



THE RIGHT TO WHITE

BY GEORGINA SCHAEFFER

“CUT IT DOWN AND PAINT IT WHITE.” That’s the quote most often associated with Syrie Maugham’s approach to the furniture she both collected and designed in her shop on Baker Street in London. This year, the legendary interior designer (and wife of the prodigious author, W. Somerset Maugham) is having a renaissance with two new books: *The Secret Lives of Somerset Maugham* (Random House) and Pauline Metcalf’s *Syrie Maugham: Staging the Glamorous Interior* (Acanthus Press). Metcalf’s book, with some 250

illustrations and photographs, captures the life of the trendsetter and fashion icon from her tumultuous personal life to her blazing career.

Born in 1879, Gwendoline Maud Syrie Barnardo was the daughter of doctor and minister John Thomas Barnardo, founder of the Barnardo Home for Boys and Girls, and Sarah Louise (also known as Syrie). In 1901, the beautiful Syrie (she was known for her flawless complexion, raven hair, and bright eyes) married American chemist Henry Solomon Wellcome—

This page: Syrie, at age 70, during her last photo shoot with Cecil Beaton in 1949. Billy Baldwin described this expression as having the "little hint of witchery in her eyes." Opposite: Lila and Dewitt Wallace's game room at their home, High Winds, in Mount Kisco, New York.

