Spacious Days

Nesta Webster

HUTCHINSON

SPACIOUS DAYS

Nesta Webster, who is well known for her history of the French Revolution, a standard work, *Chevalier de Boufflers*, *World Revolution*, and *Secret Societies*, gives in this book a full and vivid account of her family and social life up to 1914. The title is indeed well-chosen, for the life she describes was indeed spacious and free in spite of some social conventions and restrictions which may seem odd by comparison with the very different social standards of conduct and behaviour to-day.

Some Reviews :

Nesta Webster's canvas is such a big one that to do full justice to it would demand much more space than is available. But it can be said that not a square inch of it is wasted. . . . The deftness of the touch wherever the brush wanders is inescapable. This would necessarily be so, since it is wielded by the hand of a very good

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artist, who knows both what colours to have on her palette and how to use them.

TATLER

This is yet another addition to those nostalgic books which deal with Edwardian times. . . . Her days were certainly spacious, and this charming autobiography captures their spirit clearly and with warmth.

THE QUEEN

As Miss Bevan she took part in the social life of the day, travelled extensively, observed shrewdly, and here has written, in a style of disarming modesty, a charmingly discursive record of those secure and carefree days.

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Etc.

The Author, aged 25

SPACIOUS DAYS

An
AUTOBIOGRAPHY

by

NESTA H. WEBSTER

With 17 Illustrations

Third Impression

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FOREWORD

THIS book was originally written for my children and not for publication. When two publishers asked for it I said: "But of what interest will my life be to people in general? I cannot introduce the lists of celebrities the British public seems to love!"

Apparently they have always loved them. Madame du Deffand, writing to Horace Walpole in 1775, remarked on two occasions, "As you like proper names, here is the list of my guests," and there follows a string of titles, *ducs, duchesses* and *marquises* she had entertained to supper, which must have delighted the heart of Walpole. The great French *mémoires* were never written on these lines; celebrities were only introduced when there was something of interest to say about them; the art of the writers was to give a picture of the times they lived in, not merely to record great events, but to make everyday happenings interesting by their own reactions to them and by reflections applicable to all ages and all countries.

Both publishers assured me that this form of autobiography has now come to be most appreciated by the British public, that strings of famous names are no longer *de rigueur* and that the life of any individual, however unimportant, if written sincerely can be made of interest.

So, having lived in four reigns and through three wars, having travelled all over the world and met all kinds of people, I have ventured to put into print some account of life as I have seen it, looking back across the years from the "controlled" and mechanized England of 1949 to the spacious days when individual liberty was our priceless possession, when travel was free and the whole wide world open to the adventurous.

CHAPTER I

QUAKER ORIGINS

IT would be difficult to imagine a more peaceful scene than that on which my eyes first opened when, soon after eight o'clock one summer evening (the 14th of August) I entered the serene and untroubled world of late Victorian England.

I do not think my advent can have caused anything of the stir or joyous speculation which usually greets a further addition to a contented family circle, such an event had in our case been so often repeated. For some forty years Ninny, the old nurse, had sat in the nursery receiving babe after babe into her lap, until I, the youngest and last of my father's seven daughters and of his fourteen children, wound up the list. My birth must thus have seemed almost a matter of routine in the well-ordered household of Trent Park, near Barnet in Hertfordshire.

Looking out over the wide terrace from the windows of the room where I was born in the long white house, overgrown with creepers, smooth lawns and lush meadows could be seen sloping down to the shores of a great pond turning gold and rose-colour in the rays of the setting sun. Around it sleepy ducks and swans were settling down for the night amidst the scented rushes, and great white cart-horses stood up to their knees in the cool water. From the farther bank, meadows rose upwards towards dense woods of ancient beech trees, looming black against the sunset sky, whilst rooks circled cawing overhead, and wood-pigeons coo-ed softly among the branches.

Such is the picture for ever imprinted on my memory of the home where I was born, and which I loved with the strongest passion of my childhood.

My father, Robert Cooper Lee Bevan, was the descendant of a long line of Welsh burghers who had inhabited Glamorganshire from the earliest times to the beginning of the eighteenth century, when some of the family migrated to London.

Owing to the habit of keeping pedigrees, prevalent in Wales, it was possible to trace their descent without a break and including every alliance by marriage, back to Jestyn-ap-Gwrgant in 1030. Until the sixteenth century they retained the Welsh custom of calling themselves after their respective fathers. Thus Evan the son of Owen was known only as Evan ap Owen, and it was his son Jenkin ap Evan who, at the end of the sixteenth century, combined his patronymic in the surname Bevan. His son, William Bevan, joined the new sect of Quakers under the influence of George Fox, and henceforth the Bevans were precluded from any profession other than those permitted to the Society of Friends; hence they can claim no illustrious ancestors in army, navy, church or law.

My great-great grandfather, Timothy Bevan, married Elizabeth Barclay, grand-daughter of the "Apologist", and in 1767 his son Silvanus joined his uncle, David Barclay, in the Bank, which had been founded at the beginning of the century. This eventually became Barclay, Bevan, Tritton and Co., and in my childhood consisted only of the one building at 54 Lombard Street, of which my father was the head during fifty years of his life.

By this time the Bevans had long since ceased to be Quakers. Louisa Kendall, who married Silvanus, was the last of the family to belong to the sect, and seems to have lived up admirably to their principles. It is related that at one moment Silvanus, though really devoted to his wife, had allowed his fancy to stray to a girl in Wales where he and Louisa were wont to spend their summer holiday. One year, on the evening of their arrival in this rural spot, Silvanus went for a stroll through the fields, and Louisa, innocently following soon after, surprised him in amorous conversation with her rival on a stile. Without a word she turned back to the house and Silvanus, seeing he had been discovered, hurried after her, expecting to be met with reproaches. Entering the drawing-room he found her peacefully seated at the tea-table, and as he came towards her she looked up and said gently: "Friend, will thee have a dish of tea?" Whereat Silvanus, overcome by her magnanimity, threw his arms round her exclaiming, "Friend, thee is an angel!" and, it is said, never sought his charmer again.

Silvanus, however, seems to have been, on the whole, a dour personality, and at the end of his life retired to the loneliest spot he could find amidst the Wiltshire downs, where he built himself a grim stone house, Fosbury Manor, near Hungerford, of which more anon.

His son David, who married Favell Bourke, daughter of Robert Cooper Lee—a London merchant with estates in Jamaica—succeeded him at the Bank, and finding Fosbury too far away to spend much time there, took a house in Russell Square, just opposite the present Russell Hotel, and was thought very venturesome because in those days of cut-throats and footpads he used sometimes to walk from there across the fields to Lombard Street. In about 1808 he moved to Walthamstow, then right out in the country; from thence to Belmont, a charming house near Barnet, and to another town house, 42 Upper Harley Street. He also inherited from his father Collingwood House at Brighton.

David's marriage was merely an arranged one, and although he wrote Favell charming verses during their engagement, which have been preserved to this day, there seems to have been no romance in their married life. His wife always spoke of him as "Mr. Bevan" and referred to him in the same way in her diaries, which consisted mostly of pious reflections. This was in strange contrast to the mentality of her brothers—Matthew, Scudamore and Richard, wild young men leading a life of dissipation, often as boon companions of the Regent (later George IV). Two ended by blowing out their brains, and it may be that Favell, who was devoted to her brothers, never recovered from the tragic day when Matthew came to see her and left a ring lying on the mantelpiece. It was only when she heard of his death that she realized this was his farewell gift.

David's first son was born and died in 1799, so that I can claim an uncle who lived in the eighteenth century! Of the three who followed after, my father, Robert Cooper Lee, named after his maternal grandfather, and born on February 8, 1809, was the eldest. The others were Barclay and Richard Lee. Barclay was a sober and serious-minded young man, who went into the Church and achieved the feat of surviving his fourth wife; "Bob" and "Dick" were thus the gay spirits of the trio, riding recklessly about the country and indulging in every sort of escapade.

According to records of the day, they were the best men to hounds in the Pytchley Hunt; Dick the hardest, but Bob the straightest. In a book published when they had both grown old it is said: "The present chief of the great house of Barclay, Bevan & Co. would probably doubt his own identity were he to be told that at one time there was no one except himself who could beat his brother Dick across Leicestershire or Northamptonshire. That it was so, however, no one is more willing to allow than the younger of the two brothers."[1]

Robert Bevan was the only man of his day, with the exception of Mad Wyndham, who ever rode down the Devil's Dyke at Brighton, and it was said that he could jump a five-barred gate with a sixpence between each of his knees without letting it drop.

David seems to have exercised very little control over his sons, for Robert, whilst still a boy of seventeen at Harrow, was allowed to take himself away from school and spend a year enjoying himself in London and the hunting field. After this interlude, however, he decided to go on with his education and went to Trinity College, Oxford, where he was working for his degree, when his father had a paralytic stroke, and Robert, at the age of twenty, was recalled to take his place at the Bank.

So this gay young man, handsome and high-spirited, tall—6 foot 3 inches in height—with a splendid figure, a fine dancer, fond of theatre-going and all the pleasures of "love, wine and song", had to settle down to business life. He took his new duties very seriously. The other partners were old and tired and by the time he was twenty-four he was practically running the Bank himself, little dreaming of the vast octopus that was to grow from the house at 54 Lombard Street.

It is indeed possible that but for him "Barclay's" would long since have ceased to exist, and that it was only his action which saved it on a memorable occasion many years later. In 1866 the bank of Overend Gurney in Lombard Street failed, owing, I have been told, to the fact that a certain Gurney heiress wished to marry her groom, and meeting with opposition from her relations, retaliated by withdrawing her entire fortune from the family bank, and so broke it.

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[1] *The Pytchley Hunt, Past and Present*, by H. O. Nethercote (1888), p. 250.

The repercussion was felt by Barclay, Bevan & Co. and on May 11, known henceforth as "Black Friday", the greatest anxiety prevailed at No. 54. According to a legend handed down by family retainers, and related to me by one of them who remembered hearing of it at the time, a panic then arose, and the doors of Barclay, Bevan were soon besieged by a crowd clamouring for their money deposited there. It was then that Robert Bevan stepped into the breach, and standing on the steps of the Bank, went on calling out to the crowd: "Come and take your money away! Come and take it! It is all there!"

His ringing voice and commanding presence had the effect of reassuring the crowd, which gradually melted away, and the panic was allayed. This was in reality no game of bluff on the part of my father, for he had received assurances of support from the Bank of England, so that large sums of money could have been paid. But a heavy run on the Bank would have dealt it a blow from which it might never have recovered.

Although tied the whole year round to Lombard Street, my father did not feel himself obliged to give up hunting altogether, but by taking his holiday in the winter contrived to get in a few weeks with the Pytchley, together with his brother Richard, who had not joined him in business. It is said that he once intended doing so and duly arrived at the Bank, only to find it shut as it was a holiday. Thereupon he went back to his hunting, to which he devoted the rest of his life at Brixworth Hall, Northamptonshire.

It was perhaps all to the good of the Bank that he did not join it. Uncle Dick was a "character" and, I imagine, without the vaguest idea of business. Sport was the only thing he understood. Outdoor life had made him as hard as nails and almost insensible to pain. In his youth he had shot himself in the hand and was obliged to have half of it, comprising the third and fourth fingers, amputated. As chloroform had not yet been invented, he held out his hand for twenty minutes whilst the surgeon sawed through the bone and muscle, and it is said that he endured the operation without wincing. Neither this nor a permanently damaged knee, nor any other injuries—for he was said to have broken every bone in his body at some time or another—damped his spirits or abated his ardour for the chase.

Like my father he had no patience with nervous riders. It is related that on one occasion a young man came to stay at Brixworth and bucked about his exploits in the hunting field. But Uncle Dick, suspecting that he was less good across country than he pretended, determined to put him to the test. Accordingly he suggested they should take a ride together, and off they started, Uncle Dick leading the way through a number of open gates. A groom, however, had been instructed to follow behind them and padlock each gate after they had pased through. When some half-dozen locked gates lay between them and home, Uncle Dick gaily proposed to his companion that they should take a few jumps and started off, leaving the young man, who dared not take the gates, to find his way back as best he could.

I remember Uncle Dick only when I was a child and he came to visit us at Trent. He was then quite an old man and looked exactly like a picture from Jorrocks, with his cheery blue eye, his low top hat with the wide curling brim and high starched collar with the points running into his ruddy, weather-beaten cheeks. He came up to me with a chuckle, and shaking his finger said, "Now don't you go and write any poems about me!" For already I had been guilty of literary efforts, not altogether approved of by the family—as will be seen later.

Of my father's four sisters, Louisa, Favell, Frederica and Fanny, only one left her mark in the world. Of Frederica, who became Mrs. Stevenson, there is nothing to be said. Aunt Louisa, whom I remember when she lived near Trent Park at Osidge, later the home of Sir Thomas Lipton, became the progenitress of a vast brood of Bosanquets. Aunt Fanny, who married Admiral Morier, uncle of the well-known diplomat, was very clever and amusing, but also remarkable for the extraordinary shrillness of her voice.

Aunt Favell, who at the age of thirty-nine eloped with a clergyman called Mortimer, was, however, a really remarkable character. Although her name is unknown to the public, she was the author of some of the most famous children's books in the English Language: *Reading Without Tears, Peep of Day, Line upon Line, Near Home and Far Off,* etc. We, of course, were all brought up on them, and it amused us to recognize our father in the new baby described in *Reading Without Tears,* and the stories of Bob and Dick as relating to him and his brother.

I do not know whether the book is still in use amongst the children of today; the title, however, almost a flash of genius, has quite recently given rise to the fashion of appending the words "without tears" in all sorts of connections. It was strange to see the words "French Without Tears" written over the door of a London theatre, and to think how shocked Aunt Favell would have been to see the phrase she coined one hundred years ago put to "such base uses"!

For Aunt Favell, of course, never entered a theatre. Her austere form of religion can be seen in *Peep of Day,* which is said to have had one of the largest sales of any book in the English language, but which, with its terrifying references to Hell-fire, I frankly detested. Fortunately a bowdlerized edition of *Peep of Day* has since been published.

Aunt Favell, however, in her actions showed herself superior to her intolerant beliefs, for her whole life was devoted to the service of humanity. We still have the little diary she wrote in at Fosbury, where her carefully kept accounts show that out of her allowance of £200 a year only £60 were spent on herself; the rest went to keep up the village school.

She had a passion for teaching, and a real genius for imparting knowledge in such a way as to make it comprehensible and interesting to the child mind; unfortunately, although devoted to children, she had none of the motherly tenderness that could win their affection. It was the tragedy of her life that whilst inspiring respect, she failed to inspire love, which accounts for the fading of what seems to have been her one great romance.

My father's best friend at Harrow and later at Oxford was Henry Manning, afterwards Cardinal Manning, who as a young man often spent his holidays at Belmont with David and his family. Frederica, the gayest of the four girls, tried to flirt with him; Favell was only concerned with his spiritual welfare. Her great learning contributed to their friendship, for she was a first-class classical scholar, and she and Manning made a sort of game of conversing in Greek and Hebrew whilst walking in the garden. It is said of her later in life that "it was quite usual to hear her apostrophising her pet lamb in Latin when it disobeyed her injunctions".[1]

Aunt Favell certainly exercised a great influence over Manning. His Catholic biographer, Shane Leslie, relates that he spoke of her as his "spiritual mother", and to the end of his life he used to say that it was she who had first awakened him to unseen realities. In a letter he wrote her in 1832, when he was a young man at Oxford, he said: "By my admission to your family, and more especially to the correspondence of yourself, I owe the largest part of the feelings and principles which will, I hope, regulate my future life."

We may question, however, whether Aunt Favell's feeling for Manning was altogether that of a "spiritual mother"; references in her diary suggest a more tender sentiment, and in order to see him alone, she used to arrange interviews in the back-shop of Nesbitt, the publisher. But once again she had failed to inspire love, and it must have been a crushing blow to any hopes she may have entertained when Manning married a Miss Sargent on November 7, 1833.

My father still continued his friendship with Manning, and after his own marriage Manning went to stay with him. During this visit my father began to fear that he was becoming rather High Church and wrote to him in protest. In reply he received a letter which in the light of after events is somewhat curious. My sisters well remembered it, and one of them, Millicent Hart Dyke, has transcribed from memory the following passage:

"My dear Robert, you need have no fears for me on this account, for I have always believed that Popery and Infidelity are the two Anti-Christs."

Millicent adds: "I can see that letter now, yellow with age, which my father used to show us now and then and which he kept to the day of his death." And he would say laughingly that he would publish it if ever Manning became Pope.

Whether as consolation for the loss of Manning, or for some other inscrutable reason, Aunt Favell ended by marrying, in 1841, a morose and uncultured clergyman, Thomas Mortimer, who treated her very badly, but mercifully departed this life nine years later. In 1862 she retired to a charming old cottage at West Runton, near Cromer, where she adopted a number of orphans, who were expected to be content with the ascetic life she chose to lead, for she had no patience with human frailties, even with a hearty appetite. The meagrest rations were held to be sufficient, and my mother described to me an occasion when Aunt Favell entertained a party of some eight people, for whom one partridge was provided. This could not be attributed to motives of economy, for besides her private fortune the enormous sales of her books must have brought her in large sums. Her frugality was thus clearly part of her stern and austere plan of life. If only she had had some of my father's humour and *joie de vivre* she might have won the affection for which all her life she craved in vain.

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[1] Letter from my cousin, H. W. Shepheard-Walwyn, to *The Times* supplementing the long biographical article my brother, Edwyn Bevan, had contributed to that paper on June 27, 1933, the centenary of the publication of *Peep of Day.*

Aunt Favell was certainly eccentric. In the long article before referred to, contributed by my brother Edwyn to *The Times*, this point was touched on in the following passage:

> "... while she bestowed her affections in some cases, with even unwise indulgence, she was sometimes autocratic in imposing upon those for whom she cared, children or animals, her own ideas of what was for their good. She could not believe that it was good for her parrot never to rest its back and when she took it to bed with her compelled it by slaps to lie on its back. The unhappy bird died, family tradition asserts, from being washed with soap and water and dried before the kitchen fire.
>
> "She herself has described in *Reading Without Tears*, Vol. II, how the donkey was driven blind-fold into the sea, still harnessed to the cart, because sea bathing was considered good for it, and how it swam in terror out to sea. The lamb was also subjected to sea bathing; the problem of drying its soaked fleece my aunt solved with characteristic ingenuity; she had it left buried for a time in the sand with only its nose protruding. She herself was a regular bather; the orphans were made to stand in a circle, holding up towels, with their backs inwards, while she solemnly undressed in the middle."

But to return to my father's youth. At the age of twenty-five he married Agneta Yorke, daughter of Admiral Sir Joseph Yorke, a small, gentle creature to whom he was devoted. At first they were as gay as other people of their world, but at the end of a few years something happened which changed the current of my father's life. He became what the evangelicals of his day described as "converted" and decided that it was his duty to abandon "worldly pleasures" so as to devote himself wholly to the service of God.

He gave up dancing and hunting, ceased to go to the play and allowed himself only a few simple amusements as a recreation from the City. It must be remembered that in those days the theatre was extremely coarse, and he used to say that it was the foul language used on the stage that decided him to give it up. Still, to a nature so pleasure-loving and so gregarious it was hardly less of a sacrifice than giving up riding to hounds. Indeed, to the end of his life he could never see a hunting coat without his eye kindling, or pass a theatre without longing to go in.

But his Christianity was not a mere matter of renunciation. Together with his friend Lord Ashley, afterwards the great Lord Shaftesbury, he set himself to better the conditions of the working classes, and as long as he lived this question constantly occupied his mind. Politics interested him only in so far as they related to the cause he had at heart—the welfare of humanity and the maintenance of the Christian religion.

It was with this end in view that he stood for Parliament as one of three Conservatives for the City of London in the General Election of 1847. In opposition were six Liberals headed by the Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, and including Baron Lionel de Rothschild who, as a Jew, was not yet entitled to sit in Parliament. The Election turned largely on the proposed Bill for the removal of Jewish disabilities.

Neither my father nor Lord Ashley, then member for Bath in the House of Commons, were in any way "anti-Semites" in the sense that the word is used today, but as leading Evangelicals they felt very strongly that the Christian character of Parliament should be maintained. They therefore opposed a measure by which the oath required of every member, "on the true faith of a Christian", should be abrogated. As the Roman Catholics however advocated it my father, wishing to avoid any appearance of racial prejudice, in his Election speech took his stand on Protestantism as being the faith he desired to defend.

At that date the opposing Parties did not hold separate meetings and both spoke at the large joint meeting in the Guildhall on July the 28th. Baron Rothschild was greeted with loud cheers and a general waving of hats by his supporters who had rallied in force, and when my father, proposed by Mr. Abel Smith, rose to speak they created such an uproar that he was unable to make his voice heard, so summoning his sense of humour, always one of his strongest characteristics, to his rescue, he amused himself by pretending to speak, making gestures and moving his lips without emitting a sound so as to enjoy the fun of making them shout themselves hoarse for nothing.

My father headed the Conservatives with 5236 votes, but there were 6792 for Rothschild and the Liberals got in. My father never stood again.

Perhaps the loss of his first wife changed the current of his thoughts. For in 1851 Lady Agneta—as she had become on the succession of her brother to the title of the fourth Lord Hardwicke—died, leaving him with six children. Five years later he married again, this time into a Whig family, whose history contains some points that may be of interest here.

CHAPTER II

THE SHUTTLEWORTHS

MY mother, Frances Shuttleworth, whom my father married as his second wife in 1856, was of pure Lancashire descent. Her father, Philip Nicholas Shuttleworth, Warden of New College and later Bishop of Chichester, belonged to the younger branch of the Shuttleworths of Gawthorpe Hall, near Preston, whose forbears had inhabited that part of the world from time immemorial. Their name does not appear to have been derived from the shuttle, since it was known before the introduction of that implement to Lancashire, a Henry de Schutilswerthe being traced there as early as 1200—but apparently the family, by way of a pun, later on adopted a hand holding a shuttle as their crest.

According to a family tradition, a boar's head was added in 1367, when Ughtred de Shuttleworth accompanied John of Gaunt on an expedition into Spain, and as a reward for his military services received 1000 acres of land and permission for himself and his descendants to bear the crest of John of Gaunt, the boar's head.

The House and Farm Accounts of the Shuttleworths, reproducing those kept by the family during the end of the sixteenth century, and published by the Chetham Society in 1857, provides one of the most complete records of English country life in the Elizabethan era and the reign of James I; here we can see precisely what our ancestors wore, what they ate and drank, the prices paid for labour, the sums dispensed in charity, the hire of players who in those days of marvellous drama, but of the most primitive theatrical performances, existed mainly as troupes in the service of great nobles and were "let out" on occasion to entertain the lesser country houses and rewarded with some such sum as *2s. 6d.* for their pains.

Not far from Gawthorpe, at Hoghton Tower, near Preston, lived my great-grandmother's family, the Hoghtons—the "de" preceding their name in the time of Edward II had been dropped for several centuries and was not resumed till 1866—who had inhabitated this ancient castle since soon after the Norman conquest. In July 1617 Sir Richard Hoghton, who had been knighted by Queen Elizabeth, determined to entertain James I with great magnificence during his progress into Scotland.

In the Appendix of *The House and Farm Accounts of the Shuttleworths* are found the curious menus of the banquets served during the royal visit—swans, herons, curlews, capons, red deer, "umble pye", pigs burred, hogs' cheeks dried, neat's tongue tart, forming course after course, whilst the item "Quails, 5 for the King" was evidently a *bonne bouche* of some rarity.

This seems to have been the famous occasion when His Majesty, after making Sir Richard a baronet and having feasted well, set about knighting people all around him and finding no one else on whom to confer the honour, smote the loin of beef before him with his sword, exclaiming: "Rise, Sir Loin!"

An amusing sequel to this story is contained in a long history of the Shuttleworths and de Hoghtons in my grandfather's handwriting which has been handed down to us, but never printed, and thus describes the feasting that took place:

> "The reception afforded to King James on this occasion appears to have vied in splendour with the festivities which celebrated Queen Elizabeth's arrival at Kenilworth, and many years elapsed before the resources of the family were restored from the effects of the vast expense they then incurred. . . . A record of this royal visit has been preserved, and in a household Book, still in existence, is inserted each day's ponderous Bill of fare. Forty of the principal neighbouring gentry, it appears, then condescended to assume the Hoghton Livery and to render their voluntary services on the occasion. Amongst the number then assembled was Richard Shuttleworth, at that time High Sheriff of the County."

The sight of his neighbour's munificence seems to have fired Richard Shuttleworth with the desire to emulate him by entertaining the King at one of his houses, Barton Manor, near Gawthorpe. Accordingly the High Sheriff

> "solicited the honour of His Majesty's presence, but when he found that honour was conceded to him, he prudently sat down to calculate the probable expenditure thus entailed upon him by this act of royal condescension, his prudence perhaps awakened by the splendid scale on which his neighbour's were made at Hoghton Tower, and conceiving that his old Manor House (Barton) which then stood much in need of repair, might possibly be rebuilt for the same sum, he at once set fire to the edifice, and was left to express his *unfeigned* regret at so untoward an event."

Barton, however, was not rebuilt for a century. Meanwhile Richard Shuttleworth was succeeded by his grandson, another Richard, who had also inherited the Manor of Forcet, in Yorkshire, where he lived and received a knighthood under curious circumstances. To quote my grandfather's document again:

> "It is related that when he and his wife (Margaret, daughter of John Tempest, Esq., of Old Durham) made their first appearance at Court, soon after their marriage, which must have taken place at an unusually early period, Charles the 2nd was so much struck by their almost ludicrously juvenile appearance when presented to him, and especially when he learnt that they were the Parents an Infant Child, and that of the united ages of the three Individuals did not amount (it is said) to thirty-five years, that he insisted on conferring the honour of Knighthood upon the youthful Father."

If this honour was intended as an incentive to prolificacy it failed signally in its effect, for the infant remained an only child. He lived, however, to a great age and left a son, James, who showed no desire to win the kind of reward bestowed upon his grandfather.

For many years he represented his county in Parliament, but when offered a peerage replied: "No, no, I am James Shuttleworth as my forefathers were. I desire to be nothing more and therefore a peerage would add nothing to my happiness." He was wont to say that "his notion of a Patriot was a man who wisely *spent* his income", and by way of carrying out this principle he turned his attention to his less fortunate relations.

For though the elder branch of the family enjoyed great wealth and broad lands, the younger branch was comparatively impecunious. James Shuttleworth accordingly bethought himself of adopting the third son of his cousin Nicholas, a bright boy, named Humphrey, and paid for his education at Westminster and Oxford.

Humphrey, who was my great-grandfather, turned out brilliantly; according to the family record before quoted, "he was considered a good scholar and possessed many accomplishments, he spoke several languages with great fluency and was an excellent musician". After entering the Church he went with Lord Stormont as Chaplain to the British Embassy in Vienna, and at the end of four years returned home to become Vicar of Kirkham, in Lancashire. It was here that he won the heart of Anna Hoghton, sister of Sir Henry Hoghton, of Hoghton Tower.

The prelude to this marriage is found in an amusing letter from my great-grandmother which has been handed down to us. Anna was apparently paying a country visit on her way to London for the season in the winter of 1771, when she heard that Humphrey Shuttleworth, young, charming and unmarried, had been appointed to the living of Kirkham near her home. So, taking up her pen, she wrote to her mother as follows:

> "Hedingham Castle
> "Dec. 4th 1771.
>
> ". . . I am prodigiously taken with what you say of Mr. Shuttleworth and Betty has wrote about him since, I am affraid he will be snap'd up before I arrive at Preston, Cou'd not you give him to understand that you shall have a smart Daughter, next summer, newly imported from London, dont you think he might be prevailed upon to wait to see her. If Miss Bradkirck comes to Town I believe I shall be very civil to her, on purpose to get an invitation to Kirkham, can he afford to keep a Carriage do you think, I should like it better if he cou'd, but we won't quarrel about that. . . . My flirt Lord Clare is come down but I have not seen him yet. . . . I think you will say I have wrote nonsense enough.
>
> "I am your most dutiful daughter
> "Anna Hoghton."

Humphrey Shuttleworth was evidently prepared to wait; Anna duly returned from town to find that he had not been "snap'd up", so proceeded to snap him up, or perhaps to be "snap'd up" herself. At any rate, they were married two years later and lived happily, alas, for only too short a time! In 1783 Anna Shuttleworth died, at the age of thirty-five, leaving five children under eight years old, of which my grandfather, Philip Nicholas, was the youngest. Knowing herself to be dying, she bade them farewell in a long letter, which lies before me as I write—a pathetic document in faded ink on yellowed foolscap paper—beside the laughing letter she had written to her mother twelve years earlier.

> "My dear children," it begins, "when you read this you most probably will have lost an affectionate Mother and one who wishes most ardently that you may be happy both in this life and in that which is to come. But above all endeavour to obtain y^{e} latter, for there you will be eternally blest and whatever Afflictions or distresses befall you here they will soon have an end as y^{e} very longest life is nothing in comparison with Eternity."

So in ten short years, the gay, flirtatious girl had become the saintly woman, which is perhaps not as surprising as it may seem at first, for are not the gayest natures often those most capable of serious thought?

My grandfather, Philip Nicholas Shuttleworth, was no exception to this rule, for his sense of humour seems to have been only equalled by his learning and piety. His memory was so prodigious that at the age of fourteen, when a scholar at Winchester, he repeated 9000 lines of Greek and Latin verse—Homer, Virgil, Horace and Sallust—and it is said that as a young man he could read off a list of 150 disconnected words and repeat them by heart after the third reading. (This habit of memorizing has, fortunately, descended to his grandchildren, for we are nearly all able to learn by heart without an effort.)

