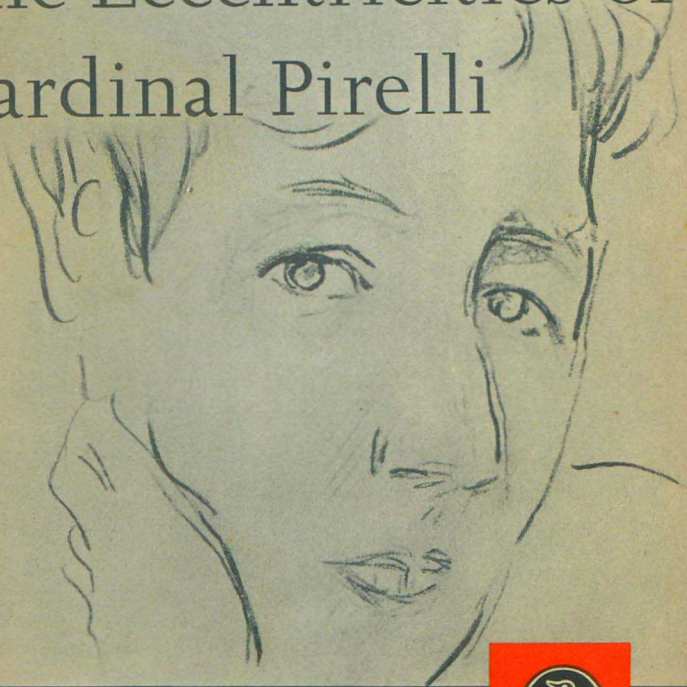


Ronald Firbank

Valmouth

Prancing Nigger

The Eccentricities of
Cardinal Pirelli



PENGUIN MODERN CLASSICS



3/6

PENGUIN MODERN CLASSICS

1570

VALMOUTH
PRANCING NIGGER
THE ECCENTRICITIES OF
CARDINAL PIRELLI

RONALD FIRBANK



Arthur Annesley Ronald Firbank was born in 1886, a grandson of Joseph Firbank, a Durham miner who later amassed a fortune as a railway contractor. His mother, to whom he was greatly attached, was an Irishwoman of considerable beauty and cultivated tastes. Owing to a weak constitution, Firbank was educated mainly at home; in 1906 he went up to Trinity Hall, Cambridge, where he was received into the Roman Catholic Church.

Until 1914 Firbank travelled a good deal, but lived mainly in London, habitu   of the Caf   Royal, well-known for his extreme and deliberate aestheticism, his sinuous, loosely-jointed figure, and his morbid nervousness, which issued in hysterical laughter and an elaborately capricious manner. The First World War was spent in retreat in Oxford; then again until his death in Rome in 1926 he travelled widely.

Firbank's first work was published in 1905, a volume of two short stories, *Odette d'Antrevernes* and *A Study in Temperament*. Ten years later Grant Richards brought out his first novel, *Vainglory*. The following were published later, all initially at the author's own expense: *Inclinations* (1916); *Caprice* (1917); *Valmouth* (1919); *The Princess Zoubaroff*, a play (1920); *Santal* (1921); *The Flower Beneath the Foot* (1923); *Prancing Nigger* (1924 – published in England 1925 under Firbank's original title, *Sorrow in Sunlight*); *Concerning the Eccentricities of Cardinal Pirelli* (1926). The *Artificial Princess* (1934) appeared posthumously; it had been written before *Vainglory* but put away and forgotten by the author.

*The drawing of Firbank on the cover
is by Augustus John*