very pleasant means of conveying the inexplicable attraction that down the ages, and still today, makes nothing comparable to the English surrendered to the charms of Portugal.

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<sup>33</sup> Letter from Lisbon, dated the 17th August 1947, in BABINGTON-SMITH, Constance (ed.), *Letters to a Sister by Rose Macaulay*, London, Collins, 1964, p. 132.