As Warden of New College he is recorded as the one man who could always be depended on "to set the table on a roar"; his epigrams and parodies, imitations and sketches delighted his friends. And as he was acquainted with all the intellectual lights of his day New College became the rendezvous of literary and political celebrities, and "no person of eminence ever came to Oxford without dining with Shuttleworth".

In politics Philip Nicholas was a Whig, a fact which partly accounted for his friendship with Lord and Lady Holland, to whose sons he acted as tutor when quite a young man. We have numbers of his letters written during his travels with them in France in 1814, and of those they wrote to him in later life. Lady Holland must have been a most extraordinary person; my mother could remember as a child seeing her when she came to stay with my grandfather at New College, accompanied by her maid, her footman and a small negro page of whom she seemed very fond. The little black boy used to stand behind her chair at meals, and Lady Holland would feed him over her shoulder with tit-bits off the end of her fork.

> "My dear friend," she wrote afterwards to my grandfather—I copy from the original letter before me—"I wish you could know the pleasure my visit to you gave me and the deep and pleasing impression it has left upon my mind. It was really gratifying to see you with such a charming wife, with such a (illegible) and most agreeable residence."

Henry Fox, however, did not think Mrs. Shuttleworth at all charming. Meeting the newly married couple abroad, he wrote: "I am rather dismayed at finding Madame so pious—I hate piety." (Considering he had admitted that he had never been able to believe in the Christian religion, this prejudice is perhaps hardly surprising.) But worse than this: "Mrs. Shuttleworth is prim, precise and very dull. There is a provoking propriety about her that would drive me wild."

My grandmother—daughter of George Welch, of High Leck, Westmoreland—had with her, on this occasion, her sister Helen, to whom a romantic story attaches. Coming one day out of St. Mary's Chapel in Oxford, she passed a young man in the road, who was so struck with her beauty that after finding out who she was, he wrote to her father, asking to be allowed to "pay her his addresses". Mr. Welch, however, did not consider him a suitable match for his daughter and refused his request. Thereupon the young man retired into a mausoleum he built for himself on the top of a hill, and lived there until he died, leaving her his entire fortune.

My grandmother did not share her sister's beauty, and up to a point deserved Henry Fox's strictures, for she certainly was far from amusing. I can remember her only as a very severe old lady when, at the age of four, I was taken to see her at Wykeham Rise, Totteridge, where she spent the rest of her life after her husband's death. It must have been in this light that she appeared to one of her little grandsons, who, one day, after gazing at her thoughtfully for a few moments, observed: "Grandmamma, I love my prayer-book!" Grandmamma, who was a devout Churchwoman, patted his head approvingly and said: "Indeed, my little boy, and tell me why you love it." "Because my prayer-book tells me that a man cannot marry his grandmother." This reply was decidedly disappointing!

It was through the influence of Lord Holland that Philip Nicholas Shuttleworth was made a bishop. The Fox family had been working towards this end for years.

In 1831 Henry Fox, who became the 4th Lord Holland, and who was then a young man of twenty-nine, wrote irreverently to his former tutor saying:

> "I long to see the Reform Bill thro' the Lords. It would give me and *all* your friends at Holland House the greatest pleasure should you be in that Chamber time enough to give it a friendly vote. I *know* you are high in Ld. Grey's list of Oxford candidates for a mitre and you need not be told how happy it would make me to see it towering over your long nose."

The appointment was mainly a political one, yet Philip Nicholas was in no way a servile supporter of the Whigs. On the contrary, he delayed his promotion in the Church for several years, by following the dictates of his conscience. Like most of the Whigs, he was a supporter of Catholic emancipation, but he displeased his Party by signing an address in 1835 to Sir Robert Peel, congratulating him on his action with regard to his Irish Tithe Bill; in not appropriating the surplus revenues of the Irish Church. This, wrote Lord Holland, was clearly intended "to prevail on Peel to keep himself *in* and the Whigs out of office, and was regretted by the latter as equivalent to a vote for a Tory against a Whig Government".

The Foxes were in despair at his folly. "How I regret," wrote Charles Fox, "that you had not the gout in both hands, and a small wandering from slight fever when that foolish address went up to Peel!"

His friends, however, congratulated him on having declined a Bishopric "on such degraded terms" and on "refusing to become the Tool of a falsely called Liberal Ministry".

Eventually he was held to be a sufficiently good Whig for the long delayed honour to be conferred on him, and on September 1, 1840, Lord Holland wrote to him triumphantly, saying that Lord Melbourne had recommended him for the See of Chichester, and the Queen had approved, though "she had asked him (Lord Melbourne) somewhat significantly if he could rely on his (Dr. Shuttleworth's) Politics".

I have before me Melbourne's letter on thick grey gilt-edged paper with "Windsor Castle" only *written* at the top, announcing the fact, curious as showing the part played by politicians in Church appointments.

The Bishop lived only two years to enjoy his elevation in the Church, for he died at Chichester in February 1842, as the result of taking a bath after eating hot scones for tea.

The Bishop's only son, Ughtred, a curious name, peculiar, I believe, to the Shuttleworths, died when he was a young man at Oxford. We always mourned his loss, for he left behind him a set of the most amazing drawings of imaginary monsters of the kind that delighted a later generation in the *Bad Child's Book of Beasts*. If only Uncle Ughtred had lived, we used to say, how he would have made us laugh!

Fortunately his youngest sister, Caroline Jemina, survived, whose imagination was hardly less fertile. She seems to have shocked my mother terribly by her youthful escapades, and indeed a young woman who could be guilty of retiring to the top of a hay-stack with young men on a Sunday afternoon to smoke cigars—cigarettes had not yet been invented—was calculated to outrage the feelings of the least prudish in the Victorian era. Cigars and crinolines must certainly have seemed a strange combination.

To come to my mother, "Fanny", the eldest of the family. Tall, upright, with regular features—I do not think she was ever strictly beautiful, but since she was nearly fifty when I was born, I could not visualize her as young.

In those days of the late Victorian era, women aged much more quickly than they do today, and with her matronly dress and cap placed on a hard parting, a woman of fifty was already "an old lady". Apart from looks, however, I do not imagine that my mother had ever been young. Never can she have indulged in any of the follies, or even the gaieties of youth, her whole mind was set on learning.

When, starting on a journey with her family as a child, her father asked her whether she would not like a story-book to amuse her on the way, she replied: "No thank you, Papa, I have my book on pneumatics to take with me." She resented it when people tried to amuse her, and a "funny man" at a children's party stiffened her resistance to such attempts. "I would not be *made* to laugh," she observed on talking to me of her childhood. This was not priggishness, but a genuine inability to enter into the mind of youth.

She had, however, a fine and subtle sense of humour; in later life she delighted in the "Alices" of Lewis Carroll and the drawings of Caran d'Ache. She was a great artist, and, when a child, Ruskin is said to have gone on his knees to her in admiration of her drawings, remarkable for their beauty of line. Later, in 1845, when she was grown up, old Lady Holland wrote to my grandmother:

> "I thank you very much for letting me see your Daughter's very agreeable and clever letters. They afforded me much pleasure and amusement and the spirit and taste of the drawings quite extraordinary. I have kept them longer than I should perhaps have done, to show them to some friends of good taste and judgement, who admired them very much."

(From one of the many letters from the Holland family now in our possession.)

My mother wrote as well as she drew, both in the sense of handwriting and of composition, for she had a wonderful command of English and discrimination in her choice of words both on paper and in conversation; she talked habitually like a well-written book. It was she who taught me all I know of style.

"Avoid using Latin words," she would say, "such as 'commence' or 'similar' when the Anglo-Saxon ones 'begin' or 'like' will do." She would have been horrified at the modern vulgarism of "prior to" instead of "before".

My mother might have had a considerable success as an authoress, but the books she wrote, *The Life of John Wesley*, *The Three Friends of God*, etc., as also her collections of poems, were not calculated to appeal to a wide public. They had, however, sales enough to bring in regular royalties, which my mother, too apart from worldly affairs to trouble about, left in the hands of her publishers.

CHAPTER III

HAPPY DAYS AT TRENT

MY mother first met my father when she was living with her mother and two sisters at a house called Wykeham Rise, in Totteridge, not far from Trent Park, where my father, then a widower, lived with his six children.

According to the legend concerning the way he came into the property, his father David, then at Belmont, about a mile from Trent, attended a sale near by in order to bid for some wine that was being sold at auction and, whilst waiting for this lot to come up, fell asleep and nodded. This being taken for a bid by the auctioneer my grandfather awoke to find that Trent Park had been knocked down to him. He made a present of it to my father, who settled in there with his first wife to whom he had been married two years. It was then he planted the beautiful double avenue of lime trees, arranged in four rows which meeting later overhead ran like green tunnels along the half-mile of its course.

At that date no railway system existed. The first train, from Darlington to Stockton, ran in 1825, the year of my father's first marriage, and it is said that he travelled in it. There were still only two when he went to live at Trent, so he used to drive himself up to London every day in a buggy to work at the Bank and, by way of enlivening the journey, chose the most spirited horse to draw it.

One indeed was so fiery that it could not be brought round to the door for no groom could hold it whilst my father got in. It had, therefore, to be harnessed to the buggy behind the closed doors of a coach-house and kept there until my father came round to the stables, got into his seat and took up the reins. Then the doors were opened and the horse shot out like an arrow from a bow, not slackening speed until it reached Lombard Street.

My father's life with his first wife was, I believe, very happy, but the marriage was somewhat unfortunate from the point of view of physique, for the Yorkes were short and inclined to *embonpoint*.

I remember at a family wedding noticing a little man with plump pink cheeks who turned out to be Lady Agneta's nephew, Alec Yorke, groom-in-waiting to Queen Victoria, and so privileged at Court that when surprised by Her Majesty in the act of exercising his talent for mimicry at her expense, instead of meeting with the reproof administered to the young man in the famous story, he was accorded an indulgent smile signifying that "We *are* amused."

Lady Agneta's children were more Yorke than Bevan in appearance. Hitherto the Bevans had been tall, well-made men; my father, indeed, had a particularly fine figure and beautifully formed hands and feet.

I can, of course, only remember him in his old age, when, with his white military moustache and upright bearing, he looked more like an old general than a banker. But his marriage into the Yorke family brought down the Bevan standard of height with a run, for his first family were all on the short side. But with his second marriage it went up again for the Shuttleworths were tall, thin and long-limbed, and my mother's children were all over average height. Thus my father's two families bore not the slightest resemblance to each other, and his seven sons presented a curious picture of "the long and the short of it", rising in exact gradation from my eldest half-brother, who was only about 5 feet high and as round as a barrel, up to my own and youngest brother Edwyn, who was 6 feet 4 inches and as thin as a rail.

When I appeared on the scene my half-brothers and -sisters were married and out in the world with a whole tribe of children of their own, so I was born an aunt many times over and have lived to be a great-great-aunt with a third great in prospect.

These nephews and nieces provided us with innumerable playmates, Roland's daughter Winifred,[1] a most lovely child and a very good rider, was my favourite who often came to stay; many were the glorious gallops we had together through the green glades of the Trent beechwoods. Frank, with his third wife and ten children, lived close by at Ludgrove, which was later turned into a boys' preparatory school by Arthur Dunn, who married Helen Malcolmson, the eldest of a delightful family who lived near Trent and were my greatest friends.

Another famous school of the same order took on a new lease of life in the same neighbourhood, for next door to Ludgrove was a cottage[2] where once lived the Rev. Robert Stammers Tabor, vicar of Trent, to whom Frank and Wilfrid were sent as pupils.

At that date a boys' school which had existed at Cheam since 1665, whither it had been moved on account of the Great Plague, was at the end of its resources and about to close down, when my father was asked to find a new headmaster and help it to carry on. Thinking Mr. Tabor would be suitable for the post my father lent him the necessary capital on the understanding that it was only to be repaid if the school succeeded. It proved a triumphant success and my own brothers were sent there in due course, Edwyn, whom Mr. Tabor used to call affectionately "Evvy Bevvy", becoming one of his most brilliant pupils.

Two of my own three brothers continued the Shuttleworth tradition by distinguishing themselves at the University. Anthony Ashley, named after his godfather, my father's friend and co-worker, Lord Shaftesbury, became Professor of Semitic Languages at Trinity College, Cambridge, and Edwyn, a Fellow of New College, Oxford, a D.Litt. and a great classical scholar.

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[1] She married the Hon. William Sidney, later Lord De L'Isle and Dudley.

[2] In my day this cottage was occupied by a most charming old lady, Miss Jane Paris, known to us all only as "Jane", who painted exquisitely. She is seen seated next but one to my father in the family group facing page 80.

I do not remember Ashley as a boy, but I believe he was very pretty and most amusing. There was a story in the family about an incident which occurred in his extreme youth when one of the Yorkes, a brother of my father's first wife, known to us as "Uncle Eliot", was staying at Trent on a visit.

Ashley, then about five years old, was allowed to come into the dining-room at dessert and sat beside him at a corner of the table. By way of friendly badinage with his little neighbour, Uncle Eliot, after taking a few sips of the liqueur brandy beside his plate, turned to Ashley and said, "Now, my boy, mind you don't drink any of that," pointing to the glass. "I won't," said Ashley. "I tried it a few minutes ago and I didn't like it, so I put it back."

My own recollections of Ashley are only of a savant such as he became on entering Trinity College where he spent the rest of his life. He was always buried in his books and his wit was of the caustic kind, usually at the expense of some less erudite mortal. He did, however, condescend to appreciate Lewis Carroll and used to say a knowledge of *Alice in Wonderland* was so necessary to one's education that an "Alice paper" should be included in examination at the University, and any undergraduate ploughed who did not pass in it.

He does not come into my life at all, as he never took any notice of us as children and very little of me after I grew up so what I know of him is mostly gleaned from his long obituary notices in *The Times* of October 1934. His health was marvellous, I never heard of his having a day's illness in his life.

Hubert on the other hand, though always seedy and disgruntled, was very kind to me when I was small, and used to bring me toys and Turkish Delight when he came down to Trent from London.

But it was Edwyn, the youngest of my own three brothers, who most contributed to the gaiety of our youth. My own sisters, Millicent, Gladys and Gwendolen, at the time of my birth were boisterous girls in the schoolroom; the nursery party consisted of Edwyn, Enid and myself. Enid, of whom I was very fond, was a melancholy child with sad grey eyes and a little drooping mouth, but Edwyn was full of spirits and the most charming little boy. He was a born actor and had a passion for animals, pretending every day to be a different one. Such was his sympathy for them that on contemplating a pig in a farmyard when we were in Wiltshire, he felt so sorry for it being so ugly that he insisted on riding over constantly to visit it and cheer it up.

Animals indeed made the great joy of life at Trent. In the meadows grazed herds of Highland cattle, shorthorns and Alderneys; we loved to go up the home farm, like a miniature village, and milk a gentle cow, warranted not to kick us or the bucket over, then up to the underkeeper's, a man named Jolly, where the shooting dogs, friendly spaniels and retrievers were kept.

Most of all I loved our schoolroom dog Dick, a black-and-tan terrier of a breed now apparently extinct, whose soft satin head received many of the tears I shed when, as often happened, I was in disgrace for some misdeed. I have loved many dogs since then, but none has taken Dick's place in my heart.

Love for dogs one day nearly involved us in a terrible tragedy. We were all playing rounders on the lawn in front of the house at Trent when a fox terrier appeared in the distance tearing towards us with its head down. Normally we should have run towards it, but one child with us was afraid of dogs and to tease her we screamed and ran away in all directions, pretending to be terrified too. The dog came straight on, passed over the spot where we had been playing, tore up to Jolly's and bit two of the dogs. It was then found to be in the last stage of rabies and both dogs died of hydrophobia.

I have often thought what a merciful Providence ordained that this particular child should have been with us at that moment and impelled us to get out of the dog's way, for this was before the days of Pasteur, and who knows how many of us might otherwise have died a ghastly death.

Horses naturally played a great part in our life at Trent. My father had taught us all to ride at about the age of four, most of us on a lovely white Arab pony named Comet, who perfectly suited his name when tearing at full gallop with his long tail streaming out behind him. When my turn came he was no longer in his first youth and had acquired a mouth of iron, but so well did he understand his duty to carry a child safely and stop at the right moment that one could lie on his back as on a sofa and let him take one along at a gentle canter with perfect confidence.

Birds added a further joy to life at Trent. I had a passion for studying them and made quite a good collection of their eggs over which Jolly became a great pal of mine. The woods all round the park made a marvellous hunting ground and Jolly used to bring me his finds, it being always understood between us that only one egg, and never the whole clutch, was to be taken from the nest. In this way I learnt a good deal about bird life, but envied Jolly his great opportunities.

I remember that when asked to write in a "Confession Book"—a fashion of the day—an answer to the question: "If not yourself, who would you be?" I wrote firmly: "Jolly". For it really seemed to me impossible to imagine a more delightful existence than his, spending not only the day on the look-out for poachers, but often half the night, in the mysterious darkness of the woods, listening to the gentle rustling of the tree leaves, the hoot of owls which made their nests in the hollow trunks of the ancient beeches.

The part of the park where these were most to be found, known as "the Rough Lot", was to me filled with romance, for there, surrounded by these venerable giants, amidst the high stems of bracken, lay the circle of green and slimy water, thick with weeds, which once had formed the moat of Camlet Castle, home of the de Mandevilles. My mother, who loved archeology, looked up its history in various old chronicles, and found that during the Wars of the Roses the Castle had been attacked, and to save it from falling into the hands of their enemies the de Mandevilles had taken their chest of treasure and dropped it to the bottom of the well, afterwards burning down the Castle.

My mother felt sure that much of interest was to be found beneath the ground and she begged my father to begin excavations. He, however, was incredulous and only laughed at her enthusiasm. "You would find nothing there," he said. "Then I will go and dig myself," my mother answered firmly, and calling Enid and me—then about thirteen and ten—to join her, set forth one summer afternoon, armed with spades and bill hooks, to the Rough Lot.

The first thing was to cut away the brambles and brushwood with which the whole island, surrounded by the moat, was overgrown, and after clearing a small space, we began to dig. I shall never forget the thrill when, after about an hour, we came upon the red tiles of the roof.

By this time we were all three too tired to go on, and returned triumphant to the house to tell my father that "Mamma had been right" and there was something to be found there. Papa, though still somewhat sceptical, then allowed some of the estate labourers to come and help us with the heavier digging and before long a number of interesting discoveries were brought to light.

A whole dungeon, with a chain attached to the wall, was dug out, also some of the oak of the drawbridge, now turned black as ebony, sunk in the slime of the moat; in course of time no doubt the portcullis might have been found. A quantity of small finds were also made—glazed tiles adorned with knights on horseback, silver coins of Edward IV, a lady's thimble, quite unlike the modern variety and covering only the tip of the finger, and so on.

But the chest of treasure was never found, for it was at this juncture that my father died and my brother Frank, who inherited Trent Park, cared even less about archeological excavations. So those we had made were left to be filled in by falling earth and the network of brambles soon covered them until no trace of our labours remained.

Thus Camlet holds its secret still, which will perhaps only be revealed when Trent Park, cut up into building lots, has been swallowed up in outer London, and its ancient beech trees cleared away to make room for the spreading sea of villadom.

It can be imagined that life at Trent was very pleasant. Nor was it less happy for the employees on the estate. The head ones had their comfortable cottages and gardens, the different families inter-married with each other, servants stayed for ever, one stable helper had been there fifty years without apparently any desire to "better himself" by becoming a coachman.

My father made himself beloved by everyone. Although crippled with gout, yet spending every day in the City, he would go the round of the farm and gardens, cheering the men piling the haystacks with jokes and suggestions of an extra pint of beer.

His easy-going temperament and sense of humour made him, however, liable to be imposed on. The bailiff, a canny Yorkshireman, had, besides his cottage garden, annexed a plot of ground in a field in order to grow vegetables for himself, which each year when we returned to Trent in the spring was seen to have grown larger. At last it reached as far as a spreading oak tree. "Now," we said, "it can go no further." But next year when we came back the oak tree had gone and the vegetable plot had advanced as usual.

Then there was the famous story of Henry Holmes' pig, which occurred before my day but remained a legend in the family.

Henry Holmes, who was then butler, begged my father to let him have a small pig out of a litter which had recently been born at the farm. My father agreed, and Henry Holmes then proceeded to keep it in a pen near the back-door, screened from view by a high laurel hedge, and fed it with the overflow from the kitchen and dairy. When it had grown into a fat porker Henry Holmes calmly suggested selling it to my father, who was so amused at his effrontery that he consented.

One servant, a coachman named Pratt, in some way unsatisfactory, was periodically given notice, but never left. One day my father said to him, "I really think, Pratt, it is time you should leave." To which the man replied, "Well, sir, you may not know when you have a good servant, but I do know when I have a good master and I am staying on." And so he remained indefinitely.

Trent, indeed, was the happiest little colony one could find and a bright example of "Tory democracy", though I am sure my father never regarded it in this light. For although a convinced Conservative, politics interested him but mildly and he never spoke of them to the men on the estate except when at election times he would say a few words to them before starting for the poll.

In those days there was no organized Socialism of any importance, but agitators were already at work stirring up the people against the Monarchy, and I can remember standing by my father's side with a row of men perched along the railings facing him whilst he said:

"Don't you believe the people who tell that you would be happier under a republic"—this was after we had started wintering abroad—"I live half the year in a republic and I can tell you that some of the workers live in houses you wouldn't put a dog in." He was thinking, no doubt, of the wretched stone hovels in the villages around Cannes.

Then, finally, "Now, then, men, you'll vote the right way, won't you?"

"Aye, aye, sir, that we will!" came in a chorus, and each went off to drop his vote for the Tory candidate into the ballot-box.

CHAPTER IV

FOSBURY

EVERY August we used to go for about six weeks to Fosbury Manor, the grey stone house built by our great-grandfather, Silvanus, in the midst of the Wiltshire downs.

The method by which the household was removed there remains one of the most curious memories of my childhood. We, that is to say the family, went inside the train, but the servants were packed into a large brake with American cloth curtains along each side and a deep "boot" at the end for the luggage.

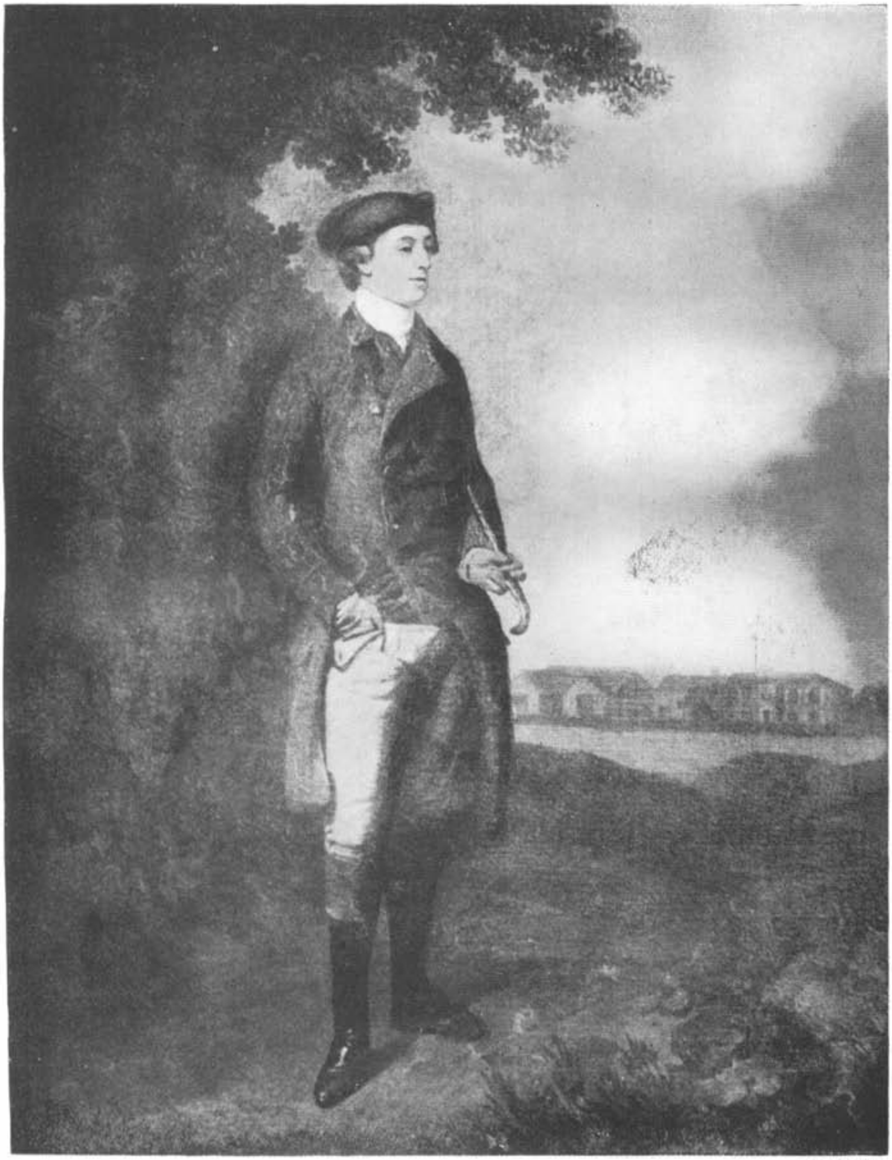
Arrived at Paddington the horses were taken out and placed in a horsebox on the train, then the brake with the servants inside, the curtains drawn closely around them, was wheeled on to a railway truck which also formed part of the train and off it started.

I remember wondering why it was necessary for the luckless servants to stifle in heat and darkness between the thick curtains all the way down to Wiltshire instead of enjoying the air and scenery on the way, but on venturing this suggestion I met with the reply from my elders, "Of course, dear, they must keep the curtains drawn or they would not be able to breathe whilst going so fast through the air!"

Even the officials at Paddington concurred in this view, strictly enjoining the servants not to draw the curtains aside lest they should be blown out. The same reason was given me when I asked why carriages could not be made to go along the roads like trains without rails—a silly question to Victorians who seriously believed that one would stifle if carried along too rapidly.

Life at Fosbury, even in the peaceful days of Queen Victoria, seemed extraordinarily old world; it was like going back a hundred years from the suburbanism which surrounded Trent to the quaint Wiltshire villages of Fosbury and Oxenwood that lay on each side of the house. The old men still went to church in smocks, the children still curtseyed when my mother drove out in the ancient barouche that had belonged to my great-grandmother, the postman still blew a horn on his way through the village streets—my mother well remembered the time he only came once a month.

Just where my father's property began, on a high point of the downs where Wiltshire, Berkshire and Hampshire met, there still stood a gruesome-looking gibbet where criminals were once hung in view of the three counties. Our favourite ride was to this gibbet because the way there lay over miles of downland where one could give one's horse its head—I can still hear the wind whistling in my ears as we tore full gallop over the smooth turf. My father was often with us on these occasions and would enjoy making us ride



by Zoffany

My great grandfather
Silvanus Bevan

My Grandfather
Philip Nicholas Shuttleworth

My Mother

down the most precipitous slopes, shouting: "Come on! Come on!" cheerfully if any of us hesitated to follow him.

At Fosbury my parents were in the right setting, for both belonged essentially to the early Victorian era. My father still spoke of lilac as "lay-lock" and would say "Put on your bonnet, my love!" when calling one of us to go out with him. Sometimes he would tell us of the days when he went back to school in a stage-coach, and used to see the unhappy victims of the law at that date hanging on gibbets by the roadside. My mother, too, had not advanced very far from the same period, and she in her turn would tell us of the days when she was a child and little girls curtseyed to their parents, called them "Sir" and "Ma'am" and their mothers carried long fans with which to rap them over the knuckles if they misbehaved.

Fosbury House itself was redolent of old world memories; one wing indeed was said to be haunted, we never knew by what, only that a young French girl who came to spend her holidays with us spent her first night in what was known as "the bowroom" of that wing, and was found next morning absolutely paralysed with terror and never to the end of her days would she tell us what she had seen. "It was too horrible, I cannot speak of it!" she said with a shudder, when some thirty years later I begged her to break her silence on the subject.

I do not think the ghost or whatever it was could be connected with Silvanus or with my grandfather David, who seems to have been a benign sort of man.

In his day the labourers' wages were often wretchedly low, and on the introduction of machinery in 1830, riots took place and incendiary fires blazed all over the county.

One Sunday evening in that year when David and his family were at Fosbury, a crowd of 200 men marched on the house to demand his signature to a paper, but after being entertained and reasoned with they went off cheering and shouting, "Bevan for ever!" promising to break only the machines that interfered with their work.

My father, however, was not content with mere palliative measures such as these, and his first act on succeeding to the property had been to rebuild practically the whole village of Oxenwood and to replace the old insanitary houses by new ones, solid, well-built and at the same time delightfully picturesque cottages with charming gardens and allotments in addition.

The schools to which Aunt Favell had devoted herself were supported entirely by him, so were the church and vicarage which he built. In this unsophisticated part of the world the villagers depended on him almost entirely for their well-being and he ruled them, not with a rod of iron, but with a firmness that would have shocked the modern exponents of democracy.

Thus at the model public-house in Oxenwood no one was allowed to get drunk, and far away on the downs were two cottages known as "Siberia" to which people were liable to be sent if they made themselves a nuisance to their neighbours. Abominable tyranny! readers will exclaim, but it did not make my father less loved by all those around him. For although at Fosbury he might be described largely as an "absentee landlord" he kept continually in touch with the inhabitants, and thirty years after his death, when the place had passed into other hands, they would sigh for the good old days when they had someone to care for them and lend an attentive ear to their troubles.

Wherever he lived my father's thoughts were always with the poor or suffering. In London, where we spent the winter, he had a number of invalids he used to visit, people in too comfortable circumstances to claim the attention of any district visitor, but often lonely or neglected, and in the evening on his way back from the City to his home in Princes Gate he would look in on them to take them books and try to cheer them.

