

On the day of my arrival in that Newcastle hotel I was asked to sign the register. I was in a hurry and I did what most of the other guests on that page had done, that is, I simply put the name of my city, London. "Full address, please", the clerk murmured mechanically. "Doesn't matter". I muttered moving off, "that 'll find me". It never occurred to me that any peculiar significance would be attached to this idle remark. Nor was it, I think, by the clerk. It was the Press, the artful promptings of reporters, that turned this into "an amusing incident". Before I had left Newcastle I had read five different versions, in local and London papers, of this "amusing incident". The only likeness between these five versions was that they all introduced me and the hotel register and they were all untrue. In three of them I was made to behave like a pompous ass, in two of them like a conceited buffoon... These spicy little dishes are only served up to the public because it is believed that the public is interested in the person in question; but it never occurs to reporters and their sub-editors that the effect of a slightly heightened or distorted anecdote may be a very bad one, helping to prejudice thousands of readers against the innocent victim of it. The little episode is worth mentioning too because it is also an example on a small scale of how current history is made.

**J. B. Priestley**

---