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## Epilogue

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After Rhoda's death in 1936, Symons was cared for by Mrs Bessie Seymour, their housekeeper since 1921, to whom Symons wrote a note dated 10 February 1940: "I have always had a profound admiration for you going back to a certain year in which Mrs Symons was not well and she often said to me that your devotion to her was almost divine and that without you she would not have lived as long as she did. And for your devotion to me and I know that without you I should never have lived as long as I have."<sup>1</sup>

During the Second World War, Symons moved into her home in St John's Wood, London, but in 1944 returned to his beloved Island Cottage, where he caught a chill, which developed into pneumonia. On 22 January 1945, he died, and was buried in a small, isolated cemetery some 500 yards from the Wittersham churchyard.<sup>2</sup>

His funeral was sparsely attended, and obituary notices generally adopted the faintly patronising tone appropriate to literary failures.<sup>3</sup> Aestheticism was out of fashion, and Symons's achievement seemed to belong to a distant age whose concerns were trivial compared to those of the generation just emerging from a world war. But the *Times Literary Supplement* editorialised at length on the passing of 'the last of the eminent aesthetic writers', whose 'special contribution' was his revelation of the significance of French Symbolist writing, and aptly summarised his contribution to English literature. 'The seclusion of beauty', the *Times Literary Supplement* noted, manifested itself in its purest state in 'the critical writings of that subtle and responsive spirit, Arthur Symons'.<sup>4</sup>

### Notes

1. The signed note, typewritten and corrected in ink, is now in the possession of Mrs Diana P. Read, Bridport, Dorset. On p. 306 of his *Arthur Symons: A Critical Biography* (1963), Roger Lhombreaud rewrites the final sentence of Symons's note.
2. Lhombreaud erroneously locates the gravesite in the Wittersham churchyard (p. 307).
3. See Richard Jennings, 'Arthur Symons', *New Statesman*, 17 Feb. 1945, p. 15.
4. 'Arthur Symons', *Times Literary Supplement*, 3 Feb. 1945, p. 57.