The claims on his liberality were naturally incessant, and my elder sisters, who acted as his secretaries, were kept busy answering the flood of begging letters which poured in daily and to which he never paid a deaf ear. Millicent has since described this in the following words:

> "Amongst my father's treasures kept in a special drawer, was his collection of 'funny letters' which were occasionally brought out and read to us for our amusement, and amongst these were a few begging letters. One was from an indignant lady who pressed her claim to his benevolence, not only on the urgency of her needs, but on the fact that she was related to a 'pear of the realm'.
>
> "Another was from a very persistent beggar, who finally pleaded for a pair of boots to go to Jerusalem. These were rather gladly bestowed, probably with the reflection that Jerusalem was only a short distance from Jericho, and with the hope that the boots might take him that much further. Alas, after a due interval the boots, with the man in them, found their way back to England, and a fresh S O S was received to help him to go to America. Then there was an angry retort from one who did not get a favourable reply to his request for money. These caustic lines may have greatly relieved the feelings of the writer:
>
> Mr. Bevan, Mr. Bevan,
> Your name on earth doth rhyme with Heaven,
> But how, dear sir, about your acts
> Of hoarding wealth and giving tracts?
> Keep your tracts, Sir, to yourself,
> And spare a little of your pelf,
> And remember, Mr. Bevan,
> The rich man hardly enters Heaven.
>
> "As a matter of fact, my father was inclined to give too freely, and my sisters and I often felt the cases might not be as deserving as they would

> have him believe; but when we expressed any opinion of this sort to him, he always said that he would rather give to several undeserving amongst the many applicants, than miss giving to the *one* who really needed his help. In general, he tried, as much as possible, to distribute his gifts amongst those who might most easily be overlooked; those living in loneliness and obscurity, rather than to well-known charities, which would have brought him fame and honours."

In answer to one he had befriended who wrote expressing the fear that his name would pass away and be forgotten in less than a hundred years, and proposing therefore that some monument should be put up to his memory, one of his daughters wrote:

> "My father desires me to say,
>
> Who builds for God and not for fame,
> Marks not the marble with his name.
>
> "He is, therefore, quite content that R.C.L.B. should be forgotten among men in much less than 100 years."

The tenth of his income he regarded as not his own at all, that belonged to God; the rest must be laid out for the greatest good of the greatest number. He did not, however, believe in the easy charity of giving to beggars in the street whereby able-bodied men and women, who preferred sitting on a pavement to doing a job of work, were often enabled to make a comfortable income, whilst the honest, self-respecting poor continued uncomplainingly to struggle for the bare necessities of life.

Coming out of church one Sunday evening at Trent, with one of his sons-in-law, he was accosted by a man who told him he was unemployed, and that his family was starving. His son-in-law handed the man half a crown, whereat my father said: "What is the good of half a crown? If he is really destitute it is not enough; if he is not destitute it is half a crown too much." Then, turning to the man: "Give me your name and address." This was done, and on reaching home, my father ordered a groom to pack a cart with provisions, drive to the address given, and find out whether the case was a genuine one. The man's story was found to be true, the family was saved from destitution, and the man was given a job at the Bank.

Another encounter of his had a more surprising sequel. On his way to church one summer evening, he was coming out of the gates at Trent Park when he met a man and his wife coming in. "Where are you going, my friends?" said my father with a smile. "We are just taking a walk in the park," answered the man. As people were always allowed to go through from one lodge to another, my father merely observed, "Well, I hope you will have a pleasant walk, but I wish you were coming to church," and with a friendly nod he passed on.

Years afterwards, when he was interviewing candidates for the London City Mission, a man who came up before him surprised him by saying, "You don't remember me, sir?" "No, I can't say I do," said my father. The man then reminded him of the incident that had taken place at the lodge gates, and went on to say: "I told you that my wife and I were going for a walk. What I didn't tell you was that I had a gun folded up beneath my coat, and my wife had a couple of snares under her skirts. We were after your game, sir. But what you said that evening made us think. We went to church, and our whole lives were changed from that moment." So the ex-poacher became a London City missionary.

My father's desire not to win fame was certainly granted, for one of his most striking characteristics was his great humility, and in this world men are usually taken at their own estimate. Even in his life-time "R.C.L.B." was not properly understood.

Lombard Street that saw him in his official rôle as the head of Barclay and Bevan, Exeter Hall that acclaimed him as a leading "Evangelical", knew nothing of him as we saw him at home. No Memoir of him has ever been written. The recently published *History of Barclays Bank* devotes only a short paragraph to him, in which nothing is said that gives any idea of his true character, of his rôle as a sportsman, of his fifty years administration of the Bank, and his action in saving it on "black Friday", or of his work for humanity. Had the authors of the book devoted less space to the history of Barclays after it had become a Joint Stock concern, and more to the character of its first directors before that period, it would have been a finer picture. For its earlier success was made by the confidence inspired in the public, by the known integrity and good faith of the men who used the wealth it brought them for the service of the community.

CHAPTER V

LE REVERS DE LA MÉDAILLE

ANYONE reading the foregoing account of life at Trent and Fosbury might well imagine a round of gaiety such as we see portrayed in the pages of society papers with photographs of country houses and their inhabitants continually at play. They might picture house-parties of convivial guests, tennis tournaments, cricket matches, dances, private theatricals, music, laughter, everything that could be devised for pleasure and amusement.

Nothing, however, would be further from the reality. It is true that life at Trent was happy for us all when we were very young, nature provided all the distractions, the beauty and the charm we knew, but those who have seen the modern Trent transformed into a millionaire's red brick "mansion" can have no idea of the austerity of life as we knew it in the old white house overgrown with creepers.

There was but one bathroom, used only by my father, no billiard-room, no smoking-room—nowhere indeed where anyone might smoke; men who wished to indulge in this obnoxious habit were obliged to repair to a harness-room in the stables at some distance from the house. There was, of course, no electric light, there were no telephones, no motor-cars, no daily papers other than *The Times*, the *Morning Post* and others of a serious kind. Life was singularly devoid of all artificial distractions. This was the same for everyone in those days, only in the region of social gaiety our lives differed so strangely from those of others.

The reason for this must now be explained. My father, as I have already said, having devoted his life to the service of God, had given up hunting, dancing and the theatre, but he had retained great *joie de vivre*, enjoyed his horses, his gardens, sport and above all seeing young people at play. During his life with his first wife he had not even judged it sinful to drive a four-in-hand, for he was as good a whip as a rider.

My mother, however, renounced what she called "the world" to a far greater extent. Very "High Church" when she was first married—she had painted the reredos behind the altar in Fosbury Church with her own hands—but after she came to live at Trent she made friends with an old man with a long beard, who lived in Barnet and belonged to the Plymouth Brethren, the very narrowest sect of dissenters, founded in 1800 by the Rev. J. N. Darby.

Unhappily, my mother was converted to this gloomy creed and henceforth it was left to my father to take us to church on Sundays whilst my mother drove off in a brougham to Barnet to attend meetings of the Brethren.

Her religious fervour now took the form of a sort of mysticism cutting her off not only from society but even, to a certain extent, from family life.

A pure intellectual, all her energies were concentrated on her books, written in beautiful English, and on the exquisite drawings with which she illustrated her poems. In theory she loved children and especially to draw them—we have little sketch-books filled with lovely children's heads, but she did not know how to hold a baby, and when one of us was put into her arms a nurse would stand by, ready to "field" it in case she let it drop. I can never remember her coming to kiss me good night in bed, or, indeed, ever entering our night nursery at all, and only once do I remember seeing her appear in the day nursery, then merely to give an order to a nurse, and the sight of her tall, majestic figure was so unprecedented that I could hardly have been more amazed if Queen Victoria herself, in robes and crown, with ball and sceptre complete, had swept into the room.

My father, on the other hand, loved to play with me. Coming at the end of so long a family it might have been expected that I should be "born tired" like many children of old parents, but on the contrary I was endowed with bounding spirits which delighted Papa, who, I think, looked upon me as a sort of happy afterthought.

Sometimes, though over seventy, he would come up to the nursery at Princes Gate on a winter evening after returning from the City, perhaps with a long cardboard box found to contain a ravishing doll, or he would have a glorious romp, letting us ride on his tall shoulders and rumple his beautiful thick white hair.

Only for a short time were we taken down to the drawing-room, when with hair brushed and freshly curled, in frilly white frocks with beautifully tied sashes of pale-blue corded silk, as in illustration facing page 97, we were set down to play on the floor with kindergarten toys until the hour came for the nurses to sweep us up to bed; should we make too much noise, we were liable to be removed earlier.

My mother did, however, give us a few lessons, notably in geography, inventing the most amusing rhymes to impress the names of places on my memory; and then, of course, Bible lessons at which I did not always prove a docile pupil. Later on she taught me to love poetry, for which I am eternally grateful to her.

It must be explained that we were an extraordinarily unmusical family, though endowed with a particular gift for languages. It is usual to suppose that a talent for music and for languages go together, our case proved exactly the contrary. My mother spoke French and German well, and at over seventy would be up every morning at 8.30 to read Hebrew, but she had no ear for music, and declared that she could only recognize three tunes when she heard them. She had, in fact, a theory that music is the lowest of the arts because it is one we share with the animal kingdom; no bird or beast can appreciate artistic objects—drawing, painting, architecture, etc.—

but birds can sing in tune, cows may respond to the *ranz-des-vaches*, horses to a trumpet call, even snakes may be charmed by music.

This curious prejudice was shared by Ashley, who detested music to such a point that he was afraid of dining out lest what he called "a screaming woman", otherwise a singer, might be asked to perform. Yet he was the best linguist of us all, knowing something of about sixteen languages, Professor of Semitic ones, speaking French exactly like a Frenchman, German so exactly like a German that when travelling in Germany with a honeymooning couple they resorted to English in order to bill and coo without being understood.

It was thus the music of words that made of poetry so great a delight to my mother and to Edwyn, who had inherited his grandfather's fabulous memory for verse, and would recite long poems to which I listened with rapt attention, so that in time I came to share their passion; and Shelley's "Skylark", "The Cloud", or the songs of Shakespeare brought me the same ecstasy as a Beethoven sonata to a musician. Poetry, indeed, became my great consolation when, as too often happened, I was sent to bed early in disgrace.

I can still see in memory the little poetry book with its back of worn green leather which I would smuggle into bed with me and learn my favourite poems by heart in the fading summer twilight.

The one that thrilled me most when I was about eleven was Macaulay's "Spanish Armada", for by that time we had taken to spending the winter abroad and love of England had become my strongest emotion. I remember thinking "if these lines ever cease to stir me it will mean that I am dying".

One spring I fell ill with some childish complaint, nothing serious, but enough to make everything seem very far away. Then I applied my test, murmuring the words "See how the lion of the seas lifts up his ancient crown!" No, it left me cold! Then I must be dying! After a while my father came and sat beside my bed. Gladys, of whom he was very fond, had just recovered from an acute attack of pleurisy and he evidently feared the same for me, for I remember how he leant forward anxiously saying, "Are you sure you feel no pain in your *side*, dear?"

"No, Papa, none."

"Are you *quite* sure?"

"Yes, quite sure!"

And the relief on his face reassured me that my time had not come yet.

It was thus that all the tender memories of my family during my childhood were bound up with my father, and I still keep as one of my most precious treasures a letter he wrote me from abroad when I was only four, beginning:

> "Dearest and Sweetest Nest, I was delighted with your nice long letter so full of love, it made me long to kiss both the little cheeks which I am glad to hear are like pink roses."

It may seem almost indelicate to quote words so intimate and so little intended for publication, but they serve to show the gentle character of the man whose life was spent in the dry atmosphere of Lombard Street and to explain the influence he exercised over my whole life, for it was his example that came to be my great inspiration in the stormy years to come.

So long as he lived I was happy, and as a child at Trent my mother's more rigid views did not affect me as they did my brothers and elder sisters. For to her all forms of "worldly" amusements were wrong, not only dances, theatres, race-meetings, card playing, and so on, but every form of social gaiety and so the gates of Trent were closed to those who indulged in it. Only the Evangelical circle that frequented Exeter Hall, or Moody and Sankey's meetings then in vogue, were admitted; prayer meetings and Bible readings were the only gatherings that took place.

I can still see them in memory, those saintly people, sweeping over the smooth lawns in their flowing Victorian dresses or seated beneath the cedars talking of Heaven and the Hereafter. No idlers these, for they were all engaged in good works of some kind, old Lady Kinnaird concerned in improving the lot of the poor women in Indian zenanas—and her three unmarried daughters—a fourth had married my brother Roland—engaged in running the Y.W.C.A., the kindliest and most human of the circle.

Then there were the Waldegraves, daughters of Lord Radstock, famous for having founded a sect that bore his name in Russia, a large breezy person with side whiskers, who carried a tremendous heartiness into his religious activities. I remember after I grew up hearing him relate at dinner with the Kinnairds how he had tried to convert a fakir in India and ending with the words, accompanied by a thump on the table that made the glasses ring, "And *down* we went on our knees!"

There was also his sister, Lady Beauchamp, with her daughters, one of whom sang with Moody at his meetings, and a disciple of his, a Russian colonel, with his wife and daughters, whose utterance was somewhat impeded by an ill-fitting set of false teeth which, out of pity, he had acquired from an oppressed Jewish dentist.

A very strange personality was Olive, Lady Sebright, who, after a wild career of acting, gambling and horse-dealing, had come to see the error of her ways and taken to preaching.

I can see her still, with her mop of grey hair which, anticipating the fashions by some forty years, she wore short; her keen grey eyes and Puck-like expression, her hands with the long pointed fingers of the born gambler, clasping a large Bible with an elastic band around it.

By way of breaking with her past, Lady Sebright had resolved to give up horse-dealing, but this, she explained to my father, could only be done by selling off her stable. He accordingly agreed to buy up her remaining horses, but somehow there was always one more, and yet one more, to be disposed of, frequently strange animals, such as a pony that had been trained in a circus and would only move in circles, and a horse without a tail that had to have a switch of false hair attached to the crupper. My father at last grew tired of helping Lady Sebright not to be a horse-dealer, and her stable was finally announced to be empty.

Then there were preachers and missionaries who stayed at Trent, or in the village of Cockfosters, at our gates near by; one of these was quite an interesting old man with a long white beard, from the South Sea Islands, whose stories of cannibalism and collection of the most hideous idols in the style of Epstein, delighted us, whilst another, named Haynes, with bald head and long beard, also used to come in to prayers with a Bible about the size of the Tables of the Law, and whom we used to call "the Prophet Hynes".

One evening, the grooms, by way of a joke, plied one of these missionaries with light refreshments before he started for a meeting with the result that, on mounting the platform, he suddenly rolled up his sleeves and declared he was going to fight the devil. After this, we saw him no more.

For years we were taught to revere a Eurasian revivalist preacher, who was fond of relating how, at one of his meetings, a man he "converted" became so excited that he took a form out into a neighbouring field, and went on jumping backwards and forwards over it. This revivalist, too, appears to have in some way fallen from grace, for there came a time when his name ceased to be mentioned, and when we asked the reason, we were met by an ominous silence.

Revivalism, like the Moody and Sankey movement of that day, always repelled me. I could not believe that with a sudden click a man could pass from an unregenerate to a regenerate being, and it seemed to me that it showed little reverence for spiritual things to shout about one's soul in public and to sing vulgar American hymns such as:

"I should like to die," said Willie,
"If my *Pa*-pa could die too."

How different to the beautiful chants and hymns, "Abide with me" or "Lead, kindly Light", sung at the services to which on summer evenings we were taken by Papa at Trent or Fosbury!

Popular meetings of a friendly kind were held at Ludgrove, where my brother Frank lived. His wife, one of the kindliest of women, bethought herself of entertaining all the haymakers employed in the neighbourhood, every Sunday afternoon during the month of June, to a hearty tea, followed by an address and hymns, which she accompanied herself on a harmonium. But these, too, were not without their humorous incidents.

As far as possible, working-class speakers were invited to give the address, and the most popular one was Tom Baker, a west-country man, with a strong provincial burr, who believed in making Bible stories more graphic, by adding little imaginative touches of his own. I shall never forget him relating the story of the flood on one occasion with this embellishment:

"And the spirit of the Lorrrd floated on the face of the waterrrs. And the Lorrrd he came to the doorrr of the Harrrk and he called out: 'Noarrr! Noarrr! I say, Noarrr, you in there, Noarrr?' And Noarrr he didn't answer. Perhaps, dear friends, 'e was feeling the motion of the Harrrk!"

The idea of Noah with his head in a basin, unable to reply, convulsed us, but the speaker intended no irreverence; it was only his way of appealing to the haymaking mind.

Although, as I have said, no entertaining took place at Trent this should be understood to apply only to social functions. My father could not have contented himself with the contemplative life which satisfied my mother; with him, to the day of his death, it was always an urge to be up and doing. He loved nothing so much as to see people enjoying themselves and so indulged in the one form of hospitality that my mother approved which took the form of "treats".

These were the only entertainments that took place at Trent—school-treats, treats for shop or factory girls, treats for the "Bus Drivers' Mission", for the "Navvies' Mission", for Asiatics from the docks, for "Aged Pilgrims" wheeled about in bath-chairs or a party of mild mental cases from the neighbouring asylum at Colney Hatch.

It was a literal interpretation of our Lord's command: "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends . . . nor thy rich neighbours, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed for they cannot recompense thee."

I cannot help feeling, however, that it was a pity hospitality should not also have been extended to people who would have proved congenial friends or acquaintances for us in later life. For youth is the time to make friendships, to learn the art of conversation and how to play one's part in the world, to mix with the best type of men and women and so construct a standard by which to judge those one meets later on. Both my parents had enjoyed these advantages, my father at Harrow and Oxford, my mother in the brilliant circle which had gathered round her father at New College, and numbered amongst her friends some of the most interesting men of the day —Lawrence Oliphant, Livingstone the explorer, Stephenson the inventor of the steam-engine, Cardinal Howard, whilst he was still a gay young man in the Guards, and his sisters Adelaide and Catherine, the de Bunsens, daughters of the Prussian ambassador. With the last named alone she kept up her friendship to the end of her life; the rest remained merely legends to us in our youth.

My mother had thus acquired a poise and *savoir faire* which, with her dignified appearance and talent for conversation, would have made her an admirable hostess either at Trent or in a literary or artistic salon.

Moreover, whilst the most unsnobbish person I have ever known, she attached great value to good breeding and what the old French aristocrats called "*le bon ton*"—a quite untranslatable expression—and often reminded us of the old Wykehamist motto: "Manners maketh man".

In view of all this one would have expected her to bring up her daughters on the lines she approved and in the same milieu as herself, instead of leaving us to governesses chosen for their "soundness" on religious questions rather than for their minds or manners, and preventing us from mixing with society of any kind. As a result my sisters grew up shy and *farouche*, unable to overcome the instinct to avoid any contact with people belonging to the gay world.

My own brothers suffered from the same disadvantage for, instead of following in my father's footsteps as Harrovians or like my half-brothers who went to Eton, they were not sent to public schools at all for fear of forming "worldly connections". Yet by a curious inconsistency I cannot explain they had gone to Cheam and went on later to the university.

Such was the damage wrought by the old Plym with the long beard in Barnet! I remember hearing that, when he died, his daughters, who had expected to inherit some portion of his considerable fortune, were disappointed to find he had left them nothing but the famous beard to make into watch-chains.

Sunday was really a terrible day at Trent for no diversions of any kind were allowed; we might not even paint texts like other children.

At 8.30 family prayers (as on week-days) attended by all the servants entering in single file and in order of rank, breakfast, then a Bible reading, a walk to morning church; after luncheon, bricks with the names of the Kings of Israel and Judah to be set out and a hymn to be learnt by heart, then another Bible-reading and finally a walk to evening church.

How often did I wish could go to sleep on Saturday night and wake up to find that it was Monday morning and the dreaded day that came in between was over! As it was, however, Monday usually found me fractious, perhaps as a reaction from Sunday repression. Is there any luck in numbers as astrologers pretend?

All I know is that throughout my life Monday has always brought me ill luck and Friday good luck, whilst 7 has always been my fateful number. I was born on the 14th of August, the youngest of 14 children and of 7 daughters. I was married on the 14th of May and every 7 years of my life was marked by some crucial turn in the wheel of my fate.

But Monday was not the only day when I received bad conduct marks, for I was regarded as an extremely naughty child, particularly by my half-brothers and sisters-in-law who compared me unfavourably with their more docile progeny. The fact is that I was born with a tiresomely enquiring mind, I could not always accept the opinions of my elders unquestioningly or submit meekly to their dictates.

Why, I used to wonder, was it necessary to think so many things wrong? Why must Sunday be a day of gloom? Why, above all, must there be this talk of eternal punishment? These saintly people who would not hurt a fly, who spent their lives doing good, whose hearts were full of pity, even for the lowest criminals, could worship a God who would show no mercy to the unregenerate. If He was indeed, as they declared, a God of love, how could He condemn His creatures to an eternity of suffering?

I do not think these questions greatly troubled my brothers and sisters, but somehow, even as a child, I had the strange feeling that I had not always belonged to the milieu in which I had been born, that somewhere I had known a different world where larger views prevailed, where there was warmth, colour, movement, gaiety. And in this mood I could not resist the temptation to disturb the gravity of the family circle by some startling remark or by playing pranks that set them laughing against their wills and so earned a reputation for naughtiness. But how often on these occasions I would catch an answering twinkle in my father's eye!

But it is time to shift the scene from Trent and Fosbury and go back to the date when we made yet another home—across the sea.

CHAPTER VI

THE FAMILY ABROAD

EVERY year when autumn came we left Trent and moved up to our grey Victorian house overlooking Hyde Park on one side and gardens on the other—25 Princes Gate. There as a small child during the winter I was allowed to indulge in quite a round of gaieties, afternoon and evening parties at the houses of our friends and relations—Bevans, Trittons, Campbells and so on—at which I remember seeing some of the bigger children actually dancing. This little season at the age of four was to be my last. I was to have no further dissipations of the kind throughout my childhood.

For when I was five years old a great change took place in our lives. My father, more and more crippled by gout, was ordered to spend the winters out of England and henceforth Cannes was to be our second home.

I remember as if it was yesterday that first journey to France, the novel sight of the blue-bloused porters on landing and the arrival in Paris where, for the first time in my life, I saw electric light in the shape of the great white arc lamps hung over the streets.

Paris, where we now stopped every year on our way to or from Cannes, was to become more familiar to me than London; the Rue de Rivoli, the Rue de la Paix, the Place de la Concorde are amongst my earliest memories. But somehow I was never happy there; Paris always seemed to me a place of ghosts, a place where I had once seen terrible things and as I grew older the feeling deepened. But more of this in a later chapter.

Our journeys to Cannes were the most curious expeditions, conducted in a patriarchal way, at first on a small scale, for a chef and his aide were only engaged on arrival, but later when we had made Cannes our home it comprised the whole household—six or seven members of the family, governess, nurse, all the indoor servants, the coachman, his wife and the horses, a party of nearly twenty people in all. So although we went to live in France we were still surrounded by a mainly British atmosphere.

The first winter we spent at a house rented only for the season, the Villa Madeleine on the Croix des Gardes, and here I had to do lessons seriously. I had begun to learn French at the age of three and wrote quite well at four, now at five it was my duty after prayers in the morning to announce breakfast to the family each day in a different language—French, German, Italian, Latin and Greek. At six I was given a prize for repeating all the provinces and departments of France by heart.

My elder sisters were in the schoolroom, ruled over by an English governess irreverently nicknamed "Poggs"; Edwyn was at Cheam, and Enid, whom nobody could understand and manage, had also gone to school. So I was left alone in the nursery. Old "Ninny" had retired on a pension, and an under-nurse had been kept on who now had charge of me.

I can never say what I owe to this loved companion of my childhood—Tiny, as I christened her, was the daughter of our coachman, and had come to us before I was born when she was only sixteen and remained until I was grown up. It is often said that women have no instinctive desire for education; Tiny was certainly a triumphant exception to such a rule; at twelve years old she had read Shakespeare all through in her spare time whilst living in the Mews behind Princes Gate. Her knowledge of history and of natural history was remarkable, "here King Charles II walked with his spaniels after the Restoration," I remember her saying to me as we passed St. James's Palace.

Now we had come to live at Cannes, she taught herself French with me whilst I sat at the nursery table looking out words in a dictionary and copying them out in an exercise book. Later she learnt German from my mother's German maid, took lessons in Italian; often when I was in bed I could hear her turning the pages of a book—the *Divinia Comedia* of Dante in the original. With all this she combined a genius for sick nursing and the care of children which tends to confirm a cherished theory of my own—that the women who excel in what is known as "woman's sphere" are those who have taken the trouble to cultivate their minds.

The second winter at Cannes we went to the Hotel Californie—which in those days was very different to the Palace Hotel into which it developed later—quite small, with a dark dining-room looking out at the back where all the guests sat at one long table.

Separate tables for "table d'hôte" were then almost unknown; people who were too exclusive to sit at the common table had their meals brought to their private salons. We had ours with the rest and made a number of pleasant friends.

There were several other small children in the hotel, amongst them Lilias and Oliver Borthwick, whose father, Sir Algernon Borthwick, later Lord Glenesk, owned the *Morning Post.* How little we thought as we played amongst the orange-trees and bamboos of the Californie garden and caught green frogs in the banana leaves, that long years afterwards two of us would meet again in the most stormy period of our country's history, when Oliver having unfortunately met an early death, Lilias as Lady Bathurst would be controlling that great patriotic paper and I should be contributing articles to its columns!

At the Hotel Californie I had several love affairs, with a Peruvian colonel, then with Mr. Cross, the husband of George Eliot, who, although nearly middle-aged and bearded, was a most delightful companion.

He used to address me laughingly as "your ladyship"!—"what would your ladyship like to do today?" which pleased me very much because I imagined the word referred to the white-sailed ships I loved to watch on the blue surface of the Mediterranean and that I reminded him of them.

Another object of my affections was Ion Keith-Falconer who, at the age of twenty-five, had fallen in love with my sister Gwendoline, though she was only fifteen, too young to be officially engaged to him. Ion, however, spent part of the winter with us at the Californie, and although a don at Trinity College, Cambridge, later Professor of Semitic languages there, he amused us all by his schoolboy pranks.

One day disguised as an Arab smoking a narghileh on the terrace of the hotel, another masquerading as the concierge whose cap and coat he found hanging in the hall when their owner was away at lunch and, having put them on, Ion enjoyed himself immensely talking nonsense to people who came to enquire for rooms.

As he was 6 feet 4 inches and very handsome, I soon fell in love with him and when, in course of time, he told me he was going to marry my sister, I said sadly, "Oh, Ion, I thought it was me!" to which he answered laughingly, "Never mind, I'll marry Gwen first and you afterwards."

But this was not till three years later when we had moved into the Villa that now became our winter home. It was an ugly little house, named the Villa Duchapt, right on the road, but my mother liked it because it was built in châlet style and so reminded her of Switzerland which she had always loved. She persuaded my father to buy it and renamed it Châlet Passiflora after the red passion-flowers that grew round the wooden balcony in the front.

The position it occupied was certainly delightful, looking over the harbour and the distant Esterel mountains, and when it had been added on to and improved in various ways it became quite comfortable, though never attractive. Later a neighbouring piece of woodland was bought and joined on to our garden, then my father bought the Villa Monte Leo and the Villa Pergola down below and threw part of their land into ours so in time the garden and wood of Passiflora covered the pleasantest part of the Californie hill and became really charming.

It was then that a new life began for us. At Trent and Fosbury it had been easy for my mother to avoid society, but now we had come to live in one of the gayest places on the Continent, our seclusion from the world became more marked.

My three sisters, who had left the schoolroom but, as I have said, were never allowed to "come out", took their strange position in good humour and amused themselves keeping a journal, wonderfully illustrated by Millie, which has been preserved and provides a curious picture of our family life:—

Mamma feels she must return the call of some neighbours named S. de W., reasoning with herself that as they have "Tuesdays at home" on their card they are sure to be out, so sets off in her garden hat and Shetland shawl, quite forgetting that it *is* Tuesday and is ushered in by Mr. S. de W. arrayed in blue velvet, to find herself in the midst of all the *beau monde* of Cannes. Mrs. S. de W. turns out, however, to be an old acquaintance whom she knew as "Emily" and who welcomes her rapturously.

(I well remember this lady, who used to take her walks abroad dressed in a regal *ensemble* of scarlet, purple and ermine.)

My sisters are appalled when Papa takes them to a reception given by Miss Percival, a retired lady-in-waiting, at the Villa Nevada, in honour of the Duke of Albany who is staying with her, and "Emily" sails up to His Royal Highness "in even more than usual splendour—purple and silver ornaments" —introduces herself, asks after his sisters, and proceeds to invite him to lunch with her.

Another neighbour, at the Villa des Mimosas, is the old Chevalier de Colquhoun, a noted *gourmet* who is said to starve before attending a particularly recherché luncheon and has the curious habit of performing his toilette on his balcony facing our windows. Several sketches illustrate this ceremony, with his clothes spread out on the rail of the balcony and occasionally fluttering down into the garden to be fished up again by the housemaid. We often watched this scene from our windows—the Chevalier washing, brushing his teeth into a basin, emptying it over the shrubs below and finally saying his prayers to the East.

My sisters have few glimpses of Cannes gaieties—Millie having been taken by Papa to call on Lady Vincent at the Villa Flora is astounded when that charming old lady turns to her, saying kindly, "Well, my dear, I hope you are having plenty of dances?" Dances! *Dances!* What an idea! No, such a possibility had never entered my sister's head for a moment!

So when an invitation actually arrived at the Villa, it is stuck into the journal as a curiosity, thus:

Villa Victoria

Mr. and Mrs. Bevan
The Misses Bevan

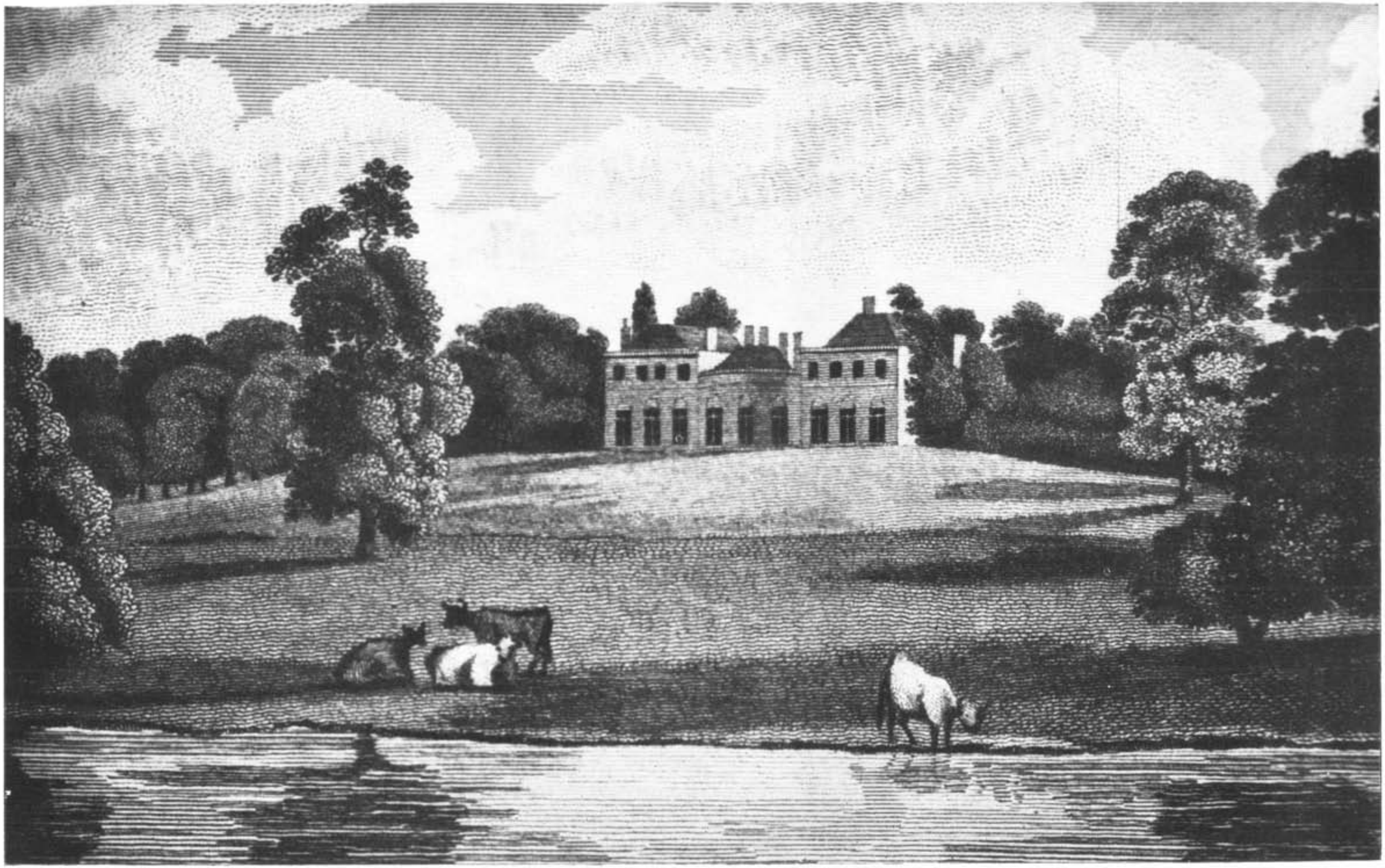
LADY MURRAY
AT HOME
Tuesday evening, 12th February, 9 o'clock
Fancy Dress Dancing
Dominoes and masks till 11 o'clock

R.S.V.P.

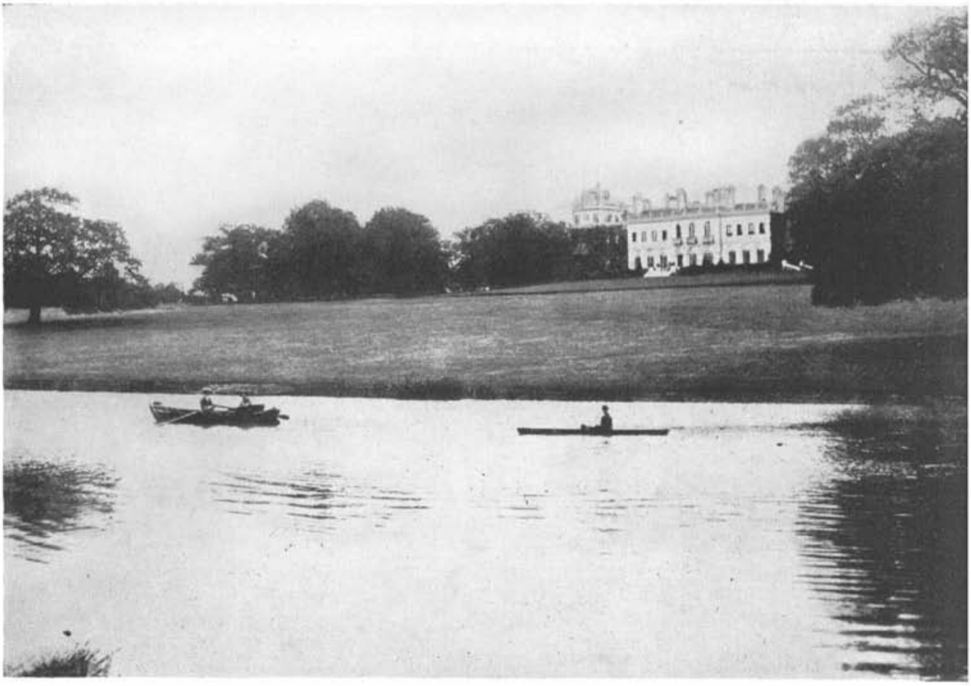
The journal follows this up with the comment:

> "Mamma is going to dress as Mother Hubbard and Papa as the dog. Imagine Mamma dancing till eleven o'clock in a domino and mask!"

Mamma, of course, never goes to parties of any kind and it is always Papa who takes his daughters to "At Homes", and on each occasion is guilty of disobeying his doctor's orders by yielding to the temptation of that delicious French beverage—chocolate with whipped cream on the top. "Papa was quite in his element, handing about cakes and cups of tea, and on the sly he got for himself a cup of chocolate, which is quite a forbidden luxury."



Trent in 1808



Trent, north front
in 1890

Trent, south front
in 1890

My mother, however, had one strange weakness—shops, especially those dealing in Oriental hangings and embroideries, and we would often meet her in the Rue d'Antibes after she had declared her intention of going for a drive on the hills at the back of Cannes. So one day she and her three daughters make an expedition to Nice where she succumbs to the seductions of "a most hideous Arab blanket" in an Oriental shop on the Quai Massena, then the great shopping centre of the town.

> "After that it was lunch time and we repaired to the restaurant 'London House' because Miller (our Scotch butler) told us that was the best place. We had not been there very long before Lord Wolverton came in and when he saw Mamma he said: 'Well, Mrs. Bevan, I hardly expected to find *you* in the fastest place in Nice!' At which we exclaimed, as we had no idea it was fast, but Mamma turned to him and said, 'At any rate I shall be able to say I have seen you here!!' So, of course, he could say no more."

Fortunately the Arab blanket got left behind in a cab on the way home, so the expedition ended satisfactorily.

. . . . .

It always seemed to me impossible to live amongst the French people, especially the Provençaux, without learning to love them. Their wit and gaiety, their quick sympathy, the boundless interest they always displayed in one's affairs made it a perpetual joy to return to them every autumn and we made many friends amongst them. The cabmen at the foot of our hill were always very much hurt if we persisted in walking instead of taking their *fiacres*, and would exclaim to each other: "*Les demoiselles Passiflora ne prennent plus de voitures! Ah! c'est qu'elles ont de bonnes jambes!*" And they would give vent to audible sighs meant for us to hear.

My mother occupied herself largely in good works, in the "Amis des Pauvres", the various Asiles for the sick, particularly the one for invalid children, the Asile Dollfus, and also the "Société protectrice des Animaux". Many were the isolated cases she befriended. Amongst these was an extraordinary old woman named Mademoiselle Pécout, who kept a hat shop in the Rue d'Antibes which was always in the wildest confusion. In the middle of the floor was a pile of hats, all on the top of one another, to which she would point as one entered and say, "*Choisissez! choisissez!*" and then hurry off to attend to *vieille Maman*, who inhabited the *arrière-boutique*. When *vieille Maman* died Mademoiselle Pécout put up a large notice in the window: "*Liquidation à cause de départ*". My mother asked her wonderingly whether she really meant to go away, to which she answered, of course not—"*C'est seulement pour faire venir les dames.*" However, as she had no idea of business, she soon got into low water, and it was then my mother came to her rescue and offered to help her, which annoyed her beyond words. She added that if

Madame really insisted on giving her money she would send forty hats to the children at the Asile Dollfus—which she did. She was, however, so obviously hard up, even without enough to eat, that a kind friend sent her an old hen to make into soup. But Mademoiselle Pécout would not think of killing it, and taking it into her arms said to it fondly: "*Sois tranquille, ma fille, ne crains rien, avec moi tu seras en sûreté!*" So the hen remained and used to roost every night on the end of her bed where she slept peacefully amidst a number of stray cats she had adopted. Mademoiselle Pécout lived to be nearly a hundred, and after my mother's death imagined her to be her guardian angel, always with her.

Some of the cases my mother helped were less deserving, for it was unfortunately only too easy to enlist her sympathy by professions of spiritual strivings. One enterprising lady who kept a wool shop in the town was chronically on the verge of "conversion", but financial difficulties always seemed to impede the process. If only Madame Bevan would give her a little help her mind would be better attuned to apprehend religious truths. The money was given and found its way on to the tables at Monte Carlo.

One really terrible case in which my mother interested herself is recorded in my sisters' "Journal".

> "Yesterday, as Miller"—(our Scotch butler before referred to)—"was crossing the market place a woman rushed by him calling out that a man had hanged himself in a *buvette* close by. He promptly went to see if it was true, and to his horror saw a man hanging from the ceiling still in a convulsive struggle. In a second he got out his jack-knife and was about to cut the poor wretch down when the *gens d'armes* came in and in loud tones forbade him to touch the rope, saying it was not his business, nor would they themselves, the inhuman monsters, move a finger to save him, but stood there, watching him die while they sent for a doctor who, of course, could not get to the spot for another ten minutes or so, when all was over and the man dead. The poor man's wife all the time was perfectly frantic and could do nothing but scream, but neither screams or anything else could move the *gens d'armes* whose business it was 'to see that no one interfered'. This is French law . . . Mamma and Gladys went down to see the widow today, but the shock has so stunned her that she can understand nothing and sits motionless by her fire, taking in nothing that is said."

How much of the cruelty attributed to the old *régime* in France must be accounted for by this strange *insouciance* which characterizes the French official mind and which more than a century of so-called "democracy" had done little to remove!

CHAPTER VII

LITERARY EFFORTS

WHILST my elder sisters were finding the distractions described in their "Journal", Enid and I were hard at work in the schoolroom with "Poggs" and other teachers, our favourite being Fräulein Maass, a most delightful Pomeranian with a somewhat Dantesque profile and a keen sense of humour. I had begun German at the age of eight and loved the plays of Goethe and Schiller which we started on when I was about nine. *Iphigenie auf Tauris* I found at that age heavy going, but *Wilhelm Tell* thrilled me, and to this day I have never forgotten the beautiful lines on blindness that occur in it; beginning:

> O, eine edle Himmelsgabe ist das Licht der Augen!

German has always seemed to me detestable for conversation, and French delightful, but for poetry and especially drama, German is, I think, infinitely to be preferred as the medium for great conceptions, which is the reason why Shakespeare is appreciated in Germany, but not in France. Heine's lyrics too, proscribed later on in Nazi Germany, delighted me, still more so when in after years I heard them sung. It is strange how the German language, so guttural in speech, takes on a wonderful harmony when set to music. The German folk songs we learnt with Fräulein Maass are amongst my happiest memories.

As children the peculiarity of our manner of life at Cannes affected us but slightly, it is true that we missed the playmates and the animals that made the joy of Trent, but we enjoyed the bathing, the picnics and the few other pleasures which came our way.

These were selected with great care so as to avoid anything that could be remotely described as improper. Thus when a circus visited the town at which it was said that some remarkable performing elephants would be seen, we were allowed to go to it with Poggs, but on the entry into the arena of a lady in tights on horseback we were hurried out into a back passage so as not to be demoralized by this shocking spectacle, and whilst waiting there until the turn was over Poggs gave instructions to one of the attendants with the words: "*Dites nous quand les éléphants arrivent!*" So at last the elephants having conferred an air of perfect propriety to the proceedings, we were allowed to return to our seats and watch the rest of the show.

There was, of course, no question of theatres or dances for us, even children's parties of the kind we had attended at Princes Gate never fell to our lot at Cannes; that brief season I had enjoyed as a four-year-old remained the only glimpse I was to have of social gaiety throughout my childhood;

tea with the daughters of a French pastor was our wildest dissipation. Should we ask my mother to let us go and have ices at Rumpelmayer's on the Croisette—those glorious French ices made of strawberries and cream with the frost glistening on the top—the reply was sure to be, "How can you wish to spend money on ices when there are children who have not enough to eat?"

All this did not seriously damp our spirits, for children are very easily contented, but what did affect me was my mother's insistence on the imminent "end of the world". I remember a small blue tract she gave me entitled, *A Vision of the Night*, describing how the skies would roll away with the noise of thunder, our Lord would descend from Heaven, the regenerate be caught up to meet Him in the air, while the unregenerate would be hurried down below into a bottomless pit of fire and brimstone.

The complacent way in which the kindly souls at Trent had contemplated this final and fearful prospect had puzzled me there; at Cannes it appalled me and haunted me even in my dreams.

The reason for this was that our villa being built on the side of the hill, carriages passing along the Californie road produced a reverberation on the rock which sounded just like thunder in the distance and I would wake with a start listening to it coming nearer and thinking, with a beating heart, that was the skies rolling away and the end of the world beginning. Often, Tiny told me in after years, did she hear me screaming in my sleep with terror, and she would hurry to my bedside to soothe and comfort me.

One morning when I was about eleven I felt sure that the dreaded moment had really come, for Enid and I were awoken about six o'clock by the noise of thunder, a terrible roaring underground, the whole room shaking, glasses and china rattling. . . . I sat up in bed stiff with fright. This time there could be no mistake about it, the end of the world was here!

But the roar and the rattling ceased and then we realized that what had happened was an earthquake. What a relief to find it was *only* an earthquake! Quite a serious one though, the worst shock that coast had ever known, and it was followed by two minor shocks, one a few minutes later and another after an hour or two. By that time we were down in the schoolroom at lessons when the rumbling began again and the room started to shake, whereat we both exclaimed, "Oh, another earthquake!"

"Go on with your lessons," said Poggs severely. "If you stop for every earthquake you will never learn anything." Which, of course, proved marvellously reassuring.

When Fräulein Maass arrived a little later, however, she was quite surprised to find us indoors at all. At the hotels she had passed on her way all the people had rushed down into the gardens at the first shock and were encamping there in various stages of dress and undress. One lady, clothed only in fur coat, sheltering under a palm tree, offered to share it with a man in the airiest of attire. An old gentleman, clad only in his shirt, was said to have mounted an omnibus horse he found in the stables and to have ridden away, never to be seen again. Some people were so terrified that they drove down to the station in their dressing-gowns, and thus attired took the train for Pau or Biarritz.

Fräulein Maass herself had had a curious experience. Before the first shock came she was awoken by the terrified twittering of a number of birds she kept in a large cage by the window. Thinking that a cat had got into the room she sprang out of bed, and, looking out of the window, saw flames shooting out of the sea. Then the earthquake began. This would seem to suggest that some kind of volcanic disturbance was taking place under the Mediterranean.

Fortunately, no lives were lost at Cannes, but some damage was done at Nice and Mentone, where a few houses and walls collapsed, whilst at a little village just on the Italian side of the frontier, called, I think, Santa Maria dei Cerdi, nearly all the inhabitants, who had crowded into the church, were killed.

. . . . .

In looking back on my childhood I see that there was one serious defect in my education. My mother having a rooted objection to any form of pure amusement never gave us toys; my father as I have said, might bring me a doll, but my mother's presents were always of the strictly useful kind—needlework or writing materials and so on. And of course she never gave us sweets, nor were we allowed to buy any; "sucking sweets," she would say, "is a vulgar habit."

But, unfortunately, on the same principle we were never allowed to read novels; only true or "improving" stories were permitted. This was a great privation, for it is whilst one is very young that one can best appreciate imaginative writing and that the characters created by the great novelists of the past come to life. It is, moreover, whilst one's mind is still fresh that one has the patience to wade through the leisurely descriptions of the *mise-en-scène* of the narrative to which so many pages were devoted; the rush of modern life unfits one for this close attention to detail.

Not to have read Scott, Thackeray or Dickens is to be at a disadvantage with educated people in England, and although I was able in later life to make up some leeway it was too late to cover all the ground that should have become familiar to me in the schoolroom. So to this day I have to confess with shame that Ivanhoe, Colonel Newcombe and Oliver Twist are only names to me when they should have been people I had known from childhood.

But my mother's restrictions went further than this, for even Charlotte Yonge and *The Heir of Redcliffe* fell under the ban; the stories provided for us largely dated from the early Victorian era of my mother's youth and all contained a moral.

I remember one entitled *The Looking-glass for the Mind*, which struck me as irresistibly funny. Its main purpose was to show up the wisdom and virtues of parents and the follies and errors of their children; one story that particularly delighted me was called *The Fooliſhness of Young People's Wiſhes Expoſed*—the s's looking like f's—in which a small boy was taken severely to task by his father for saying in spring he wished it was always spring, in summer that it was always summer and so on throughout the year, when he was brought to book and made to realize the folly of his inconsequence instead of being praised, as I felt he should have been, for his spirit of contentment.

It was this sort of thing that inspired some of my earliest attempts at authorship, just as some twenty years later the same early Victorian models inspired the authors of the delightful *Cautionary Tales* and *The Moral Alphabet.* I had always longed to write, and can still see in memory the marble-covered exercise book in which at seven years old I had begun a story. At eleven I had finished quite a long one about a family living in Islington, a district I had once driven through on our way to the Military Tournament and struck me as unspeakably dreary.

This story, sent home from Cannes to my nieces in London, so delighted them that I embarked at thirteen on a great venture: the editorship of a periodical entitled *Auntie's Monthly Magazine,* to which they call contributed their efforts. Mine consisted in three serial stories, and it was here that the influence of such books as *The Looking-glass for the Mind* became apparent. It must be remembered that at that period a sharp division, often amounting to antagonism, existed between youth and age in all classes of society; the camaraderie now common amongst parents and children was then almost unknown; to be young was still to be the object of perpetual reproof. My stories were thus largely a take-off of this attitude, and I enjoyed working them out immensely.

The magazine, still in existence, though torn and grimy with age, amused the whole family, including my father, who loved me to read it aloud to him. Frank, however, though laughing heartily over each number when it arrived from Cannes, felt it his duty to reprove me for not adopting "a more instructive and higher moral tone of teaching", so, after the magazine had run to six numbers, it was stopped and I was obliged to confine my literary activities to my diary.

For I *had* to write, I could not live without it, and strangely enough, in a family so literary as ours, I was the only one who felt the urge to write fiction. This was a pity, particularly in the case of Millie, who contributed the largest part to my sisters' "Journal" and had an extraordinary gift for witty narrative. Her caricatures were delightful, and later on her really exquisite miniatures met with great praise at the Royal Academy.

So through all the austerity of our lives there ran a vein of humour; even my mother could descend to pleasantry, especially in rhyme. Ashley and Edwyn with all their erudition—see the list of their publications in *Who's Who* for 1934—could break out quite amusingly into verse. One of Ashley's best efforts related to an extraordinary old lady, Mrs. S., who was in the habit of leaving little booklets on us consisting of beautiful thoughts she had woven into a completely unintelligible form. After one of these effusions had reached us Ashley suggested that this preamble should be printed at the beginning of her next composition:

"As sometimes wandering through the dark,
We catch a gleam afar,
Some London gas lamp or a spark
Blown from a cheap cigar,

So whenso'eer I read again
The books I'm wont to write,
Through the dense mists that cloud my brain
Glimmers a lonely light

And then I ask, "Oh, can it be
That in my handiwork,
Fruit of laborious idiocy,
Some meaning yet may lurk?"

. . . . .

Gwennie was the first to break up the family circle. At eighteen her long engagement to Ion Keith-Falconer ended in their marriage at Cannes. But their happiness was short-lived. After a year or two Ion insisted on leaving Cambridge, where he had preceded Ashley as Professor of Semitic languages, in order to become a missionary in Arabia. They settled in the village of Sheikh Othman, outside Aden, and there Ion died of fever. So at only twenty-one Gwennie was left a widow.[1]

But a greater grief was in store for us all.

Every year when spring came we had set forth for England with great rejoicings. Only my mother lamented, for Cannes assured her the seclusion that the visits of our many relations made impossible at Trent. How heavenly it was, after the heat and dust of the Riviera in April, to pass through green banks studded with primroses on our way from Dover to London and to see the lambs skipping about in English meadows! Then the arrival at Trent, the visits to our favourite animals, the flowers, the birds, the sound of the cuckoo in the beechwoods—no one can really understand what it is to love England who has not been obliged to spend weary months and years away from her.

Then came one spring when we reached home again, filled with our usual ecstasy, to find Trent lovelier than ever in the May sunshine. How settled it all felt, how stable, how unchanging! To my childish mind it seemed as if life must go on like this for ever. It had never occurred to me that one day it must end.

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[1] She married Capt. F. E. Bradshaw some years later.

I had not realized that my father, now eighty-one, was growing weaker, and when, in July, he fell ill I did not guess at first that this was more than one of his usual attacks of gout. Then gradually the truth dawned on me—he was to be taken from us; the realization came like a thunderclap. But he lay wrapped in peace, smiling on those around him, thinking to the last of kind things to do for them. One morning he said:

"Today is the Parents' cricket match at Cheam. I wonder whether I could go to it. I should love to see it. But perhaps I feel too tired."

Soon after, that great heart ceased to beat.

Next morning, sitting at the schoolroom window, I heard the bell tolling in the village—I can hear it still.

Then came the last Sunday at Trent church, no mourning hymns or funeral marches, but his favourite hymn "The King of Love my Shepherd is", and as a voluntary, "O rest in the Lord", the first so well expressing the joyous contentment of his life, the second the peace of his passing.

Ten days later I drove out of the gates of Trent for the last time; it was no longer my home. That first bright chapter in my life was closed.

CHAPTER VIII

YEARS OF EXILE

AFTER my father's death Trent, Fosbury and the Villa Monte Léo passed to my half-brother Frank; my mother, according to her own wish, was left Passiflora, which was the only home she cared for. My own brothers and sisters, now all grown up, dispersed in various directions and took it in turns to join my mother, with whom I was left to wander on the Continent.

Our winters were, of course, spent at Cannes and I shall never forget the despair of arriving there every year in the first week of October. I think the climate of the Riviera must have changed entirely, for now it enjoys a summer season which ends in October whilst in those days the heat in spring and autumn was almost unbearable.

All the Cannois who were able to migrated to the mountains, even the bees were transported there in their hives. The grass in the gardens was rolled up like a carpet and melons sown on the bare earth, providing us with some consolation on our return. But until December Cannes was a city of the dead, hotels, churches, nearly all the shops were shut; even the canal was turned off for its autumn cleaning and one year we were obliged to migrate to Grasse for want of water.

My mother loved heat. At Princes Gate a man was employed all night to stoke the furnace which heated the pipes, and at the beginning of the winter our night nursery windows were pasted up with brown paper and not opened again till the spring, for in those days "night air" was generally believed to be unhealthy. Even at Cannes we never slept with a window open; at sunset every window throughout the house was shut and a large *calorifère* in the hall kept up the heating.

My mother certainly disproved the theory of fresh air being absolutely essential to robust health, for she kept her rooms at a mean temperature of seventy degrees, went very little out of doors and lived to be eighty-one, yet never can I remember her having a cold, a headache or any serious malady. It was I who had to suffer in after life for being brought up in this hot-house atmosphere and never "hardened off" so as to be able to endure an English winter without shivering.

My mother only twice returned to England during the remaining nineteen years of her life. Our summers were spent in Switzerland, usually at the Hôtel Montfleury above Territet, on the Lake of Geneva, which my mother found secluded enough, as no entertainments ever took place there.

One year, however, in search of still greater solitude she resolved to try the Grand Hotel at Leysin, in the valley of the Rhône which, from its prospectus, promised to be even more secluded, and we duly arrived there.

But it turned out to be a sanatorium for consumptives in which we were required to observe all the rules prescribed for the patients, which my mother found irksome.

I shall never forget the melancholy of the walks around the hotel, interspersed with wooden shelters the walls of which were scribbled over with such remarks as, "*Adieu, o terre!*" or "*C'est le dernier jour d'un poitrinaire!*" I was thankful when, after ten days, she decided to return to Territet.

Every summer I was allowed to go over to England and pay a few visits to relations, but only for a short time. Oh, how I longed for Trent! A letter from Millie,[1] who was staying there with Frank, reached me in Switzerland and pictures it so well that I cannot resist quoting it:

> "Isn't it heavenly to write on dear Trent Park paper again? How you must envy me! It is as near Paradise as anything can be in this world.... The trees are green and shady and the sun shines as, it seems to me now on looking back, it always *did* shine when we were there.
>
> "I always think of Trent warm, sunny and smelling of hay and fresh paint. It is a typical Trent day now, hot hay-fields and the cattle gathered under the trees for shade. Comet, a brown cart-horse and an Alderney cow are standing together in a field by the cricket-field pond. Comet would not let us pat him and pretended not to know us, but the cow came up and let us pat its fluffy brown forehead. Lord Grey (our donkey) wouldn't say whether he knew us or not, he was tied up in the stable-shed. Dick, sweet dog, did not know me the first minute, but when he did he jumped for joy and leaped upon my knee."

Ah, those July days at Trent! Two lines in *The Lord of Burleigh* always bring them back to me:

"Summer winds about them blowing,
Made a murmur in the land."

The years of exile on the Continent, from the age of fifteen to seventeen, were the saddest and loneliest of my whole life. Enid, to whom I was devoted and with whom I had done lessons for eight years under the rule of Poggs, now married Harry Sulivan, a most charming and lovable young man who, through the carelessness of an army doctor, had lost a leg and was obliged to leave his regiment (the Border Regiment), and they settled in Norfolk.

Poggs had departed and I was thus left alone in the schoolroom with her successor, Fräulein K., a young Austrian-Polish governess—to judge by her name, of Jewish origin, though this did not strike me at the time—who had convinced my mother of the soundness of her religious views, but ended by boring her as much as she did me. She was in reality a perfectly null personality, quite harmless, without the faintest sense of humour or an idea of any kind in her head. She was, however, passably bi-lingual. Every morning we took a walk along the Californie road talking French, every afternoon in another direction talking German. There was nothing to break the monotony.

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[1] My sister Millicent, who later married Reginald Hart Dyke.

It is terrible to be unhappy when one is very young, the present presses so closely around one that one cannot see beyond it or picture any change for the better. Nothing is more important than to give children the habit of happiness which may remain with them for life and enable them to face whatever trials fate may have in store for them; to acquire a despondent cast of mind is fatally easy. I had been happy as a child at Trent, but those three years abroad effectually damped my spirits and it was long before I recovered my *joie de vivre.*

Fortunately I still had German lessons with Fräulein Maass and Signorina Gabiano to teach me Italian and read Dante with me, which was an unspeakable delight; then a great treat was flower-painting with Madame Hegg, a really remarkable Swiss artist. These were bright spots in a most uneventful life.

But the brightest were Edwyn's holiday when he came out to Cannes from Oxford, where he was now an undergraduate at New College, and gave me lessons in Greek and on the history of Egypt, which he illustrated with the most marvellous drawings to impress names on my memory. I have one still of Queen Hatshepsu with a sketch of a milliner offering a seat to her customer, and the words "Hat-shop-sit-you" in Edwyn's beautiful classical writing underneath, another of me sitting on his knee with my arm round his neck, whilst he talked of ancient Greece and of Egypt where, later on, he went to excavate with Flinders Petrie.

Edwyn was one of the most lovable human beings I have ever known and quite unique. His obituary notices in *The Times* of October 1944 gave no idea of his real character. To judge by these he might have been a dry-as-dust savant; in reality no more amusing and original personality could be imagined.

As a small boy he had been particularly tiresome at his lessons; my sisters, who were told off to see that he was working at his holiday tasks, were sure to find him with his legs on the table, doing acrobatic stunts, singing or drawing in his exercise books.

"Edwyn," they would say severely, "you will never get through your exams at this rate!" But he passed with flying colours. He seemed to absorb knowledge in some mysterious way through the pores of his skin, soaking in the ancient world rather than studying it, until it became more real to him than the world in which he lived.

When he had finished his first book, *The House of Seleucus*, I found him dispatching the MS to press—type-writing was not *de rigueur* in those days—with the most amazing drawings all down the margins—people tumbling out of buses, fantastic monsters, mouthing faces.

"But, Edwyn," I said, "what will the printers make of all this?"

He brushed away the question as if too trivial to need a reply. I do not think he really noticed these extraordinary marginal decorations which he had executed mechanically whilst his mind was concentrated on the text. However, the book came out all right and only the critics were baffled because, as one observed, there was no one in England learned enough to review it adequately.

This habit of concentration was the cause of his astounding absent-mindedness, a failing to which all of us are prone, but which in Edwyn reached a point that made him almost incapable of dealing with mundane matters.

One day at Cannes, having planned to spend the day wandering amongst the hills behind Grasse, he got up early and dressed in the darkness of the winter morning by the light of a bedroom candle, for the villa was not yet lit by electricity. The butler had placed a packet of sandwiches for his lunch on a table beside him, but a little later, on looking out from the pantry window, he perceived Edwyn walking down the drive with the candle still lighted in his hand, whilst the packet of sandwiches reposed on the table in his room. The butler hastily fetched the packet and, running after Edwyn, exchanged it for the candle, probably without Edwyn noticing his mistake.

One winter later on he went to India, and I well remember his return, when I met him at the door of the villa, bewildered at the flood of expostulation proceeding from the Italian cabman who had brought him up from the station, and whom he had paid with an obsolete coin of Jubbulpore. He was still wearing the solar topee he had worn in India, having quite forgotten to change it when travelling through Italy in wintry weather.

Edwyn's passion for poetry remained with him all his life; verses in some language or another seemed to be always running in his head, walking beside him in the hills at Cannes or the mountains of Switzerland, sitting beside him in tram or train one was always liable to hear the rhythm of Greek iambics; later in life it was Dante's *Inferno* or *Paradiso*, of which he knew many hundred lines by heart, that he would murmur as he wandered amongst London traffic whilst we trembled for his safety.

I could well understand these tastes of Edwyn's for Greek and Italian were my favourite lessons. I had a passion for Italy and sometimes on our expeditions along the Riviera I would cross the Pont Saint Louis that divides it from France, if only to kiss the soil of that enchanting land.

In looking back I see as a most merciful dispensation of Providence that my mother should have elected to make her home on the Continent, for with her religious views she might have been expected to settle at Bath or Bournemouth instead of inhabiting a Tower of Babel where, at any rate, I had the advantage of being able to learn languages without an effort.

Moreover, life at Cannes in those days was quite amusing to look on at. As the playground of royalty—reigning monarchs, "rightful" monarchs who had not succeeded in reigning, heirs apparent, festive Grand Dukes—it attracted all the plutocrats from Liverpool and New York who longed to bask in royal smiles. Aloof from these strivings in our villa on the hill, we often caught glimpses of crowned heads at play, frequently on their way up to the Villa Nevada to visit old Miss Percival, the retired lady-in-waiting with whom Prince Leopold, the Duke of Albany, had been staying when he died after a fall at the Cercle Nautique.

The Villa Nevada, after this sad event, became a place of pilgrimage for members of the Royal Family, and it was no unusual thing for Miss Percival, when sitting down to her tea, to find her drawing-room door flung open by Teresa, her old Italian servant, announcing, "Madame la Reine d'Angleterre," whereupon Queen Victoria, with immense dignity, would enter the room and Miss Percival, according to etiquette, would have to back out into the hall and wait there until bidden to re-enter.

We loved to watch the Queen, for whom, as a child, I had a great admiration, driving up to the Villa Nevada, and as soon as we saw her coming Enid and I would run to different points of the road so as to get a separate bow in return for our curtseys. I remember, too, seeing her in her donkey-chair at Grasse where, in spite of the *lèse-majesté* displayed by the donkey in braying loudly with wide open mouth as it sped along, she retained the same regal calm as behind her famous cream-coloured horses at her Jubilee.

Another frequent visitor to the Villa Nevada was the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII, who always enjoyed himself hugely at Cannes, especially at the Battle of Flowers, standing up in a decorated carriage and gaily throwing bouquets in all directions; for years I kept a bunch of Parma violets that came my way.

But with regard to the Prince of Wales I regret to record that when Enid and I were about thirteen and ten years old we had committed a really terrible act of *lèse-majesté* which now eventually recoiled on my head alone.

Along the lower wall of our garden there grew a row of beautiful mimosa trees of which the boughs, with their fluffy yellow balls, overhung the road and proved so tempting to passersby that they would stand up in their carriages and tear down branches to take away with them. This caused so much damage to the trees that one afternoon, without telling anyone, Enid and I armed ourselves with a large garden syringe and a pail of water, and perching amongst the branches, concealed by a screen of leaves, proceeded to squirt each pilferer who came along. Their strangled wails on being met with an unexpected volley of water from an unseen source continued to amuse us until suddenly a male voice, deeper than the rest, assailed us with a torrent of angry words. Then, peering through the leaves, we realized what we had done. It was the Prince of Wales who, stopping his carriage, had started to pull down a branch when a douche of cold water shot down the royal sleeve! The story, of course, went all round Cannes and, somehow or other, although Enid and I were equally guilty, the dreadful deed was attributed to me alone. I hoped I had lived it down when an unforeseen circumstance brought it home to me.

I should explain that Miss Percival had formed a curious friendship with my mother, curious because she loved "Society" and could hardly be expected to sympathize with my mother's religious views. She seemed, however, at moments to be impressed by them, indeed, on the verge of a spiritual awakening, and my mother, by way of hastening that event, showed her great kindness, particularly by lending her our carriage, for Miss Percival had none of her own.

Unable to make any return in the way of hospitality, for she knew nothing could draw my mother from her seclusion, Miss Percival used to invite us up to the Villa, and now when I was fifteen and the Duchess of Albany was staying there with her two children—a charming little girl of eight and a little boy of six—I was asked to go to tea and play with them. My dismay can be imagined when, on the first of these occasions, the Duchess greeted me with the words, "So you are the little girl who squirted the Prince of Wales!" Bathed in confusion, I could only murmur, "I'm very sorry, Ma'am, I really didn't mean to!" But the Duchess, who was a most kindly and delightful woman, only laughed and said, "I don't think it did him any harm."

But she evidently thought me capable of any enormity for when, some weeks later, we went with Miss Percival to see her off at the station, she stood at the window of the train as it was moving out and waving gaily called out to me, "Now mind you don't get into any more mischief!"

. . . . .

So the years went by until I was seventeen and Fräulein K., to my infinite relief, departed to her native Poland.

But as my English education had been much neglected I begged my mother now to let me go to school or college in England. She considered that I was too young for college, so school would be more suitable. At first Cheltenham was discussed, and I was thrilled at the prospect of going to what seemed to be the next thing to a boys' public school with its separate houses, games and so on, but in the end she decided that this would be too gay. No, there was only one school to which I could safely be sent, and that was in Gloucestershire, kept by an old Miss Winscombe, whose religious views could be absolutely depended on. So, one April day, I left Cannes and reached England full of enthusiasm for this new adventure.

CHAPTER IX

BROWNSHILL COURT

BROWNSHILL COURT, near Stroud, was a fine old country house of the rather grim Georgian type, not unlike Fosbury, surrounded by a large garden and woods. Edwyn, with whom I arrived there, had joined me in the train on my way down from Paddington, and now handed me over with fatherly care into the hands of the schoolmistress.

Miss Winscombe, a curious old lady with sandy hair turning white which she wore in a sort of long bob down her back, was a believer in Spartan methods. As I tossed on my hard and narrow bed, stuffed apparently with croquet balls, in the room I shared with four other girls, I wondered how I was to learn to sleep under these conditions. The glorious French mattresses into which I had sunk at Cannes were, as I found in after life, a bad preparation for British bedding.

Fortunately, at that age I was quite healthy, and it was not for some weeks that I began to feel the effects of the starvation diet provided. Dinner in the middle of the day was the only hearty meal, at which, if one was lucky, one might get a second helping; supper in the evening consisted only of a ship's biscuit and water, and even the supply of the latter often ran short, so that we were reduced to running down to a cow pond to drink. On our rare expeditions into Stroud we could hardly bear to look into a baker's shop, so tempting were the loaves and cakes spread out there! I am glad to have had this experience of hunger—and how hungry one can be at seventeen!—for it taught me that there are worse things to be endured in life; to have plenty to eat and nothing to do seemed to me more intolerable.

What I found hardest to bear at Brownshill was the lack of fresh air and exercise, for lessons occupied nearly the whole day, Breakfast at 8, chapel at 8.30 followed by a Scripture lesson, lessons from 9.30 to 1.30, dinner, lessons again from 3.15 to 5.30, tea, lessons again from 6 to 8, making about 9 hours in all. The only time we were out of doors throughout that lovely summer was for about an hour after dinner, and that was spent in compulsory cricket.

Miss Winscombe was a great believer in cricket as part of a girl's education, and I was glad of this as I had always been fond of the game at Trent, and now succeeded in distinguishing myself by fielding at cover point.

But it was evident that the Mistress herself had not grasped the elements of the game, for one afternoon when we were "drawing stumps" she gave us a little lecture on our progress, saying: "You are getting on very well, dear girls, but I notice one fault you are making—the batters are not careful enough to send the ball *to* the fielders!" Whereat, I regret to say, cover point gave way to a shout of mirth!

Another mania of Miss Winscombe's was that no medicine should ever be given in case of illness, so if, as sometimes happened, girls were seized with colic they were left to recover as best they could. These attacks were not uncommon, as owing to the meagreness of the fare we were forced to stay the pangs of hunger with slabs of bread, perhaps too new to be digestible.

One memorable day we were taken for a "treat", about an hour's journey by train to a field where we were to enjoy a picnic. Dinner was provided at one o'clock, consisting of mutton pies and jam puffs, but when tea-time came the Mistress and her staff retired behind a hedge and enjoyed a hearty meal, whilst we were left unfed and growing hungrier every moment until the moment came for our return. But that was not for several hours. Only at nine o'clock did we reach Stroud station, where we were packed into a char-à-banc and taken back to the house. I shall never forget that dreadful drive with one girl leaning in a dead faint on my shoulder whilst another lay unconscious on the floor at my feet. The governesses took no notice of her, and it was left to me on arrival to drag her out of the char-à-banc and up to her room, there to revive her as best I could with smelling-salts and cold water, for, of course, no brandy could be allowed.

At moments the conditions of life at Brownshill seemed unendurable, and I wrote to my mother begging to be allowed to leave at the end of the term and go to college. But she would not hear of this, it must be home or school!

It is extraordinary what one can endure when one is young and healthy, so I wrote back saying I would "stand the dirt, the famine and the cold in the coming winter to get on with work and finish my education". Anything seemed better than the luxurious idleness of Cannes!

But the matter was settled by a most extraordinary and unexpected development.

Soon after my arrival at Brownshill I noticed that every night, just as we had got into bed, a horse could be heard trotting along the high road which ran parallel to the house, first coming nearer and nearer, and then, instead of dying away again in the distance, stopping dead at a point opposite the house where there was no gateway or turning in any direction. I asked the other girls in my room what this could mean, but they replied, evasively, that they did not know. It was evident that some mystery attached to this nocturnal visitor, and as the weeks went by the mystery deepened, not merely with regard to the horseman, but to the place in general. There was clearly some secret which I could not discover.

Then one morning suspicion gave way to certainty. We were all assembled in chapel and the Mistress had finished reading the service when she suddenly turned and addressed us in words to this effect:

"I understand there has been further talk about a subject you are forbidden to discuss. This must cease immediately. Anyone infringing this rule will be severely dealt with. Not a word more must be said on the matter."

What could it mean? Once out of chapel, I implored some of the girls to explain this cryptic utterance, but they only shook their heads and said, "We are not allowed to speak of it."

"Speak of what?" I persisted. "Is it a ghost? Is the house haunted?"

"We don't know. It may be ghosts, but we can't tell what it is. Anyhow, we must say nothing about it. We are sworn to secrecy."

And not another word could I elicit from them beyond the fact that another new girl who had arrived when I did, had "seen something" and talked about it—hence the Mistress's solemn warning in chapel.

I had always been terribly afraid of ghosts and the idea that the place was haunted finally shook my determination to stay on. So when school broke up at the end of the term I resolved, if possible, never to return. But I wanted to fathom the mystery. Fortunately, on getting into the train I found myself alone in the same carriage with the new girl who had got in touch with it, and I lost no time in plying her with questions:

"Do tell me what you saw! What is the secret of Brownshill?"

"Well," she answered slowly, "as I am leaving—for I couldn't go back after what has happened—I suppose there's no harm in my telling you all about it." She seemed a quiet, matter-of-fact girl, not in the least nervous or hysterical, but the story she told me was most extraordinary.

She had been awakened one night by a slight noise. The moonlight was shining through the windows and fell across the floor where suddenly she saw something moving—a human figure crawling on all fours towards her bed. She thought it must be one of the other girls sleeping in the same room and called out, "Is anyone out of bed?" They all awoke and answered, "No." Whereat the figure picked itself up and ran out of the room.

Next day she spoke of what she had seen, and this was why the Mistress gave strict injunctions not to talk about it. The other girls, however, now told her all they knew. It seemed that strange things had constantly been heard about the house, whispering behind doors, stealthy footsteps, a system of whistles that coincided with the striking of the cuckoo-clock in the front hall. These emanated from the basement to which the girls were strictly forbidden to go, but one night two of them crept down in the dark, and opening the door that led to it, heard the sound of hammering; then a man's voice called out, "Time's up!" and the hammering ceased.

Of course, the girls talked about all this, and the Mistress, hearing of it, summoned them to her room and made them take their oath on the Bible that they would keep silent on the subject and not say a word about it to their parents.

The girl who told me this story was so terrified that her people took her away from Brownshill, and I had no difficulty in persuading my mother to let me leave, too. I heard afterwards that so many of the girls' nerves had been shaken by their experiences that they had to leave and the school was finally broken up.

What was the clue to the mystery? I was never able to get definitely to the bottom of it, but I was told some years later that a gang of false coiners had taken possession of the basement, which they used as a workshop, hence the hammering and the cry of, "Time's up!" It was also said that this basement was connected with the high road by an underground passage which opened at the point where I had heard the horse's footsteps stop nightly, the horseman being apparently employed to bring them supplies.

But what was the reason for the Mistress's anxiety to hush the matter up and enforce an oath of secrecy on her pupils? That is a mystery to which I can offer no explanation.

CHAPTER X

LOTUS LAND

MY schooldays having ended thus abruptly I returned to Cannes for the winter.

It was a relief to find I could be of some use to my mother in running the house, for, with her superb disregard of mundane matters, she had engaged a number of servants without considering what language they spoke. So she would ring the bell and deliver a long order in German only to find that she was speaking to the French butler, who looked completely blank.

The worst of it was that she had chosen a German cook and an Italian kitchenmaid, neither of whom understood a word of each other's languages so every morning I had to go down to the kitchen and explain what the cook wanted her aide to do. This descent served a further purpose, for it enabled me to discover that the cook, with the co-operation of my mother's German maid, who had the face of an angel, was getting in large quantities of food which she took down to the town in a cab and sold in the market. I lost no time in getting both women dispatched back to their native fatherland.

My mother had been unfortunate in losing a faithful German maid named Boysen who had been with her for years, but was somewhat unaccountable in her actions.

On one occasion my mother, being ill, asked her to sleep in the dressing-room opening out of her bedroom in a bed-bookcase she had recently bought and thought a most useful piece of furniture, the bed part being made to let down for use at night and to close up again for the day. Boysen, however, refused to sleep in it as she was afraid of its turning into a bookcase in the middle of the night, but said she would spend the whole night leaning up against the door with her ear to the key-hole in case my mother wanted her, and this she persisted in doing. She left in the end because she said Cannes was too far from London, and then took a situation in Fiji.

My mother never allowed herself to be disturbed by "servant worries". I remember one day when she was in the full flow of a discourse on some learned subject in her beautiful well-chosen English, the door suddenly opened, and Antoinette, a new French housemaid, entered tempestuously in floods of tears:

"O *Madame, je ne puis pas rester, la cuisinière est si mèchante avec moi! Je veux m'en aller!*"

Doubtless a long tale of woe would have been poured into our ears, but my mother, hardly looking up from her crochet, gently backwatered with her hand, waving the woman away as if she had been an importunate fly, whereat Antoinette, taken aback, gave one short gasp and dashed out of the room. My mother, completely ignoring this scene, took up the thread of her discourse where she had left it. Antoinette remained some fifteen years.

Apart from the polyglot staff my mother had assembled, our villa had now become more than ever a Tower of Babel, for she had collected round her a curious cosmopolitan circle of people who sympathized with her religious views—French, Swiss, Dutch, Russian, etc.

Some of the Russians were really delightful people, mostly "Radstockians"—followers of old Lord Radstock—who used to assemble in our drawing-room for meetings, usually led by Count Bobrinsky, a strange bearded person who would come and talk by the hour in an almost unintelligible mixture of French and English whilst the Countess sat by only saying "*Ach!*" and smoking little Russian cigarettes. One day at lunch in their villa he suddenly leant across the table to Millie and said: "When my wife shall die shall you marry me? Now you gannot say you have had no brobosal!" At this sort of thing the Countess would only smile and say gently, "*Ach, Alexis, ni shali, ni shali*" (don't fool). "Why do you speak such emptiness?"

Millie made great friends with their daughters and learnt from them in six weeks to talk Russian, whilst she was recovering from influenza. Sophie and Lili were really very remarkable women. Sophie at twenty-five turned the scale at over seventeen stone but it was all pure muscle. Her physical strength was terrific; if during our walks in the Esterel, we came to a stream that was difficult to cross, Sophie would tear up young pine trees by the roots and fling them across the water to form a bridge. She could only remember being tired once in her life and that was when she had boxed with two British officers and knocked them both out. But her heart was as soft as her biceps were hard.

During a terrible Russian famine she went without sugar in her coffee the whole winter at Cannes in order to send every penny she could save to help the starving peasants. Later on she trained as a hospital nurse in England so as to be able to doctor them at a dispensary she set up at her home in Bogorodsk in the province of Tula. The Revolution, thirty years later showed her no favour on this account.

I have always found Russian women very superior to the men of their country. Alosch, Count Bobrinsky's eldest son, was an extraordinary creature and seemed to me only half civilized. Apparently he spent most of his life in Russian forests where from a hole in the ground he kept a look-out for bears which he shot as they fell through the network of branches erected over his head.

One winter he came to Cannes and decided he would like to learn to sing, so he engaged an Italian singing master who said the first step was to teach him to smile for only when smiling was the mouth in the right position for voice production. So for days Alosch and his teacher continued to sit on two chairs in the kitchen with their arms folded over the backs, smiling broadly at each other. We never heard what happened after that.

We had great fun with the Bobrinskys, playing "robbers" by moonlight in the lovely garden of the Villa Valetta they rented one winter, bathing with them off the Ile St. Honorat or going for picnics in the mountains. One day we all planned to send the servants at their villa out for the day and cook the lunch ourselves. So soon after breakfast eight of us set to work and luncheon was announced for 12.30, at which hour the Countess, who had not joined the kitchen party, seated herself at the dining-room table, expecting the meal to appear. But as only one of us knew anything about cooking it was just three o'clock when the first course, large Russian pancakes, known as *blini*, served with melted butter and sour cream, emerged from the kitchen.

All this time the Countess sat peacefully at the table, her hands folded and without moving, as if it was quite natural to wait two and a half hours to be served. She was a woman of infinite patience, with all the Slav's oblivion to the passing of time.

I remember well how another Russian, dear old Princess Dolgorouki, with a brown wrinkled face like a walnut, who lived near us with her shaggy Caucasian dog, called Moka, once asked me to lunch with her and when I said, "*À quelle heure?*" she answered impatiently, "*À quelle heure? Mais à midi, à midi et demi, à une heure! Mais quelle pédanterie!*" It had never occurred to me that it was pedantic to have any particular hour for lunching.

At Cannes, as at Trent, a certain number of religious cranks and adventurers found their way into my mother's circle and imposed on her readiness to believe in their sincerity. One missionary, whose meetings were said to have been a great success, was arrested for burglary and ended ingloriously in jail at Grasse. Another apparently went off his head and accused my mother of stealing all the chairs out of his mission-hall. The idea of my mother walking off with 200 rush-bottomed chairs moved us to tears of mirth.

I remember hearing at the time about an English missionary who toured that part of France urging his audiences, as he thought, to have recourse to "the water of life", but saying, "*Mes amis, qu'est-ce qui nous donne la joie? qu'est-ce qui nous donne la paix? Mes amis, il n'y a que que l'eau-de-vie!*" After this he was doubtless pained to find himself taken for a traveller in some special brand of cognac.

Most of these people were, of course, animated by a horror of "Popery", and with one of them it reached such a point that he ended by imagining that one of his legs was a Roman Catholic so he set about punishing it in various ways, hanging it out of the carriage when he was driving or out of bed on a cold night. Another, persuaded by his wife and daughter to visit Rome, determined not to look at that wicked city, so walked about with his eyes shut until he came to the Pincio stairs and tumbled down them.

My mother, whilst indulging in no such extravagant displays of feeling, nevertheless maintained an attitude of rigid opposition to Roman Catholicism on which she would read us long treatises aloud. One I have never forgotten was a purple covered book entitled Thilwall's *Idolatry of the*

Church of Rome, which at the age of eleven I found intolerably wearisome. But here we come to a strange anomaly in my mother's complex nature which, to be understood, must be prefaced by a somewhat lengthy digression.

For those unfamiliar with the Riviera I should explain that off the coast of Cannes there lie the Iles des Lérins, the largest and nearest being Ste. Marguerite with a fortress where the Man in the Iron Mask was imprisoned under Louis XIV and from which Bazaine made his famous escape, and the further one St. Honorat with its ruined Saracen castle and close by the ancient Benedictine monastery where Saint Patrick spent some years of his life.

I do not know what may be the condition of these islands today, after the Second World War, but in those days St. Honorat can hardly have changed in the course of eight centuries. To cross the strip of deep blue sea that separates it from the coast of Provence was to step back over the years to the early Middle Ages, to pass out of the rush and turmoil of modern life into the drowsy peace of contemplation.

All around the little island the waves lapped sleepily against the white rocks and the sea sparkled in the glorious sunshine. Not a sound broke the silence of the land except that of men chopping wood in the olive groves or the bleat of the dark brown sheep that browsed around the walls of the monastery. Brown-clad figures crept noiselessly through the sunlight to work or prayer; white oxen drew the plough driven by the same brown figures. From time to time the chapel bell rang out over the island as it had done for 1000 years. Nothing seemed to have changed in this world of the soul; Heaven itself could hardly be more serene, more immutable in its remoteness from all earthly things.

Here one could realize the attitude of the monastic mind, the focussing of the eye of the soul on the remote Hereafter, the oblivion to all warm living present life for the sake of future bliss, the *délices* promised to the *élus* after death.

And meanwhile, on the other side of the blue water, revellers crowded into the white Casino by the sea, whose sole philosophy was to live for the present moment only, to think of no future even though it be tomorrow, to live in the light of the sun and never for an instant give a thought to the darkness that lies ahead.

Was it this concentration on the thought of Eternity that attracted my mother to St. Honorat? Was it some affinity with the monastic mind that drew her there? I only know that many of her historical researches centred around the visions of monks and nuns in their cells and that she loved nothing better than to go over to the island and pass the whole day wandering alone amongst the pine trees and round the monastery walls. For it was the monastery that drew her, that seemed to hold for her some incontrollable fascination, so much so that one day she begged the lay brother in the porter's lodge to let her into the precincts.

The lay brother replied that the foot of woman had never trodden them since their foundation, but that if she could prove her descent from Saint Louis an exception might be made in her case. My mother said she could do this, whereat the lay brother suggested that if she wrote a letter to the Pope, mentioning this fact, the Holy Father might possibly accord the desired permission. But alas! she imagined that a letter to the Pope must entail beginning with the words "*Mon Père*", a proceeding from which my mother's conscience shrank. So the gates of the monastery remained closed to her for ever.

Many years after her death, in 1928, I happened to be at Cannes when for the first time in 800 years the monastery was thrown open to the public for one week. Apparently some alterations were being made to the precincts which necessitated their re-consecration so the foot of woman was allowed to profane them before this took place.

I lost no time in going over to the island, and as I passed through the portals I wished my mother could have lived to see this day, that she too might have gazed on the marvellous picture of the Last Supper on the walls of the refectory, so living that the figures seem really to be seated there around the table.

I thought how she would have loved the little stone cloister where Saint Patrick walked in meditation, and where still every evening the monks all met and turned on the little fountain in the tiny flower-grown courtyard, standing around it in a circle and singing a hymn to the Blessèd Virgin. This ceremony described by the young monk who took us round struck me as infinitely touching.

What is the explanation of the charm the monastic life seemed to hold for my mother? Believers in re-incarnation will at once suggest the influence of a former life and it would certainly not have been difficult for anyone who contemplated my mother in the long black gowns she affected, the black or white lace that framed her features, with her great dignity and air of command, to picture her as an abbess ruling over her weaker sisters within convent walls. I have had too many strange experiences, which I shall touch on later, to regard as fantastic a theory which provides a key to otherwise inexplicable phenomena.

Whatever then the cause, my mother was clearly not of her age or of her entourage, essentially a mystic, she lived in a world of her own and it would have been quite impossible to imagine her mixing in ordinary "society", taking part in small talk or sitting in a row of dowagers around a ballroom.

The Cannois, however, could not forgive my mother for refusing to take part in the festivities of the season, and revenged themselves by publishing paragraphs about her in the local papers representing her as indulging in the wildest gaieties. Madame Bevan was one of the prominent figures at the Carnival or the Battle of Flowers; "*parmi les sportsmen de Cannes nous citerons Madame Bevan*" and a description would follow of the horses she was running at the last race-meeting. One surprising announcement ran:

SOIRÉE MUSICALE

Une soirée musicale a eu lieu dimanche chez Mme Bevan au Chalet Passiflora à la Californie avec le concours de Mlle Corroy de l'Opera Comique.

Note the choice of Sunday evening as a particular bit of malice!

My mother received these witticisms with complete sang-froid; indeed, it is doubtful whether she ever noticed them.

But to me this enforced seclusion from "the world" was not amusing. To have to live in one of the gayest places on the Continent and take no part in its gaieties was like being taken to a ball and ordered to sit in a corner and knit.

For I was not a mystic! For me the monastic life held no attractions, nor could I enter enthusiastically into my mother's studies of prophecy relating to the Second Advent and the return of the Jews to Palestine for which she prayed daily.

I was eighteen now, no longer a schoolgirl content to remain a chrysalis —as was the custom in those days before making one's début—but longing to burst out of my cocoon and spread my wings in the sunshine.

And what sunshine! How lovely Cannes was in those days! The long *jetée* where the yachts later lay at anchor, had not been built, there was only the old port ending with the lighthouse harbouring a picturesque variety of craft; the Croisette with its palm trees and charming white villas had not yet been disfigured by monster hotels, the tideless beach had not been vulgarized by sun-bathers in every stage of unattractive nudity, the primitive little Établissement de Bains on the Promenade du Midi where we went to swim was almost deserted. At a short distance Juan-les-Pins, now a seething mob of sun-baked humanity, consisted only of a white sandy sea-shore over which the pine trees hung almost to the water's edge.

Our garden had now become a thing of beauty; the smell of scented geraniums which, together with masses of purple heliotrope, grew thickly round the house, always brings it back to me. I see again the sunny terrace with the tall palm in the middle, shaded at one end by a spreading pepper tree, its walls covered with lemons ripening in the sunshine, orange-trees too, laden with fruit; down below sloping lawns with clumps of palms, bananas, mimosas shedding their fluffy yellow balls, beds of Princesse de Galles violets with heads nearly as big as pansies and smelling as no violets I have ever met elsewhere could smell. And in the spring the roses, papery *roses de Bengale,* clustering banksias, white rose, camélias, great Maréchal Niels, falling in showers from walls and trellises, pink Madame Lavallées climbing up the pine trees and hanging in festoons from the branches, great bushes of Madame Abel Chatenay and other ephemeral varieties that in the heat of May bloomed only for a day, buds in the morning, full-blown by the evening. It was, as the women in the flower-market would say, "*une vraie indigestion de roses*".

What a setting Cannes provided for gaiety of all kinds! Sailing, yachting, picnics, tennis tournaments, parties and dances in the lovely villas with their marble steps and semi-tropical gardens, with the scent of flowers and the sound of string bands in the air! All life seemed to be set to music in that lotus-eating land "where it seemed always afternoon".

Music, indeed, was my one consolation. For though, as I have said, we were a most unmusical family in the sense that none of us understood, or pretended to understand, classical music, Millie, Enid and I had enough ear to appreciate a melody and enough voice to be able to sing a little in tune.

I could not learn to play the piano because I was never able to stretch an octave, but I learnt to accompany myself on the guitar. Signor Schwartz came over from Nice and gave me lessons, Madame Fiametta Nabonnand taught me in a throbbing Italian tremolo to sing airs from Donizetti and Bellini, and I picked up from the Neapolitan musicians who would come and play under our windows a number of the old Italian songs—*Santa Lucia, Addio mio bello Napoli, Musica Proibita* and the new canzoni de Piedigrotta—*Margarita* and *La Frangesa* which just then had a great success. All that is changed now, jazz, the saxophone and "crooning", since the First World War have replaced on the Riviera the guitars and mandolines of the strolling players that delighted my youth under the palms and blue skies of the Mediterranean.

It seems to me that if one does not understand classical music it is better to admit it frankly rather than pretend a rapture one does not feel. I often wished, however, that I had had a musical education when my brother Hubert married Isabelle Wienawska, the daughter of the famous violinist, who, besides being herself a brilliant pianist, was a most charming and original personality and must have found her talents sadly wasted on such an unmusical family as ours.

But to return to the old days at Cannes. The heat at that date had one compensation, that it enabled us to bathe right up till Christmas, sometimes at Saint Honorat where we would spend hours in and out of the sea.

How delicious it was to float in that clear blue water, so translucent that one could see one's feet walking over the white sand as one entered it, and watch the curious creatures in its depths, jelly-fish and sea horses, and so buoyant that one could lie on its surface as on a divan, looking up into the deep blue sky. Meanwhile the boatmen would be busy casting nets for fishes of all colours and sizes, *racahouts* and *loups de mer* and tiny sardines, out of which they would make a glorious *bouillabaisse* in a black pot on the white beach ready for our *déjeuner* when we emerged with the hunger that only swimming in the sea can give one.

Swimming has always been to me the purest ecstasy; once in the water I feel I have no body, whilst moving through it seems to me the most perfect form of motion, bringing every muscle into play—the nearest thing to it is dancing, the old *valse à trois temps* was indeed like swimming through the air on waves of sound.

Ah! how in those old days at Cannes I longed to dance! for, although I had never been allowed to have dancing lessons, I had learnt a little from dear Fräulein Maass who, whilst spending holidays with us at Fosbury, would teach me polkas, mazurkas and above all waltzes on the old oak floor of the dining-room when my mother had retired upstairs to her *boudoir.*

But I was never to be allowed to go to dances! Still unable to see beyond the present moment, still shut in by its iron pressure, that word "never" rang like a knell in my ears. The sound of violins and guitars tuning up for dance music would drive me indoors, stopping my ears to shut out the seductive strains; lying in bed at night I could hear the carriages rolling along the road to the dances to which I had been invited and might not go, and I would hide my head under the bedclothes to shut out the seductive sounds.

The shops in the Rue d'Antibes added to the tantalization for I have always loved clothes, and there were the loveliest dance-frocks, the gayest hats blown together by the deft hands of Parisian *modistes,* with persuasive *vendeuses* tempting one to buy.

My mother's austerity had never extended to clothes. She herself was anything but "dowdy", the beads and bugles affected by other old ladies of her day were conspicuous by their absence from the long lines of her black, well-cut gowns, and she had always ordered us charming frocks from Liberty's. She did not even disapprove of cosmetics, for although face powder at that date was considered somewhat daring, she used it freely, and as children we each had our powder-box, complete with puff, on our dressing-table.

My mother, however, detested the "royal fringes" then in fashion, and certainly the mossy growths which decorated the foreheads of women during the late Victorian era were far from artistic. But since hair was worn dragged back from the face there was no other way of softening the line which was often hard and unbecoming. I had never been allowed a fringe as a child, but now at eighteen, greatly daring, I crept down to the town and had a very small one cut by Azémard, the *coiffeur.*

I returned home, expecting my mother to be indignant at the result but she noticed nothing, only after about two days when I said to her, "Mamma, how do you like my fringe?" she answered, "Of course it looks extremely vulgar." "Then I have been looking vulgar for two days, Mamma!" At which she had sufficient sense of humour to smile.

But what was the good of all such vanities to me when every form of social gaiety was forbidden? It is true we went to a few parties at the houses of our French, Dutch or Russian friends, and oh! how prim a French *soirée* in those days could be! The *jeunes filles* all parked together at one end of the room, the married women at the other and only with them might the young men indulge in light conversation. Occasionally one would pass us with a graceful bow and some such remark as, "*Quel charmant parterre de flesur!*"

which made one feel like a lobelia planted at the edge of a Victorian flower-bed. It would never have done for him to display any warmer shade of feeling.

The brightest spots in the winter were when we went over to stay with our friends, Sir Thomas and Lady Hanbury, at their lovely "Palazzo Orengo", usually known as "La Mortola", from the name of the village in which it stood. With its rare shrubs, no less than seventy-two kinds of mimosas, its marble steps swathed in climbing roses and long cypress alleys leading to the sea, it was a dream of beauty.

One year when we were there a very interesting discovery had been made on the coast near Ventimiglia, three skeletons of the Stone Age were unearthed in the face of the cliff overhanging the sea, a man seven feet high holding a flint instrument in his hand and on either side of him a woman apparently clinging to his shoulder, each wearing a necklace of fish-bones.

I remember counting the man's teeth as he lay stretched out on the earth and finding that he had thirty, all perfect, with not a spot of decay. Cecil Hanbury, who took us to see these curious remains, told us they were believed to be "pre-Adamite", the explanation of the strange attitude in which they were found being that either they had been overtaken by an earthquake and that the women had clung to the man's shoulder for protection or that he had died and his two wives had been buried with him.

The one place along the coast of the Riviera I never longed to visit was Monte Carlo where, of course, we were not allowed to set foot. When in later life I entered the famous Casino I marvelled at the attraction that *nid de cocottes*, as Marie Bashkirtseff named it, could exercise over the British mind. The atrocious façade with its gaudy cupolas, the stifling atmosphere in the Salle de Jeux, the dreary old women "punters" dressed in ulsters who made a small living sitting round the tables, the silence broken only by the croupier's rake shovelling in notes and coins, and down below the brutal pigeon-shooting that turned one sick if inadvertently one looked that way, all seemed to me to make Monte Carlo the most unattractive spot on the whole Riviera.

We at Cannes heard too much of the tragedies that took place there to cherish any illusions on the fascinations of gambling; lucky winners went in risk of their lives, being followed into the train by thieves and cut-throats, and the line became so dangerous that we were afraid even of our menfolk travelling on it alone.

The unlucky gambler, on the other hand, frequently took his own life, sometimes throwing himself into the sea from what became known as "the suicide's rock" or shooting himself in the garden of the Casino. For losses were more usual than gains, and it was often said, "*Rouge perd et noir perd, mais blanc gagne toujours!*"—Monsieur Blanc being the owner of the Casino.

I remember coming back from Mentone in the *train des joueurs*—the evening train which at that hour picked up most of the gamblers at Monte Carlo station on their way back to Nice or Cannes. Amongst these was a French girl of about twenty, who had been to the Casino for the first time and could not get over her delight at the experience. "*Ah, quelle journée délicieuse!*" she cried. "*Monte Carlo c'est le Paradis!*" At that a middle-aged woman in black, who had been gazing out of the window, turned and faced the carriage:

"*Et moi,*" she said fiercely, "*moi je vous dis que c'est l'Enfer—mais j'y vais toujours!*"

By the end of another winter life at Cannes had become for me intolerably wearisome; young and healthy with no outlet for my energies, my time was spent in reading or wandering about the garden alone, dreaming of the great world that lay beyond the horizon. There, across the sea, was Africa, land of burning deserts and palmy mirages; the home of Suliman-ben, Abdaraman, one of the Arab prisoners of war once interned in the Ile Ste. Marguerite, who used to visit us when I was a child and tell us of his life in Biskra.

I longed to cross the strip of blue water and land in Algiers, or to board one of the vessels on the distant sky-line making for Egypt, that home of mystery. I longed to sail away to the East, to India, to China, to Japan; the thirst for travel was almost more than I could bear. To me the arid desert was not the Sahara but the Riviera, and I could well understand how another girl, Marie Bashkirtseff, on that same coast only a few years earlier could cry out in despair: "*Que vais-je faire dans cet affreux désert?*"

To me the most intolerable thing in life has always been inaction; I must have work or play—and since I might not play I begged my mother once again to let me work in earnest, this time to go to college and read for a degree, and this time, to my infinite relief, she consented.

CHAPTER XI

WESTFIELD COLLEGE

IT must not be supposed that I now became what was called in those days "a Girton girl". No, Cambridge and Oxford were both regarded as too gay; there was only one college that could be considered perfectly innocuous and that was Westfield College, Hampstead, which worked for London University, though forming no part of it, with the austere Miss Maynard as Principal.

So once more, full of pleasant anticipations, I set off from Cannes and one April day entered Westfield as a student. The building itself, composed of biscuit-coloured stucco with massive Georgian pillars, was somewhat forbidding, but the rooms allotted to me were very attractive, a small bedroom and a really charming study with casement windows looking out over the garden and orchard to the distant hills beyond. It was a very different arrival to the one at Brownshill, and it was brightened still further next day when a gardener appeared from Trent with plants and ferns sent by my kind brother Frank to decorate my study.

I was very happy at first at Westfield, the new-found independence or having one's own rooms, making one's own friends and going out with them for walks and bicycle rides, of boiling one's own kettle and even polishing one's own shoes, seemed to me quite delightful. Then there were tennis and hockey matches, cocoa parties, debates and dances which added a zest to life.

But the work was terrific. All I had learnt before counted for nothing, for nearly all the other students had come on from High Schools and were well up in Latin and mathematics, which formed the main part of the curriculum, but of which I did not know a word, even my multiplication table had grown rusty. So I figured humbly on the list of students as an "Elementary" admitted only on probation, for it was necessary to pass an examination in ten subjects before one's formal admission to the college.

I had therefore to begin at the very beginning with long division sums and *puella mensam ornat*. However, a few months hard grind did it, and after passing successfully, I settled down to work for the London Matriculation.

But as time went on the work seemed to grow harder and harder. On looking back it seems to me still to have been a very stupid system, for in order to take my degree as a B.A. in classics and Mental and Moral Science, as I hoped, it was necessary to pass Matriculation in advanced mathematics, a matter of three years before beginning to study logic, psychology and ethics for the Final.

More than ever I wished I had been allowed to go to Girton or Lady Margaret Hall, where I could have specialized from the beginning in order to obtain a Cambridge or an Oxford degree. Instead of this I was left to struggle hopelessly through seas of x's, y's and z's that said nothing to me; Euclid or applied mathematics, particularly dynamics, did not trouble me, but algebra, and above all chemical algebra, bored me to tears.

The result of having to cover so much ground was that everybody overworked, for the students studying for the B.Sc. to whom mathematics usually came easily, were frequently stumped by French or Greek. Eight hours was the minimum in which one could get through one's daily tasks. Miss Maynard thought this quite moderate: "Work like a tiger for eight hours a day," she would say, "and you will get through all right."

We worked like tigers, sometimes for ten and twelve hours, one or two even for fifteen, yet could only just keep up the pace. But the Mistress showed no pity. She herself was a woman of iron physique; when, on one occasion, workmen came to dig up the drains in the garden she insisted on arming herself with a spade and digging with them.

On the top of all our work some of us used to go up to the City in the evening to teach in a night-school that coached boys for the Civil Service. I had a class of about fifteen ranging from fourteen to eighteen years of age, who at first kept up a running fire of chaff.

If I asked, "Now can you tell me what are the chief towns in the South of France?" a chorus of voices answered: "Monte Carlo!" Then someone would begin, "Bill, he's been to Monte Carlo, tell us all about it, Bill!" and so on *ad infinitum*. However, in time I succeeded in getting them to attend, for they were not bad boys and, I believe, passed their examinations very well.

By the end of a year the life at Westfield began to tell on me. After working far into the night I found it difficult to sleep, the lack of heating arrangements—sometimes the temperature in my study fell as low as 35°—gave me incessant colds.

So at last I gave up working for Matriculation and stayed on as a General student, attending lectures on the subjects that interested me—English literature, Greek, and Mental and Moral Science. History at that time bored me almost as much as algebra, perhaps because of the dry way in which it was taught. I also detested Latin, of which the syntax seemed to me far more difficult to master than Greek accidence. By making fun of these particular studies and writing little sketches that amused my friends amongst the students, I earned the stern disapproval of the authorities, "flippant" was the term most often applied to me. I was therefore never invited to contribute to the Mistress's compilation of essays known as "the Budget"; only once was I asked to write for the college magazine *Hermes*, and I responded with a skit on Cicero's *De Amicitia*, which we had been reading in class and struck me as the most amazing string of platitudes. Bicycling had just come into fashion, so my contribution to *Hermes* was entitled *De Bicyclio* and consisted in a dialogue between Punctilius Tyro the augur and Crassus Skidio the praetor on the art of bicycling.

"He who would exercise himself therein should possess a bicycle or at any rate obtain the loan of one from a friend. Without a bicycle I may say it is almost impossible to ride."

And so on *ad infinitum.*

Of course heads were shaken over this, still it had been accorded a place in *Hermes,* and as it was the first time I ever saw myself in print I felt duly elated.

Indeed, every now and then the lecturers themselves, when hard up for ideas, would come very reluctantly and ask me to think out a charade or a new college song, suggestions with which I readily complied, to the joy of the brighter spirits amongst the students, but usually meeting with disapproval.

The Mistress did, however, consider I was worthy to take the leading part in a Greek play during my last term. I had always been fond of acting, since the days when Edwyn used to make up plays and charades for us to act in the schoolroom on wet days at Fosbury, in which he played the star part as a comedian. But now for the first time I was called upon to play a serious rôle in tragedy and I entered on it with deep misgivings, so it was a great relief when the Mistress herself expressed approval of my performance as Electra in the drama of Sophocles.

I did not, however, get on with Miss Maynard. As in all schools and colleges the Mistress had her circle of adorers which I could not join. On Sunday evenings the whole college used to assemble in her sitting-room for what was known as "Function", a ceremony which consisted in a talk by her and poems of a sentimental religious kind recited by the students.

The greatest honour was to be invited to sit on a footstool by the fireside at her feet and have one's head stroked by her muscular hand. When one evening this favour was extended to me I managed to avoid occupying the coveted position on the hassock by saying I feared the heat of the fire would be too much for me; nor could I take part in the recitations which pleased the circle, and seemed to me mawkish and quite meaningless.

But as the other students assured me that sooner or later I should have to recite something I consulted Edwyn on the subject when he came to see me, describing the sort of thing that was required. "Oh, that's quite easy," he answered, "I'll write you something at once." And taking up a pencil he wrote without a moment's hesitation the following poem:

"Do not ask me why I linger
In this vale of thorns and tears,
Whilst time's stern and solemn finger
Beckons the approaching years.

Falls the dead leaf of October
In life's sere and darkening stream,
Rise to aspirations sober,
Cast aside the foolish dream.

Work alone is sure and certain,
Work alone stands ever fast,
At the lifting of the curtain,
We shall know the buried past.

Know the pain we could not smother,
Know the unforgotten moan,
Sees in every soul a brother,
Find in every heart our own.

Therefore is it that I linger
Till the rapid years are run
And Time's stern and solemn finger
Beckons the approaching sun."

"There," he said, throwing down the pencil, "I think it will do, though I can go on as long as you like. It hasn't a word of meaning, but it sounds beautiful, doesn't it?"

I could not trust myself to recite this with becoming gravity at the Sunday evening gathering but I tried it privately on some of the students, who, of course, did think it beautiful and were quite annoyed when I assured them that it meant nothing at all.

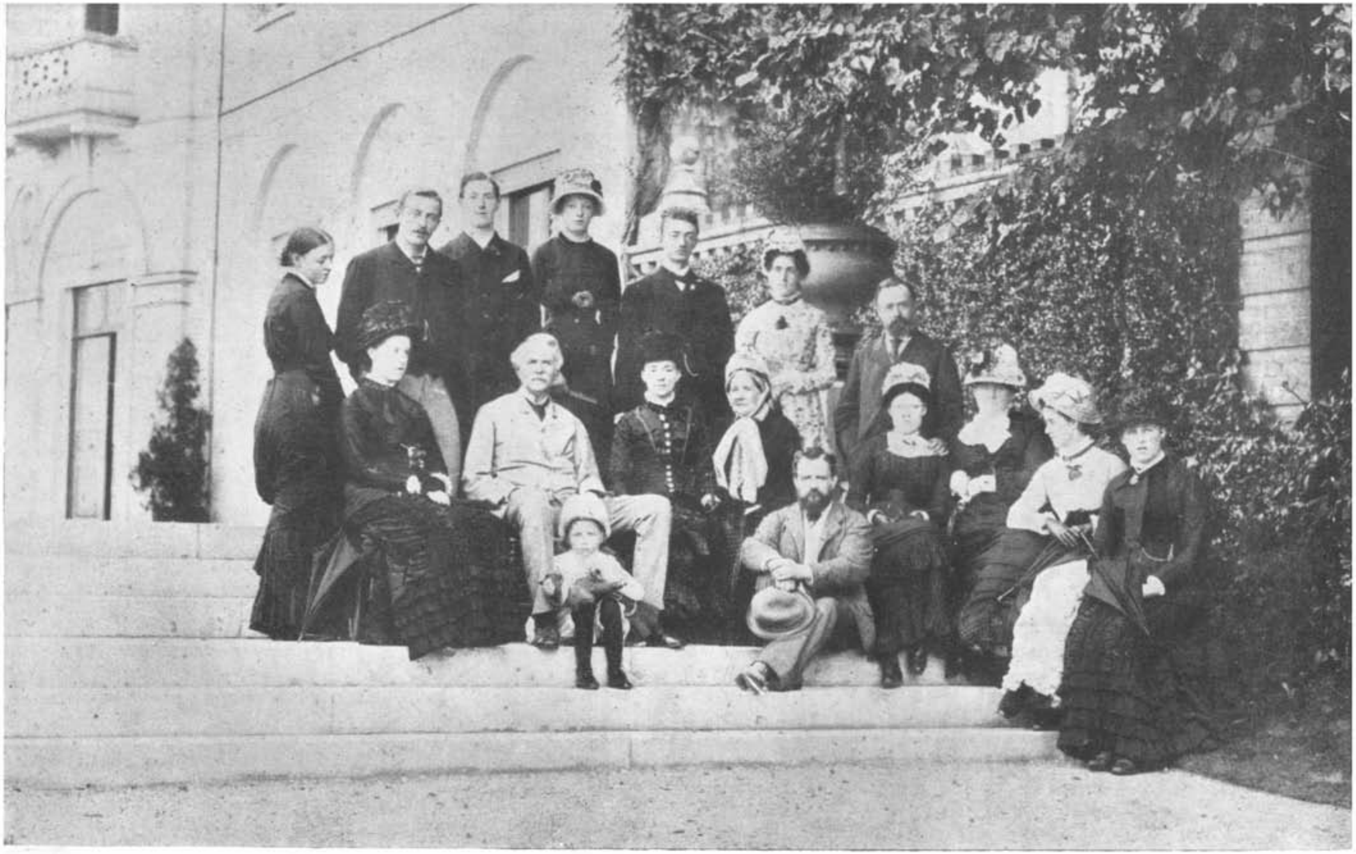
In looking back I cannot feel that the intellectual standard at Westfield was at all a high one, lecturers and students alike seemed to me not educated in the real sense but to be only walking compendiums of facts. For cramming is not education, and all they had learnt was with a view to examinations; the interest of the subject hardly seemed to matter to them at all. They might be able to win French Honours at Burlington House but they could hardly have made themselves understood by a French porter.

"Small have continued plodders ever won,
Save base authority from others' books."

Shakespeare might have written that after a term at Westfield!

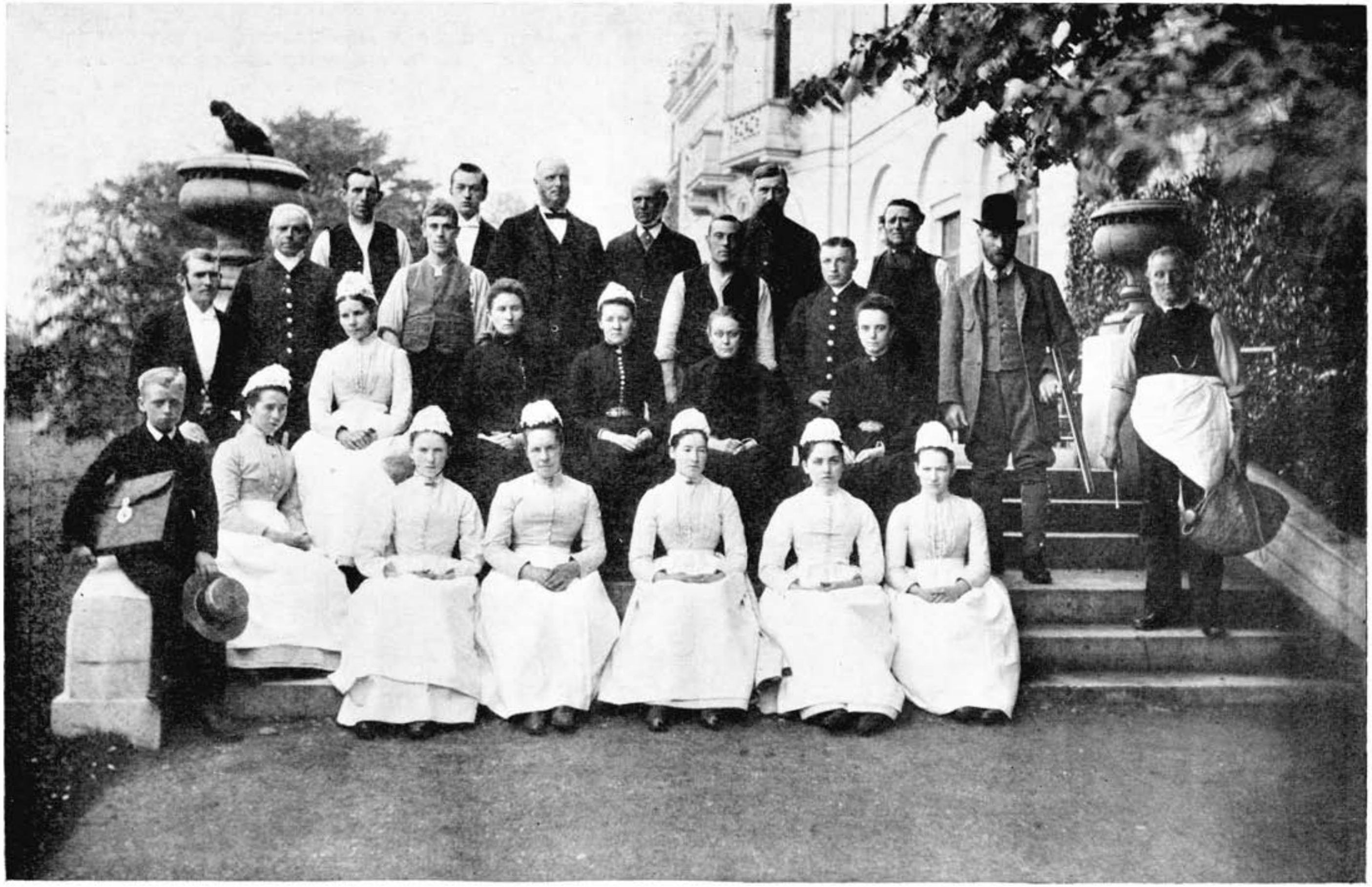
The great exception to this rule, however, was Miss Anne Richardson from Northern Ireland, the head classical lecturer, a woman of real intellect and with a most refreshing sense of humour. Her lectures on ancient Greece were a great delight to me. It was she, too, who taught me to love Browning whose obscure language she was able to elucidate in such a manner that one ended by admitting that the thought could not have been conveyed otherwise. *Rabbi ben Ezra, The Grammarian's Funeral,* portions of *The Ring and the Book,* became to me a source of inspiration that was to last my whole life through. I had loved the beauty of Tennyson, the music of Shelley, the grandeur of Shakespeare, but here in Browning was a philosophy of life that led to action.

Few writers, I believe, achieve this purpose of making one *do* differently



House Party at Trent

Back row: Gwendolen, Ion Keith-Falconer, Merty Moore, Gladys, Hubert.
Front row: Lady Blanche Keith-Falconer, my father with me at his feet, my half-sister Edith (Mrs. Middleton-Campbell), Miss Jane Paris, Millicent, with Frank standing behind her and his wife at her side.



The Staff at Trent

Back row: 3rd from left David Miller; Booth, bailiff.
Middle row: John Mitchell, first footman; Bartlett, coachman; on extreme right Tiny, daughter of Bartlett, and afterwards married to Mitchell. Boysen on her right and Jolly standing on her left. Dick on pedestal at left.

to what one would otherwise have done; they may delight, they may soothe but they do not point the way.

Browning and later on Emerson, in a more practical vein, became like shining lights guiding me on the difficult path I had to tread. How often in my darkest hours did I find help and comfort in the thought:

"He placed thee midst this dance
Of plastic circumstance,
This present thou forsooth wouldst fain arrest
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent
Try thee and turn thee forth sufficiently impressed."

Or, when torn between conflicting counsels, wise kind Emerson, whom I also got to know at college, came to my rescue with his essay on "Self-Reliance": "Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string . . . Insist on yourself: never imitate . . . Imitation is suicide."

But all my reading at college was not of a philosophical kind; now for the first time I ventured into the realms of fiction.

At home, as I have said, I had never been allowed to read a novel, even the classics of English literature had been forbidden, but now at college I was suddenly plunged into the flood of books and plays popular in the "Naughty 'Nineties" circulating amongst the other students—Hardy, Hall Caine, Wilde and Ibsen, *Trilby* and *The Green Carnation,* not to speak of Paul Bourget, Maupassant and Gyp. How was it possible to go back after these to Scott, Thackeray or even Dickens?

Alas! I could never bring myself to do this thoroughly; Scott I never attempted, but I laboured through *Pendennis* and *David Copperfield,* tried to laugh at *Pickwick,* enjoyed *Vanity Fair* and *Pride and Prejudice,* but only succeeded in really loving Charlotte Brontë. There my efforts ended, and that is why to this day I have to lament so great a gap in my education. I see, too, how much a well-chosen course of novel reading in the schoolroom would have contributed to my peace of mind, for in the classics one is broken in gently to the facts of life; in the "modern" novels they were put forward with brutal frankness and came upon me as a shock. I could not get the taste of *The Heavenly Twins* out of my mouth for months.

It was not that I wanted to read "improper" books; to devour popular novels at random seemed to me as stupid as a schoolboy over-eating at the tuck-shop, and nasty books were as distasteful to me as nasty food, but I had no-one to guide me.

How well Victor Hugo understood the importance of "that serious business of preparing a woman for life", when he added, "*Que de science il faut pour lutter contre cette grande ignorance qu'on appelle l'innocence!*" But in those Victorian days no such science was usually employed, girls were supposed to know nothing of life until they married, often with disastrous results.

College life, however, enabled me to break way from most of the restrictions that hedged one round at that date, and in the little circle of friends I made amongst the students every subject in heaven or earth was discussed over our evening cocoa. Years afterwards one of them wrote to me:

> "I should like to see you in your old room at college again . . . it was like a petulant sea and the foam of its waves was very iridiscent—is that the right word?—with philosophy and French poetry, pictures, cake and cosmetics, new hats, *The Yellow Book*, etc."

No mention here of cigarettes it will be noticed! That was one of the restrictions that still held good, for even in the most "worldly" circles smoking for girls was *taboo*. My brother-in-law, Harry Sulivan, had, however, initiated me into the joy of a cigarette *sub rosa*—the appropriate name of the brand he affected—and I had smuggled a few into college where, collected in my room in the evening, when lecturers were not likely to be about, some of us would light up. Should a dreaded footstep be heard outside the door, cigarettes would be hastily thrust into a flower-pot and the lecturer would be greeted with a wail of: "Oh, Miss Jones, I can't keep the greenfly off my plants so I am trying to smoke them off with a little tobacco!"

Yes, in spite of overwork college life was very good fun and I am thankful to have spent two years there, for it taught me how to work. Euclid and logic in particular gave me the habit of concentration without which I could never have carried out the researches I was to make in later life.

It seems to me a thousand pities that the University has not yet come to be regarded as necessary to a woman's training as to a man's; in those days we thought it must eventually become so. If only girls went to college at eighteen as a matter of course, especially now that work is made lighter, they would be more fitted to play their part in the world and we might see fewer unhappy marriages, and after the First World War have heard less about the escapades of "bright young things" who could not find any other outlet for their animal spirits.

At eighteen it is only natural to enjoy a "rag" and college is a better place to work off this phase than "Society". Even at Westfield ragging was not unknown, though it did not take the destructive form indulged in by undergraduates at Oxford and Cambridge.

I think our most successful effort was the Ghost Party given by four of us just before we went down for the last time. The invitations were sent out anonymously in the name of a spook and a leprechaun and the whole crowd of women, including all the staff, arrived to find themselves in a pitch dark room which we were able to keep so, as electric light had not yet been installed there. The tableaux of ghost life we presented were, however, so realistic that something of a panic ensued and finally the audience arose as one woman and the party broke up in pandemonium. We ourselves were soon lost in the crowd and joined the rest in angry expostulations at the proceedings, thus successfully covering up our tracks so that the real promoters of the entertainment were never discovered.

My college days ended less happily than they had begun; the strain of work and the chills of winter had really affected my health. The climax was a chill caught at a shooting party in Norfolk during the last Christmas vacation where, after we had waited about for an hour in a freezing wood, our host, an extremely rich man and a teetotaller, regaled us with cold rabbit pie and lemonade—one glass of claret or a whisky-and-soda might have saved me. How often I have cursed the principles of prohibition, for I returned to the house chilled to the bone and was left with a tendency to internal catarrh which took many years to cure.

Besides all this, the course of philosophy I had done at college, combined with the Mistress's own dissertations on theology, had disturbed my peace of mind. Miss Maynard was a great believer in the necessity for examining all the foundations of belief, and excelled, so to speak, in taking everything to bits; unhappily she was not so good at putting things together again for her constructive arguments proved unconvincing. So one was left wondering, "What is truth?"

It was the Quakers who helped to restore my belief in religion; with Miss Anne Richardson and my great friend Richenda Gillett (later Dr. Gillett) I used to attend their meeting-house in Bunhill Row where an old carpenter, Alexander Dunlop, spoke "when the spirit moved him" with great power and eloquence. I loved the quiet atmosphere of these meetings, for they taught belief in a God of love and, like Browning, in a guiding principle directing human life. Without this I could not know a moment's happiness.

CHAPTER XII

FREEDOM AT LAST!

THE year I left college was a momentous one for me for it was now that I came of age. My father had left us all independent at twenty-one, so here I was with the world before me, free at last, free to sail for China, to go up in a balloon, to rent a flat, in a word to plan my own life as I pleased. The sudden transition from complete bondage to unlimited liberty was bewildering. How vividly the words of *Locksley Hall* bring back the thrill of that moment:

"Make me feel the wild pulsation that I felt before the strife,
When I heard my days before me, and the tumult of my life!"

But how was I to use my freedom? Girls of today can have no idea of the restrictions that hedged round their predecessors of Victorian England.

I had lived long enough now amongst women working for a purpose to despise an idle life and long to embark on some useful career. But what careers were open to women at that date? I might train to become a High School teacher like most of my college companions, but would it be right to take the bread out of the mouth of someone who needed it?

And even such posts were difficult to find. One of the brightest students at Westfield wrote to me later on kitchen paper explaining that, as she had been unable to obtain work as a teacher, she was reduced to becoming a "general servant" and was writing to me on the kitchen table in the intervals of chopping wood and peeling potatoes. Such were the benefits "the higher education of women" had brought her.

I might, of course, have become a hospital nurse or, like my friend Richenda Gillett, have qualified as a lady doctor, but sickness did not attract me. Then there were "the slums", where my sister Gladys found her vocation but where I could not feel I should find mine.

Well, if I could not find work, I would have amusement. I had always had a passion for drama and longed to go to the theatre, now I was free to go, and the first play I ever saw was *The Geisha*, which enchanted me. But apart from theatre-going, few amusements were to be had, except as a *débutante*, and like my sisters I had never "come out".

At one moment there had been a question of my going to "the Drawing-Room", as it was known in those days. A sister-in-law wished to present me, and I was just about to order my dress and "tail", when a telegram arrived from Cannes peremptorily forbidding me to go to Court.

I was sorry, for I should have liked to pay my respects to Queen Victoria, but the ceremony itself was not an exhilarating one, taking place as it did in broad daylight, very different to the evening Courts followed by supper under King Edward VII. I did not feel, therefore, that it was worth while, now I was free, to go against my mother's wishes in the matter, so, like my sisters, I have never been to Court to this day.

I made indeed no kind of *début*, since there was no-one to "take me out". My sisters had all continued on the lines laid down for them and abjured "Society"; my sisters-in-law had daughters of their own to chaperone; and in those days the most rigid system of chaperonage prevailed; no girl could go about alone, still less with a young man, unless a married woman was in attendance. I remember the awful warning held up to me by my mother in the affair of Lady V., daughter of Lord R., who had actually gone for a drive alone with a young man in a dog-cart and meeting with an accident, the cart having been upset into a ditch, the whole dreadful story came out and the young man had to marry Lady V. to save her reputation: and of course they lived unhappily ever after.

Even marriage did not save one from social conventions, for I also remember as a child driving in Piccadilly with a sister-in-law and passing my sister Gwennie, then a widow of twenty-two, in a hansom cab. Whereat my sister-in-law cast up her hands in horror, exclaiming, "Gwennie in a hat in a hansom in the afternoon!" For a bonnet was *de rigueur*—all my elder sisters went into bonnets at eighteen—and a cab was considered a most undignified method of progression after lunch time.

Omnibuses were of course out of the question and in the stage they had reached by the time I came of age, the old horse-drawn buses with narrow seats and iron-bound wheels which took an interminable time to reach their destination, did not tempt one to make use of them. When, in reply to a lecture once given me by my mother on the subject of extravagance I said, "Very well, Mamma, I will go in buses," she was deeply shocked and answered: "No, of course not, that would never do!"

Apart from social functions the necessity for chaperonage made travel abroad equally impossible; one could not go alone in a train on the Continent or stay alone in a hotel.

Indeed, a lady's-maid was often required to go with one on certain occasions. Accordingly, when I left college a maid was chosen for me by the family, a dour female, to be known here as Briggs, who had been with a lady-in-waiting and was not accustomed to being spoken to, her mistress having been in the habit of communicating with her on slips of paper. After friendly foreign servants I found it difficult to keep up the degree of taciturnity necessary to retain her respect.

My time in England was now spent in paying country visits to my relations. Sometimes I stayed at Trent, where Frank had carried out "improvements"; the beautiful cedar on the lawn had been cut down, the unpretentious old white house had been faced with red brick and now presented somewhat the appearance of a prosperous railway hotel.

"At any rate," I said, "Trent will have to remain in the family now, Frank will never be able to sell it, no-one would buy anything so frightful." But I was wrong. Trent was sold in 1909 to Sir Edward Sassoon, whose son practically rebuilt it, in what, I must admit, was somewhat better taste. At the same time Fosbury was sold to Mr. Huth and made the home of his famous library for many years.

Soon after I came of age my brother Edwyn married Daisy Waldegrave, the daughter of Lord Radstock, who had sent her when she was eighteen and very pretty, with fair hair and blue eyes, to live in Whitechapel, at about the moment when the famous murders by "Jack the Ripper" were taking place there.

I think Lord Radstock was rather disappointed that Daisy did not marry a costermonger, for after their wedding in London, at which I was bridesmaid, I drove on to the reception in the same carriage with him, and all the way he kept repeating, "I've no patience with all this West End nonsense, give me a good East End wedding!"

If only we had been jogging along the Old Kent Road in a coster's donkey cart with a brave display of "pearlies" all around us how happy he would have been! I believe he was a marvellous sight at the coronation of King Edward VII, running to catch the train on the Underground in his robes and coronet.

My happiest days were spent with Enid and Harry Sulivan in their Norfolk home. Norfolk was, after Hertfordshire, the county I knew best in my youth, the East coast round Cromer was the home of the clan with which our family and the Bank were connected—Barclays, Gurneys, Buxtons, etc., who always received us with open arms. But the place we loved best as children was West Runton with its memories of Aunt Favell. Fosbury had been the scene of her earlier labours where she had written *Peep of Day*, re-organized the school and taught the children, but her personality had impressed itself still more on her home at West Runton where she spent the last years of her life.

It was to this lovely cottage, The Rivulet, thickly overgrown with honeysuckle and roses, that some years after her death, Enid and I had been sent as children for a few weeks every spring. The cottage then belonged to the Rev. Lethbridge Moore whom Aunt Favell had adopted when he was a young officer who had fought in the Afghan War—she ended by marrying him to my mother's sister Emmie Shuttleworth.

Uncle Lethbridge as he thus became to us, then went into the Church and was Vicar of Sheringham where he was living at the time when he lent us The Rivulet. As he had fully returned the affection lavished on him by Aunt Favell, whom he used to call "the dear Mother" and regarded as a saint, everything in the cottage had to remain as she had left it: there were her pots of musk which scented the early Victorian drawing-room, the white cotton fishing nets she had made herself, covering the sofas and chairs, in which the buttons on our frocks used to get inextricably entangled. There was even in the library a bottle of eau-de-Cologne labelled, "Breathed by the dear mother during her last moments", which one dreadful day Edwyn broke so that its precious contents were spilt all over the fireplace.

It was this room which contained her library of old leather-bound books, one of which delighted me by its title, *Morning Exercises Against Popery*. I used to wonder how these were performed, did one use boxing-gloves or Indian clubs to bash Popery in the face, or merely practise with dumb-bells in order to strengthen one's muscles so as to be able to oppose anyone who put forward its pernicious doctrines?

At West Runton we learnt many of the stories about Aunt Favell; it was there that the incident took place, related in *Reading Without Tears*, of the blindfolded donkey with the cart attached to it swimming out to sea; there, too, was the cutting in the sand cliffs through which she went down to bathe with the orphans forming a screen around her; it was probably there, too, that the incidents of the pet lamb and the parrot, before referred to, were enacted. Anyone reading these stories might conclude that Aunt Favell was mad; she certainly was not so at the time she wrote her books, for their clearness and logic are plain evidence of her sanity, but it is possible that at the end of her life some degree of softening of the brain may have accounted for her eccentricities.

A curious thing happened long after her death, when I was a child of about twelve. A certain Lord and Lady R.—I forget their exact name—rented The Rivulet for a time and declared that one night they saw a tall thin old lady in a grey shawl standing at the foot of their bed, who looked at them serenely and then vanished. Aunt Favell had usually worn a grey shawl and those who had known her said that the description of the vision seen by Lord and Lady R. tallied exactly with her appearance.

Uncle Lethbridge was hardly less peculiar than Aunt Favell herself. With a smooth pink face and white beard, he had a habit of walking about with his eyes shut as if enjoying ineffable bliss, and as he kept up this practise even on horseback he once met with a nasty accident. He had taken Enid out for a ride and, keeping his eyes shut as usual, he rode into a cart and bruised his knee. This injury was made the subject of family prayers that evening at the Vicarage, Uncle Lethbridge pleading for the recovery of his knee, quoting the passage in the Scriptures, "not a bone of him shall be broken", and ending with a hymn for the sick.

We used to enjoy going to his church on Sundays for it was furnished with an old-fashioned two-decker pulpit, the Vicar on the top and a clerk whom his nieces—the daughters of his sister Mrs. Newton—christened "Cuckoo". When sermon time came Cuckoo remained in his box, whilst Uncle Lethbridge descended from the pulpit and preached from a railed-in enclosure below where he would walk up and down with his eyes shut all through his sermon.

In the end his peculiarities led him into difficulties, for he insisted on altering the words of the Liturgy "our gracious Queen and Governor" to "our gracious Queen and Governess", maintaining that no woman could be described as a Governor. This met with a protest from his Bishop, and whether on this account or for other eccentricities he was asked to resign his living. Uncle Lethbridge replied that he could not possibly do so until the spirit moved him, but set about rebuilding The Rivulet which, with all its picturesqueness, was far from luxurious. And then precisely as the new house, very comfortable and convenient, was finished, the spirit did move him—into it, with his family.

I was very fond of his elder daughter Evelyn, who was both a poet and an artist, and she was influenced by her brother Merty, a very curious person, to study Theosophy.

Merty was an inner member of the sect, for he had spent some years with Mme Blavatsky and after her death acted in the same capacity, as a sort of *aide-de-camp*, to Annie Besant. In so far as Theosophy dealt with reincarnation it interested me and I went to hear Mrs. Besant speak, for I had been told she was marvellously eloquent.

But I was disappointed and told Merty so. "Then you must come and talk with her quietly," he answered. So I went and spent the evening with them both in Tavistock Square. But it was Merty who did all the talking whilst Mrs. Besant sat silently on the sofa, wrapped in an attitude of contemplation. There are speaking silences when one feels currents of thought passing from mind to mind, but Mrs. Besant's silence was not of this order, she might have been a wooden image seated there whilst we discussed the Dhammapada and the Bhagavad Ghita; only when I got up to go she seemed to awake from her reverie—or was it slumber?—to say, "Brahminism is far higher than Buddhism!" and stretching out her hand to me in farewell she added, "Come out to Benares with me and help me!" or words to that effect.

That evening effectively damped my ardour for Theosophy, at any rate as taught by Mrs. Besant. I was to learn more about it many years later, when Merty, who went out with her to India, finally left her, bitterly disillusioned. But if I could no longer entertain any belief in Mrs. Besant's reputed "powers", an extraordinary incident that took place at West Runton led me to a different conclusion with regard to Mme Blavatsky.

Aunt Emmie, my mother's sister, who, as I have said, had married Uncle Lethbridge, was a gentle mousy old lady, strictly orthodox, and therefore deeply shocked at Merty's and Evie's theosophical beliefs.

One evening they were sitting round the fireplace in the square hall which formed the centre of the house, into which the drawing-room, library and door leading to the kitchen all opened. Merty was standing on the hearthrug with his back to the fireplace discussing Theosophy with Evie and a friend of hers who was staying with them, whilst Aunt Emmie remained alone in the drawing-room with her crochet. In the course of conversation Evie's friend made a statement about Mme Blavatsky's theories to which Merty replied with some heat: "I assure you that you are wrong, and if Mme Blavatsky were alive today she would confirm what I am saying."

At that moment a loud rap rang out on the mantlepiece behind Merty and was repeated all round the hall, the next moment Aunt Emmie came out of the drawing-room in a great state of agitation, saying that rapping was going on all round the drawing-room too, then the cook followed from the kitchen to report the same extraordinary sounds, adding that a pair of boots left on the window-sill for cleaning had been thrown violently to the ground.

I arrived at Runton soon after this mysterious manifestation had taken place and heard the story from Aunt Emmie herself, who, being a most matter-of-fact old lady, was unlikely to have drawn on her imagination. No explanation of the incident was ever forthcoming, and I cannot see how one can doubt that some agency one can only describe as "supernatural" was at work.

But if Aunt Emmie was unimaginative the same could certainly not be said of her sister Carrie Shuttleworth, who was often at West Runton and greatly contributed to our hilarity there. One morning she remarked at breakfast that she had heard the foghorn going in the night at sea. "Had I heard it," said Uncle Lethbridge in a faraway voice, "I should have thought it was the last trump."

"Oh, but, Lethbridge," Aunt Carrie exclaimed, "surely you don't think the last trump will sound like a brass foghorn?"

"Possibly not of brass, possibly of silver," Uncle Lethbridge replied dreamily.

Aunt Carrie was indeed the most amusing relation we ever had, and she had retained the same originality which characterized her in her youth when she was given to smoking cigars on the top of a hayrick. Although she never married and lived in Kensington with a number of cats to whom she was devoted—"I could not face life without cats," she once said to me—she was not like any other old maid with cats but, as she used to say herself, more like an old bachelor with a keen sense of humour and an objective interest in life.

She had certainly no romance laid away in lavender, for though she had had many admirers she had never wanted to marry any of them, one because when he came to stay she heard him snore, others simply because they bored her. Her luxuriant imagination was our delight for it was this, we felt sure, which accounted for many of the amazing stories of her adventures she used to tell us.

There was the occasion when she was being driven over a mountain pass in Switzerland and the coachman fainted, so she had to mount the box and drive with one hand whilst holding the coachman round the waist with the other arm. Then the day when she was going along Piccadilly in a hansom when someone on the pavement shouted to her that she had no driver, and sure enough he had got down to fetch his whip and been left behind, so there was nothing for it but for Aunt Carrie to hook down the reins with her umbrella and drive herself.

Aunt Carrie was fond of studying the habits of birds and animals and used to write letters to the *Spectator* about them which that weekly gravely printed. I remember particularly the story of the pigeon which fell in love with a ginger-beer bottle which no doubt she really believed. This passion for animals sometimes led her into strange situations. One day, going through some Mews, she espied in a doorway, where some stablemen were standing, what she took to be a basket full of white puppies and rushed up to them exclaiming: "Oh, what darlings! I *must* speak to them!" But on coming nearer she perceived that the basket contained nothing but a quantity of dusters rolled up into balls, so she retired in confusion whilst the men, collected round in a circle, naturally concluded she was mad.

Whilst making allowance for her fertile imagination we delighted in Aunt Carrie's stories for she was really a wonderful raconteuse. When we stayed together in a hotel abroad where everyone sat at one long table, people used to take notes of her conversation on the backs of the menus and no doubt dined out on her *bons mots* afterwards. We have missed her terribly since her death in 1917.

CHAPTER XIII

A WHITE ELEPHANT AT LARGE

THE winter after I came of age I returned to Cannes, for I did not wish my mother to feel that now I was free I should care to leave her. She was happy, however, during the last years of her life in having her old friend Fräulein Mimi de Bunsen, known to us always as "Aunt Mim", to spend the winters with her at Cannes. The only drawback to this arrangement was that Aunt Mim, as the daughter of the Prussian Ambassador in London when she and my mother were girls together, had made many friends amongst the royal families of Europe who wished to come and see her at the villa, but were not always welcome there.

The Queen of Sweden, a deeply religious woman, met with a cordial reception, but the Prince of Nassau was left to wait among the umbrellas in the hall whilst the German-Swiss butler took a message from him to Aunt Mim, and a certain Grand Duchess, known to be an *habituée* of Monte Carlo, could not be admitted inside the door at all, so Aunt Mim was obliged to interview her in the garden.

Aunt Mim was a charming old lady, but the atmosphere was not exhilarating, particularly when it was intensified by the arrival of a deaf and aged Plymouth Brother who also came to spend the winter—three people all over seventy and I was twenty-one. The conversation at meals turned largely on prophecy, centring round such questions as whether the fourth beast in Ezekiel should be said to stand for the Pope or the Czar of Russia, grave heresy attaching to the wrong interpretation of these allegories.

Outside the villa little distraction was to be found, for the same restrictions continued as before; I must not dance or go in for any "worldly pleasures", even tennis-parties at the houses of people who indulged in them were forbidden.

One brilliant exception was made, however, in favour of the Mulhollands: Mabel Sanderson, one of the family of lovely Irish sisters, had stayed with my mother's friend, Miss Perceval, and when she married Alfred Mullholand (brother of Lord Dunleath), who had the charming Villa Champfleuri on the Californie road, we became great friends. My happiest days were spent with them in their small steam yacht, the *Nirvana*, cruising along the coast to Agaye, Théoule or to the Islands.

One night Mabel planned a delightful surprise for me. I was invited to dine at Champfleuri and after dinner folding doors were thrown open to disclose the large drawing-room, its shining floor cleared of furniture, prepared for a dance! Mabel, well knowing the prohibitions that hedged me round, had cleverly told me nothing of the arrangements for the evening's entertainment, and they were perfect. I shall never forget the exhilaration of that moment, feeling the parquet at last under my feet, the Italian string band playing delicious waltzes, young men from the yachts as partners, the scent of climbing white roses blown through the windows on the soft air of the Southern night! That was the only time I ever danced at Cannes.

For whilst under my mother's roof I felt obliged to submit to the conditions she imposed, though when away from her I felt the time had come to take my own line.

But this was not easy, for I was very fond of my mother and it grieved me to go against her wishes. She was not a person one could meet half-way; it must be all or nothing. So I was faced with a really terrible choice, either I must give up every form of amusement, every opportunity of mixing with "the world" and lead the life of a recluse for ever, or I must decide for myself what was permissible and do it boldly, braving the disapproval, not only of my mother but of the whole family.

For I was the only one to break rank; all my brothers and sisters had submitted, more or less, to the conditions laid down for them by avoiding society and leading what I felt to be narrow lives. I could not follow in their wake, I wanted colour, movement, adventure, I could not stay for ever stagnating in a backwater, seeing the world go by at a distance. It was Emerson who inspired me with courage to endure their strictures, to be regarded almost as "a black sheep" merely for wishing to lead a normal life.

> "The virtue in most request is conformity . . . He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness . . . What I must do is all that concerns me, not what people think . . . you will always find those who think they know what is your duty better than you know it."

It was in the middle of my second winter at Cannes after I came of age that Aunt Carrie came to my rescue. "You are really a white elephant to your mother," she once remarked to me, and this was true, for my mother really did not know what to do with me and to be both a black sheep and a white elephant was certainly a trying rôle. So I was delighted to fall in with a plan now proposed to me.

Aunt Carrie was in the habit of going abroad every winter, usually to Bordighera, but now she thought she would try Biarritz, and suggested we should take a villa there together for a few months. Accordingly I set off across France and joined her at the Villa Marthe Marie on the Falaise overlooking the sea.

Biarritz was then quite a small place, frequented mainly by golfers and the impecunious who found the Riviera too expensive and enjoyed themselves much more than the plutocrats of Cannes and Nice. For great wealth is often fatal to pleasure; the necessity for having to contrive adds a zest to life which is denied to the very rich who are apt to become "money-logged" and incapable of keen sensations. As I was to hear my daughter Rosalind say later on after lunching gorgeously in Berkeley Square: "When one is as rich as all that the whole world must seem like Woolworth. Everything for sixpence!"

At Biarritz people were certainly very much alive; besides, the bracing air blowing off the Atlantic made it a more exhilarating spot than the lotus-eating Riviera. The season we spent there was enchanting—golfing, riding, moonlight picnics, parties of all kinds and above all dances—masked balls, fancy dress balls far into the night. Now at last I could dance to my heart's content, for the cosmopolitan world of Biarritz comprised a number of Spaniards always ready to turn night into day and get up a dance at a moment's notice.

The leading spirit amongst these was a young semi-Spaniard named Oscar Heeren, very good-looking and a magnificent dancer as well as rider. We often rode together and led wild cotillons of our own devising, and how inspiriting it was to dance to the air of "Espana" in the Spanish way with a click of the heels on the parquet, imitating the sound of castanets. The Spanish world of laughter, love and song was certainly very amusing for a time.

It was at Biarritz that for the first time I appeared on the stage in public. Private theatricals were got up by an amateur company at the Casino and I played the part of old Mrs. Coleman in *The Passport*, apparently with some success for it was remarked how kind it was of such an old lady to turn out for the occasion.

The drawback to living abroad is that one sees much less of the Continent than people who set out from England on a tour with an itinerary of places to visit mapped out for them. It was thus that in my desultory wanderings about Europe, either with my mother or with friends, I went in course of time to Rome, to Naples, the Italian Lakes, the Engadine, up the Rhine and so on, but I have never seen either Florence or Venice to this day. Nor have I ever been in the East of Europe, a fact I bitterly regret, for to have seen pre-revolutionary Russia would have been invaluable to me in later life. Nothing would have been easier in those days when we had so many Russian friends, and I might have gone, like Millie, to stay with the Bobrinskys at Bogoroditsk.

Northern climates did not attract me, it was the East that called me, and I felt I could leave Russia until I was too old and tired to venture farther afield, little dreaming how soon that mighty Empire was to be swept away. Meanwhile, loving warmth and colour, I had to content myself with the gay sunny life of Italy and the blue waters of Lac Leman.

One September morning, on my way to bathe at Clarens, I was standing at the foot of the Territet-Glion *funiculaire* looking at the fruit and flower stalls arranged round the little square before the station, when I saw a figure advancing towards me, a woman, no longer young, dressed in black glacé silk with little pleated flounces round the skirt, holding a parasol over her head. My attention was attracted to her because of her magnificent way of walking, there was something regal about her; then suddenly I realized that she was the Empress of Austria. Passing close by me she went and stood alone in front of a fruit stall, looking at the peaches and grapes spread out there. And at that moment the thought flashed through my mind: "Why do they let her walk about alone like that? How easy it would be for an anarchist to assassinate her!" Do coming events cast their shadows before? For a strange feeling of apprehension came over me; I wondered no-one seemed to be standing near to guard her.

The very next day, September 16, 1898, as we sat at dinner in Montreux, the news reached us that she had been murdered at three o'clock that afternoon in Geneva by the anarchist Luccheni. Of all brutal crimes the assassination of this sad and beautiful woman was the most senseless; what harm was she doing to "the people", of whom these crazy fanatics constituted themselves the champions?

Political assassinations will continue as long as authority refrains from enquiring into the workings of those secret societies which make use of blind tools to carry out their fell designs. Luccheni paid for his crime in the dungeons of Venice, and since then many murderers of the same kind have been brought to justice, but the hidden instigators of these deeds have never been revealed nor does any attempt appear to have been made to discover their identity.

The Italian lakes in September seemed to me a Paradise on earth. One year on my way there down from the Engadine with friends, we stopped at Promontogno where we spent most of our time with the Comte and Comtesse Jean de Salis. The Comtesse, *née* Princesse de Chimay, was a most charming and beautiful woman.

At Bellagio, where we spent some weeks, we met that curious person Prince Loewenstein who had recently married Lady Ann Savile and parted from her almost immediately. Every day he would remark, "Tomorrow I go back to my wife," but he never went and later on disappeared mysteriously. I do not know whether it was ever discovered what became of him.

It was at Bellagio that I met the only talking dog I have ever known. He was a dachshund, named Bongo, belonging to Mr. Harvey Pechell who had a villa overlooking the lake. Bongo would come in to tea and, sitting up on his hind legs, would say quite distinctly, "How are yer?" and rather less clearly, "How's yer mother?" This is a story I have seldom been able to make anyone believe, but it is a fact none the less.

I shall never forget those lovely evenings on the lake of Como with the smell of *olia fraga* in the air and the sound of guitars and mandolines thrilling up to the sky. There was a man who kept a tortoiseshell comb shop in the day-time, and would come out at night and sing to his guitar with tears of artistic fervour in his eyes.

Even the boatmen had "souls". One afternoon as we were being rowed along the edge of the lake by a *barcaiuolo* in a beautiful red sash, we passed the steps of a villa leading down to the water.

"Who lives there?" I asked.

"The Duca di ——" answered the *barcaiuolo*. Then he shook his head. "But the Duchessa ——!"

"You do not like her?"

"*No, e communa, non e istruitta* (no, she is common, she is uneducated), we do not like her."

I wondered what boatman in England would object to a Duchess for lack of education.

In Milan everyone seemed to have learnt about music, and the porter at the hotel where I stayed could tell me exactly which music-shop kept the best selection of the works of any particular composer.

Milan reminds me of Melba. My sister-in-law's sister, Irene Wienawska (later Lady Dean Paul), was a musical genius and a great friend of hers. I once spent a delightful day with them both on the river where Melba had a house. I asked the famous *prima donna* what she looked back upon as the greatest triumph of her career.

"When I made my *début* in *Rigoletto* at Milan," she answered without a moment's hesitation, "and the little street-boys followed me crying out, '*Ecco la Melba, la grande artista!*' Then I knew, if I had pleased the Milanese street-boys, that I could sing!"

I shall never forget hearing her in this same opera at Covent Garden when her marvellous voice blended with Caruso's like a stream of pure silver amidst rolls of black velvet. The great charm of Melba's singing was, I think, that it was so effortless, as natural and spontaneous as the song of a girl washing clothes on the banks of the Var.

Next to Italy, the expeditions I enjoyed most in summer were to Ireland, where I used to stay with my friends the Butlers in County Carlow, and always met with a warm welcome from the Irish who seemed in those days to have no animus against the English. All the way from Dublin in the train the guard and porters would look after me, putting their heads in at the window and saying, "God bless you and give you a good journey!" At Tullow station Mick, the old coachman, would be waiting with a friendly beam in his wonderful grey Irish eyes. It was Mick who in the spring would remind Sir Thomas Butler to invite me, as he drove him to the station in the outside car: "Well, and when'll Miss Bevan be coming to us again? That's the lady for us, she takes a real pleasure out of life. Och, we'll soon see her lepping over the fields at her own pace!"

Ireland was great fun in those days, long drives in outside cars—no motors yet—to lunch with neighbours miles away, merry gatherings round the piano with Edith Butler,[1] my particular friend, playing dance music, and "Tony" Weldon singing Irish songs with always a hearty chorus for *Mat Hannigan's Aunt*. Then we would all move up to Dublin for the Horse Show, staying at the "Shelburne" with evenings at the theatre thrown in between the days spent in watching horses taking the stone walls erected to test their value as hunters in the West of Ireland.

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[1] Now Mrs. Beauchamp Lecky.

I loved the simplicity of Irish sporting life; nothing was for show, good horses and shabby liveries, fine old country houses with the paper peeling off the walls, fresh salmon from the rivers in cracked china dishes and everywhere the gay, happy-go-lucky spirit of the Irish peasants. I cannot believe that these simple kindly people were ever really inflamed by the hatred of England attributed to them by their self-appointed representatives. Rebellion in Ireland has always seemed to me an engineered movement, worked from abroad as part of the great conspiracy against the British Empire.

It was in Ireland that at last the opportunity came to me to realize my dream of distant travel. It had only been the lack of a travelling companion which had prevented me from setting sail for the East; I knew of no-one ready to start with me on the long trail. But one afternoon at a garden-party in County Carlow I was talking to two Irishwomen, Miss Grace Eustace and Miss Ellie Archdale, when the former said, "I want to go to Japan."

"So do I," said Ellie Archdale.

"And I, too!" I put in eagerly.

"Let's all go round the world together!" we cried in chorus.

And so it was settled. The other two were respectively ten and twenty years older than myself and I had only met them once or twice so that we were almost strangers.

"How can you start off with people you hardly know?" my friends and relations said to me. "Travelling is often trying to the temper—suppose you quarrel?"

"All the more reason not to spoil a friendship," I replied. "If we do quarrel nothing will be lost by it and we shall have seen the world."

Besides, my dour maid, Susan Briggs, was to go with us, so if we parted company I should not be left alone.

County Carlow wished us good speed and laughingly christened us "the World, the Flesh and the Devil"; I was the World, being regarded as the gayest of the trio; Grace, who must have turned the scale at some thirteen stone, was the Flesh; and Ellie, prone to displays of temper, was the Devil.

So that was how we came to set out on our great adventure.

My father, R. C. L. Bevan,
and brother Edwyn

The Author
aged 3

Edwyn R. Bevan

CHAPTER XIV

ROUND THE WORLD

IN the peaceful days when we set off on our journey round the world travel was gloriously cheap, my first-class ticket from London to London by all the best lines—P. & O., Empress and Cunard—cost me exactly £144, and this included the train journeys across India and America. A further £80 secured a second-class ticket for Susan Briggs.

I shall never forget the thrill of embarking at Marseilles, my first glimpse of a great shipping port with its forests of masts, dense network of rigging, the smell of the sea, the curious crowd of humanity from all quarters of the globe, the babel of strange tongues, the noise, the traffic and the shouting; I felt intoxicated with delight; now at last I was to see the Africa I had gazed at in imagination across the Mediterranean from our terrace at Cannes, and after that India, Ceylon, Japan; it seemed unbelievable that my dream had really come true. I cannot describe what I felt when that winter evening we slowly moved out of the harbour and saw the shore-lights fade away in the distance.

I had never particularly loved the sea before, partly because I was a very bad sailor and suffered indescribably every time we crossed the Channel. But a friend had given me a useful tip: "Try sipping stout." It must not be taken at a draught, but slowly, just a sip each time that the sinking feeling creeps round one's waist-line, replacing it by a warm glow.

I had never tasted stout before and thought it sounded horrible but it acted like magic, for though it did not always prevent a recurrence of that malady it saved me from the deadly sensation that had hitherto accompanied it. As a rule, however, it proved a complete preventive and I was often able to go into meals with the "fiddles" on the tables when only the Captain, the ship's doctor and a few other passengers were able to brave the storm.

Now that I was able to enjoy the voyage I felt that there was nothing more enchanting than sailing on Southern seas. How glorious to rise in the freshness of the morning and, putting one's head out of the port-hole, to look out on a vast blue world, turquoise sky and sapphire sea sparkling in the golden sunshine! But perhaps it is at night that the sea seems most wonderful, when one looks out over the glittering pathway of the moon leading to the distant sky-line.

To me the sea conveys all the wonder that mountains inspire in many minds. I do not love mountains, their heights oppress me, their frowning brows chill me to the heart. Great masses of matter, rock and stone and earth, they hold no mystery. For mountains can be explored from head to foot, they can be climbed, blasted, tunnelled, observatories may be built on their summits, *funiculaires* run up their sides; in a word they can be disfigured, desecrated to any extent.

But the sea, for all its changing moods, can never be transformed, it is eternal, immutable, human life leaves no trace upon its surface. Hymns and boat-songs, dirges and chanties, have been sung on it, myriads of voices in all the languages of the world have thrilled up to the sky from those blue waves and now are still; sailors and craft alike lie buried in its depths and the sea laughs on.

What is time on the sea? What is a life lost to it? Thousands, millions of lives have ended there—kings, pirates, warriors, galley-slaves mingle their bones in its vast depths and lie forgotten. So the sea holds its secrets to the end.

I could not love the sea, however, in her angry moods, her sudden rages terrified me. When we sailed out of harbour that January evening she was calm and smiling, but as we passed Crete three days later a terrific gale sprang up, black waves edged with white seething foam began to crash like cannon-balls against the port-holes, the contents of my cabin were hurled about, soon the floor was a mass of debris, and at each lurch of the ship one heard the distant smash of crockery.

When Susan Briggs called me in the morning she arrived head foremost in my washing-basin and was then shot across the cabin and tried in vain for some minutes to return. It was not till later that we heard the ship had actually been in danger of capsizing, for she had never experienced so bad a voyage.

We were a very amusing party on board the *Egypt*. There was Dr. Welldon, late headmaster of Harrow, who had just been made Bishop of Calcutta and preached to us on Sundays, there was Maurice Farkoa, the French entertainer, to sing to us in the evenings, there was Lord Basil Blackwood who had illustrated *The Bad Child's Book of Beasts*, to draw us caricatures, whilst the smoking-room was enlivened by Sammy Loates, the jockey, giving stable tips and relating anecdotes of the turf. Musical evenings were organized by Sir John Aird, the rich contractor, who looked exactly like the prophet Elijah and went round urging totally incompetent people to perform.

I got on very well with Dr. Welldon, who had a most breezy personality and was trying hard to be a bishop with becoming dignity, though with occasional lapses into uncontrollable pleasantry. One Sunday after he had preached with great eloquence I told him how much his sermon had impressed me, adding, "I mean to be quite good now!" to which he answered promptly, "*Don't*, you won't be half so amusing!" Then, after having let slip a remark of this kind he would add hastily, "Forget I said it, forget I said it!"

A gay party on board consisted of Mr. Lort Philipps and his friends, including Captain Darby Griffith in the Grenadiers, who were on their way out to shoot lions in Somaliland. One stormy Sunday night some of us planned to play hide-and-seek in the dark round the deck and I naturally invited the Bishop to join us. "You forget my cloth!" he said firmly and walked disapprovingly away. But soon after, as I fled round a corner with Captain Darby Griffith in pursuit, the Bishop, quite forgetting his cloth, dashed forward with an outstretched hand exclaiming, "Caught!" Then, suddenly remembering his dignity again, he pulled himself together and continued his walk with his eyes solemnly bent upon his plump and gaitered legs, as he paraded the deck.

On arrival at Port Said we found that the ship would be held up there for two days; so a large party of us from the *Egypt* started off by train for Cairo to spend the night. The journey was to me quite a new experience, at every station along the line a yelling crowd of Arabs threw themselves upon the train as soon as it drew up, and looking out one could see nothing but a sea of dark faces, whirling white robes, heads swathed in shawls, whilst clutching brown hands were thrust in at the window amidst cries of, "*Baksheesh! Baksheesh!*"

In Cairo an even larger and noisier mob awaited us and, precipitating themselves upon our luggage, led us to a waiting omnibus into which we packed, then amidst a chorus of shrieks we set off for the hotel, leaving a crowd of Arabs fighting madly for the coins given them.

Noise was in fact the one impression left on my mind by Cairo, the cries of the street sellers, of the *saises* clearing the way for the carriages of local magnates with their shouts of "*O-ah! Kelb!*", the shrieks and yells that accompanied every detail of life, seemed to me a combination of the parrot-house in the zoo with the nocturnal choruses of a thousand London cats. As one entered a shop one was immediately surrounded by a howling crowd displaying their wares, and on getting into an *arabiya* a dozen natives saw one off with deafening farewells. Poor little Sammy Loates, who was only about five feet high and looked like a worried monkey, grew very tired of being what he called " 'ustled", but the Bishop of Calcutta, tall and powerfully built, moved through these scenes with perfect dignity and treated all the natives as personal friends, which attracted them in still greater numbers around us.

The morning after our arrival we set forth for Mena House in a driving Scotch mist which completely hid the top of the Great Pyramid when we came in sight of it. Descending from our carriages we set off on camels to the Sphinx, and thence to the Pyramids, and all the way we were beset by Arabs clamouring to run up the Pyramids for *baksheesh.* The Bishop was at his best under these conditions and the following dialogue was wafted to me on the top of my camel:

Arab (to Bishop): "I run up Pyramid, mister. You give me two shillings. I do it in ten minutes."

Bishop (smiling benignly): "Why, that's nothing—ten minutes! I can do it much quicker myself."

Arab: "How quick you do it?"

Bishop (cheerfully): "Seven minutes. Seven minutes. Seven minutes!"

Arab (despairingly): "You cannot do it in seven minutes. Give me *baksheesh* and I do it in nine."

Bishop (blandly): "My good man, I don't *give*, I *take*. I take £5 for seven minutes."

Arab (desperately): "I will do it in eight minutes."

Bishop: "That's nothing. I tell you I do it in seven."

Arab goes away in despair.

However, when we reached the great Pyramid of Chufu the Bishop's secretary alone felt equal to scaling it; the rest of us ingenuously imagined that to penetrate inside it to the king's tomb would require less energy. Never were we destined to greater disillusionment. We started for the entrance, each clutched by two Arabs who dragged us up the steps, and then found ourselves at the beginning of a dark passage down which we were pulled by one Arab from the front and pushed by another from behind. The roof grew lower and lower until at last we were obliged to crawl on all fours; then came a higher roof and a flight of crumbling stairs up which the Arabs hauled us, seizing us round the waist, until finally, breathless and dishevelled, we arrived at the tomb. The atmosphere, meanwhile, had been growing gradually denser, for as there appeared to be no means of ventilation, the oxygen must have been used up centuries ago.

It was a horrible experience and never were asphyxiated miners more relieved to reach the upper air again. We all agreed that we would rather have run up the Pyramid twice over. I have often wondered since then how, in view of the ruined state of the inside of the great Pyramid, the British Israelites manage to take the minute measurements by which they purport to foretell the course of the world's history.

The rest of our voyage to India was marked by no further adventures, most of the amusing people on board the *Egypt* had got off at Port Said, but the Bishop remained to cheer us with his buoyant spirits; when we reached Aden he was wild to land and play hide-and-seek on camels along the shore.

Bombay, on our arrival there, held for me no surprises, I felt I had seen it all before on the covers of Missionary magazines. One object at Watson's Hotel, where we stayed, immediately attracted the attention of Susan Briggs, this was a pair of hooks over my bed to which in hot weather a punkah was attached.

"I suppose, m'm," said Briggs, "that's where they hang the coolies up!" —perhaps a pardonable mistake since *punkahs* are meant to cool one. But for all Briggs' "superiority" her education was not of a high order, for on trying to write out my washing list in France she had solemnly entered one item as "3 *moushairs*", meaning *mouchoirs* for pocket handkerchiefs, whilst in her accounts the cryptic entry of "odoglone" turned out to be a bottle of eau-de-Cologne she had bought for me.

Anglo-Indian society, of which I had my first glimpse in Bombay, did not attract me, and I felt sorry for Englishwomen in India with so little of solid interest in their lives; sorry, too, for their children, left to the care of ayahs and deprived of the healthy surroundings of English nursery life.

My room in Watson's Hotel opened out on to a long verandah where a number of these children used to play. One lovely little girl of about four, with long fair hair, seemed very lonely and would creep into my room like a homeless kitten. No-one seemed to bother about her. When I sat at the dressing-table she would curl up on the tail of my muslin gown, watching me with wondering blue eyes and saying very little, but nestling close up to my side. One night when I came in from a dance the room was empty, but a tiny dinner-party was laid out on the floor, where she had evidently been playing when carried off to bed by her ayah. A darling child, I often thought of her afterwards and wondered what became of her.

It would be superfluous to describe all we saw on our journey across India by Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Agra, Lucknow and Benares to Calcutta; is it not written in the books of Baedeker and Murray? And to pretend to know anything about that vast country with its heterogeneous population, its innumerable races, religions, castes and customs, after one month of travel or even after the year I spent there later on, would be an unpardonable presumption.

Two Indian scenes in particular stand out from the rest—the Taj Mahal at Agra, and the ghats at Benares; the first a vision of peace and loveliness, the second a revelation in horror and dark superstition.

The Taj, that poem in white marble inlaid with exquisite designs in bloodstone and cornelian, standing out in its white perfection against a background of dark cypresses, is not merely a triumph of architecture, for no picture can convey any conception of the effect it produces on the mind. Although its outward form is the realization of all one's dreams of beauty it appeals to far more than the senses; it is the soul to which it speaks, of love and hope and immortality. Wrapped in the atmosphere it creates around it we know that we must live again, that death is not the end, and that beyond the grave there lies that higher life rising, as from the tomb of Shah Jehan's queen, to heights our finite minds cannot grasp.

Strange land of contrasts! For across the river in the Palace of the Moguls whence Shah Jehan gazed at the monument he had raised to the queen he loved, may still be seen the room where the women of the royal Zenana were wont to amuse themselves; around those pillars the child wives would play their games of hide-and-seek. But in one corner is a hole through which we were told that unhappy women, who had ceased to charm, were dropped into the waters of the Jumna down below.

The lot of women in modern India seemed to me pitiful, whether at work in fields, or city, or leading idle lives in the Zenanas to which we were admitted. In one of these we sat on the floor with a number of wives, all cooped up on the house-top, and engaged in passing a dirty black baby boy, attired in nothing but a coat and cap, from hand to hand. When our turn came we were expected to kiss him, but we must not remark on his beauty or even say that he looked healthy for fear such praise might draw on him the anger of the gods. This curious superstition is carried to such a point that Indian parents, proud of having a son and fearing that the gods may snatch him from them, have been known to dress him as a girl until he reached marriageable age, hoping thus to delude the gods and avert their vengeance.

It is at Benares that Indian superstition is seen at its height. All along the banks of the Ganges are flights of steps called ghats on which pilgrims from all parts of India congregate, and fakirs perform the strangest rites. The ordinary fakir contents himself with letting his hair grow long, covering himself with white dust and sitting cross-legged on the ground in an attitude of meditation, but some fakirs devise curious methods for attaining greater sanctity, such as standing on their heads for hours, or keeping their eyes fixed on the tips of their noses; one we noticed as we floated down the Ganges had been standing on one leg for years. Another had erected himself a little platform on which he had sat for six years calling out, "*Ram! Sita! Ram!*" at intervals of a few minutes from morning till night, and brandishing what looked like two steel pokers in the air.

All the way along the river devotees could be seen bathing or else burning their dead, sometimes incompletely, for looking down at the water we perceived to our horror the feet of a half-consumed corpse floating towards us.

A pleasanter interlude was our visit to a very holy man, the Swami Bhaskaranandaji Saraswati, who received us in his garden, where he had erected a little shrine containing a life size statue of himself, which he daily decked with flowers. His sanctity apparently took the form of continuing to discard his garments, until by this time he was reduced only to a loin cloth, whilst the rest of his lean body had turned to the colour of a new saddle. He seemed a very genial person, completely bald and smiling; he shook hands with us, enquired the names and professions of our parents, made us write our names in his visitors' book, and finally presented us each with a flower and a blessing in farewell.

There are sadder aspects of Hinduism than we saw on the ghats of Benares. I shall never forget the little temple into which I was taken later on, in a street of the bazaar whilst staying in Calcutta. At the gate of the temple courtyard we were met by an enormously fat and nearly naked priest who led us inside the precincts where a number of little widows veiled in black were sitting on the ground amongst the mangled remains of sacrificed goats whose blood flowed around our feet. From the cornice of the temple the scarlet tusked head of the elephant god, Ganesh, grinned down upon the hideous scene.

As a contrast to this picture I like to remember the little Jain temple at Ahmedabad into which we wandered one calm and lovely evening. The building itself formed by a row of pointed stone pagodas about twenty feet high and ornamented with gods and monkeys, surrounded a small courtyard paved with marble. Before entering this we had to remove our shoes for it would be sacrilege to wear in them the skin of the sacred calf, so silently we passed through the gates. Inside it was very quiet. Behind the temple spires the sun was setting, green parrots flew from tree to tree, big grey monkeys perched on the roofs and gate-posts and small striped Indian squirrels darted noiselessly along the walls.

In the middle of the courtyard was the shrine of the Jain god Dharmnath, whose image, adorned with jewels, was seated like Buddha in an attitude of contemplation. He could be seen through the grating of a small brass gate where offerings of rice were placed before him in symbolic patterns by his devotees.

As we sat there silently in the hush of the evening twilight a great peace seemed to descend on us. Suddenly, like a whirlwind, two young Indian women dressed in claret-coloured silk sarees, ran in, making no sound on the marble with their soft naked feet and singing a plaintive hymn. Dropping on their knees before the shrine they spread before it the few grains of rice they had brought with them, chanting all the time and bowing with their foreheads to the ground. Then light as air they rose and whirled out again into the twilight. I think they had come to ask for children. A quaint and touching ceremony, very different to the sanguinary rites of Hinduism.

But in India religion may attain to heights of real grandeur. No-one who has stood in the Jumna Musjid at Delhi in the early morning can forget the impressive sight of 5000 Moslems prostrating themselves in reverence before the One God whilst from the minaret the cry rings out: "*Allah ul Allah, Mahomed Rasul Allah!* (There is no god but God and Mahomed is the prophet of God)."

My journey round the world led me to the conviction that behind all great religions there lies a central truth, which might be compared to a lamp with many-coloured sides. Through one the light shines red, through another blue, yet it is the same light behind them all. Thus religions prove religion. Were there but one faith we might attribute it to an invention of the human mind, but the fact that through every age and in every country men have believed in a God or gods, and in a life hereafter, must surely be the most convincing argument against materialism. Only the fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."

CHAPTER XV

BURMA

BUDDHISM always seemed to me one of the greatest of religions. On that first voyage out to India I had read *The Soul of a People*, by Fielding Hall, describing life in Burma where the purest form of Buddhism was practised, and I longed to see that country for myself. So on reaching Calcutta I cast about me for some way of realizing this project.

My two travelling companions had decided to make an expedition up to Darjeeling and Sikhim, but, not loving mountains, this did not appeal to me, so after their departure I remained on in Calcutta where I made friends with Mr. and Mrs. Donald Mackenzie Smeaton, who had spent several years in Burma and made plans for me to be received by people they knew there. Meanwhile Mrs. Smeaton delighted me with stories of life in that country.

The Burmese, she told me, christened her husband "the Raingiver", because once when he arrived in Burma in the midst of a drought a shower fell as he descended from the train, so they concluded that he had some magic power over the elements. The next time he came back hundreds of them assembled on the shore to meet him, with an address, and he was led on to the quay with a chain of pink roses hung round his neck and a golden umbrella held over his head. A hymn they had composed themselves was then read over him, beginning:

"Hail, Donald Mackenzie,
Shot from Britannia's chalky blue,
To cheer these melancholy shores!"

On another occasion an old Burman from the Shan hills came to visit Mrs. Smeaton. He had never met a European lady before and travelled hundreds of miles for the purpose. He arrived at last in a white satin coat down to his feet, trimmed with gold lace. Finding conversation through an interpreter rather tedious Mrs. Smeaton thought it might amuse him to see some of the things in her drawing-room and finally showed him the piano. He had, of course, never seen such a thing in his life and sat on the floor whilst she played to him. She then proceeded to sing him *The Skye Boat Song*, but could not understand why all the time he kept on fumbling at something under his coat. It then transpired that he thought he had suddenly been translated to Paradise and was telling his beads in gratitude.

These stories naturally increased my longing to see Burma, and I was delighted when the Smeatons arranged for me to be met by friends of theirs in Rangoon. In those days travellers were usually passed on from one house to another, and in Burma and Ceylon met with extraordinary hospitality.

It was, therefore, quite natural that Captain and Mrs. C., whom I had never met before, should offer to put me up on arrival, and I started off gaily across the Bay of Bengal with the melancholy Susan Briggs and Peter, a diminutive Madrassi bearer, in attendance.

It certainly needed all my youth and enthusaism to bear up under this experience, for travelling on the "British India" line was very different to the P. & O. on which I had always been able to secure a cabin to myself. The S.S. *Nerbudda* was dirty, smelly, swarming with spiders, beetles, cockroaches and red ants, the food was nasty and the heat terrific; to crown all I found myself obliged to share a cabin with a Eurasian woman who never washed, but scented herself heavily instead, and remained in her berth throughout the whole voyage, clothed in salmon pink silk, drinking stout and reading Zola to the accompaniment of a deafening gramophone. She had all her meals, not unsubstantial ones, brought to her in the cabin which attracted the insects, so that when I went to bed I found the air dense with the odours of dinner and stale scent, and my bunk the parade-ground for regiments of red ants which marched over me as I slept and even crept under my eyelids, stinging horribly as they went. At last I could bear it no more and seizing my bedding and pillows I dragged them up on deck and slept there peacefully in the beautiful tropical moonlight, fanned by gentle breezes. After this, on further voyages, I always slept on deck whenever possible.

Apart from these *contretemps* the voyage was very amusing, for the other passengers were a most polyglot collection, consisting of an English couple—Mr. and Mrs. Goodfellow—an Irishman, a Scotsman, two Australian women, a French Vicomte, an Austrian baron and a German Prince with his attendant. The Vicomte de P. seemed always sunk in gloom, his thick black brows drawn together in a frown, as if nursing some secret sorrow, but the Baron de B., who was a musical maniac, kept us all entertained every evening after dinner on the deck piano, playing airs from every opera one had ever heard of and working himself up into a state of the wildest artistic frenzy.

After a while he insisted on my singing, accompanying me ecstatically, and so we would continue to regale our fellow passengers with songs in all their respective tongues, with English and Scotch airs, French nursery rhymes, German *Volkslieder, canzoni di Piedigrotta.* Our greatest success was, however, always:

"Il y'était un petit navire,
Qui n'avait ja-ja-jamais navigué."

The sad fate of the *petit marin* consumed at last *en sauce blanche* by his companions, seemed to appeal to the whole party who would join in a sort of community singing, and even the Vicomte would rouse himself from his state of chronic melancholy to something like cheerfulness.

"*Ce pauvre de P.*," the Baron, who always spoke French, would say, shaking his head in the direction of the Vicomte, "*il n'est pas trop doué par la*

Nature, non, pas trop doué; la Nature s'est conduite envers lui plutôt en marraine qu'en mère."

At last the cause of his secret sorrow was revealed, for under the influence of music, moonlight, the sea and the tropical air, the Vicomte suddenly became communicative: "*Ma grand'mère désire que je me marie, elle cherche une demoiselle pour moi.*"

So that was it! *Grand'maman*, it appeared, had sent the unhappy Vicomte round the world whilst she looked out for a wife for him, and as soon as he returned he would have to marry her, whatever she might be like. No wonder that he sat sunk in gloom, brooding on the fate in store for him.

The evening before we arrived in Rangoon, we had our final concert, at which everyone joined in singing *On the Road to Mandalay*. How strange it seemed to think that there close by lay the coast of Burma, and that at dawn we should see for ourselves the palm-trees and pagodas and hear "the tinkly temple bells".

It is difficult, by the way, to understand how Kipling's "British soldier" managed to "look eastward to the sea" from "the old Moulmein pagoda", since Moulmein faces due west, nor how he could "hear the dawn come up from China" which lies to the north. Perhaps it was true, as I was told in India, that Kipling had never been in Burma when he wrote the poem.

On arrival in Rangoon two shocks awaited me, first Captain C., who had offered to put me up, arrived to say that his house had been burnt down and he and his wife were homeless, then a lady doctor came on board to announce that a small-pox epidemic was raging on land and that everyone must be vaccinated immediately. "It would be horrid to be pitted for life," I observed. "Pitted?" she replied cheerfully, "it's not a mere case of pitting; it's confluent small-pox, the most virulent variety, which takes great chunks out of you and you're lucky if it doesn't blind you into the bargain."

It certainly seemed a grim prospect to land in Burma with nowhere to go and knowing no-one, with the possibility of contracting this terrible disease. But two kind friends I had made on the voyage, Mr. and Mrs. Goodfellow, came to my rescue and whirled me off to their charming house in Halpin Road, where they invited me to stay as their guest until I went up country.

The first thing to do was to get vaccinated. Accordingly the same evening Briggs and I presented ourselves at the Municipality, the only place where this operation could be performed, to find that no English doctor was available. So I was obliged to submit to my leg being scratched by a Burman, who then proceeded to inoculate it by the light of a flaming torch held by another Burman at his side. I insisted on being done on the leg for I have never understood why girls should have their arms disfigured by deep scars when vaccination on the leg is equally efficacious.

I have never felt anything like the heat in Rangoon, a mean temperature of 97° in the shade. From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. one could only lie down with the air weighing on one's chest like lead, with mosquitoes trumpeting loudly around one's head; no meals could take place between those hours. But in the evening and the early morning one could feel the enchantment of the country, the gorgeous, glowing East not to be found in India. How different to the arid *maidan* of Calcutta were the lovely lakes of Rangoon!

Perhaps the most delicious moment of the day was soon after dawn when town and village woke to life and gentle Burmese fathers tubbed their brown babies whilst their wives set forth for the market. Then down the street came the Buddhist monks, known as *pongyis*, in their yellow robes, the colour of dead buttercups, with palm-leaf fans to shield them from the rays of the rising sun, holding out their brass lotahs to receive the offerings of rice held out to them, for no *pongyi* might possess anything of his own. That was the time of day to see the great Shwe Dagon Pagoda, that marvellous monument of Buddhist piety. Around the central dome shining with gold leaf thickly plastered on by the hands of devotees, rose innumerable small shrines and pagodas, before which at dawn the faithful knelt in prayer and scattered their offerings of pink rose petals.

After the caste-ridden population of India with its weary, toil-worn women, the merry Burmese seemed to me delightful. Here the women in their short white coats and silk *pasohs* in every shade of pale pink, rose, cherry colour rising to magenta, like a bed of asters, with a rose or camelia tucked into their smooth black hair and smoking huge white cheroots, were not only free but the real rulers of the household, driving bargains at market and conducting business with all the acumen of the Frenchwomen they much resemble.

The houses of Europeans in Burma seemed to me delightful after those I had seen in India. Instead of ugly stucco buildings coloured white, pink or yellow and occupying only one floor, were charming two-storey houses, the upper floor of carved teak giving rather the effect of a Swiss châlet, with a wide verandah all along the front. It was this floor that contained all the living-rooms, the ground floor being used only as a go-down or store-room, the verandahs arranged with rugs and easy chairs made a comfortable sitting-out place. I remember how attractive these houses looked as one drove past them after dark with shaded lamps shining out from the dark woodwork through the open french windows.

The Goodfellows' house was particularly charming, and they were extraordinarily kind in taking me about and showing me everything of interest. When I told them I was longing to see a *pwe* (pronounced pway) as the Burmese drama is called, they sent out to enquire whether a good one was on view at the moment; the answer came back that a first-class company had just arrived from Mandalay and would come and play in our garden.

The Burmese were very fond of music and acting and their great national entertainment, the *pwe*, might consist of either acting or dancing, to the accompaniment of an orchestra of strange native instruments. These performances usually took place in the street, for there were no theatres, or a company might be ordered to come and play just as bands of strolling players would be engaged to perform during the Elizabethan era in England. The one that was to come to us announced that they would begin at 6 p.m. and go on till 5 a.m.; they were asked, however, not to begin till nine o'clock and at 7.30 the troupe began to arrive; the lawn was gradually covered with all sorts of extraordinary vehicles containing the properties and the orchestra, so that soon the whole compound presented the appearance of a gipsy encampment.

Meanwhile we sat down to dinner, a large party, for the Goodfellows had invited a number of our fellow-passengers from the *Nerbudda*, including the Baron and the Vicomte. Conversation was carried on to the accompaniment of a deafening noise from the orchestra, beating their drums as practice for the performance.

At nine o'clock we took our places on the lawn in front of the stage, which consisted simply of a large mat spread on the grass, with wooden packing-cases at one side to act as furniture. In the background all the waggons and the oxen that had drawn them were collected; the spaces between them acting as dressing-rooms where the performers sat making up in full view of the audience.

At one corner of the stage was the orchestra, composed of drums and an enormous round wooden frame, shaped like a drum, inside which the performer sat striking a row of brass knobs fastened around its lower rim with a clapper. These knobs, each forming a note, made up a scale and gave out a sound not unlike the ring of a blacksmith's hammer. The Baron, however, went into ecstasies over this, declaring that he detected semi-tones and quarter-tones unknown in Western music. "*Non, non,*" he went on repeating, "*vous savez que c'est très remarquable!*" Meanwhile the drums were only sounded at intervals as a sort of high-light.

The entertainment opened with an actress advancing upon the mat with her hands full of fruit, which she waved in the air to the strains of the orchestra. This was the preliminary ceremony of offering food to the *nats* or spirits of the garden. There are all kinds of *nats* in Burma—tree *nats*, river *nats* and so on, who, it seems, are rather touchy people and have to be propitiated if any enterprise is to succeed.

Then the play began, apparently high tragedy, in which the Crown Prince, seated on one of the packing-cases as a throne and with a handkerchief tied round his head for a coronet, eloquently assured his spouse of his devotion, to which the Crown Princess responded by doubling up every joint in her body and backing violently to show her joy. Double-jointedness seemed, indeed, to be the main qualifications for a Burmese actress, speeches were hurried through with little or no attempt at histrionic effect, but to bend back wrists and fingers to a most alarming extent was evidently essential. Every now and then a song was introduced, not with the smiling ease *de rigueur* in the West but, as elsewhere in the Far East, with every muscle strained into an expression of tense agony, with eyes and forehead drawn up in the effort to wring out every quavering note—to us a strange and painful performance.

The play having continued for two hours, and the plot remaining somewhat obscure, we ventured to ask the stage-manager whether the company would be kind enough to let us see a little Burmese dancing. He shook his head at first and seemed to think that would be impossible. "If you want dancing," he explained, "you must have a dancing *pwe*, but if you ask for an acting *pwe* you must see it out." It was very difficult, he added, to interfere with the Burmese; they always liked to have their own way and having begun to act would go on acting to the end. The end might be expected on the third morning from now, at daybreak, the play continuing each night from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m.

To say that we were appalled, is to give but a faint idea of our feelings at this prospect, yet the Burmese stage-manager's point of view was perfectly reasonable. In a country where time is not, to watch a play for three nights on end may seem no more of an effort than it is for us to sit through a three hour matinée, and our request that the company should break off the performance for a dance must have seemed like asking Shakespearian actors to stop after the first act of *Hamlet* and execute a ballet. Indeed, after two hours, we had probably not reached a further point than would correspond to the second page of *Hamlet*—and yet we had had enough!

I blush even now to think how ungracious our attitude must have seemed. For at last the stage-manager was persuaded to intervene on our behalf, the play stopped and the entertainment ended with a dance performed by six little Burmese girls whose garments were wound so tightly round their legs that they could hardly move and only went through a series of contortions, not once moving their feet off the ground.

The next day I was up early to spend a very interesting morning in Macgregor's timber yard watching the elephants piling teak. The intelligence with which they performed this task was amazing, the *mahouts*, seated on their heads, called out directions "Upright—longwise—to the right—to the left," and so on in elephant language and the great beasts obeyed implicitly, laying the huge beams of wood in perfect symmetry. There was a legend that one elephant anxious to get them into an exactly straight line, had been known to shut one eye and look along his trunk held out in front of him. Sometimes, however, I was told, an elephant would get tired of work and "run amok", then the other elephants would beat him with chains in their trunks and so reduce him to submission.

But now I was longing to go up country to Mandalay and see the Golden Palace of King Thebaw about which I had read so much. My plan was to spend a day and night there, then sail down the Irrawaddy to Prome, from which point I proposed to take the train back to Rangoon and start westwards for Ceylon to rejoin my two travelling companions from whom I had parted in Calcutta.

Accordingly I set off for Mandalay and arrived at the Dak Bungalow—

the only place where one could stay in those days—of which Briggs and I were the sole European occupants. However, I had introductions to kind people in the cantonment, who came to befriend me and we spent a glorious evening wandering about the Golden Palace, literally golden, for the interior was gilded throughout and incrusted with imitation rubies, giving a curious effect of Oriental splendour. There on the door-post of the Throne Room, where Thebaw once sat in state, might still be seen the blood marks left by the fingers of a maid of honour as she fell back pierced by the Queen's javelin. For Sapiyalat, a sort of Eastern Catherine de Medici, allowed no rivals in her path, and intercepting the glance that passed between her royal consort and the luckless maid, hurled the weapon with unerring aim, striking her victim to the heart.

I have often wondered why no-one has ever dramatized the story of Thebaw's Court; I am sure it must have been the scene of many romances, for, as I sat in the verandah of the Dak Bungalow, Mah Kin, a little Burmese woman who sold silks, came and spread her wares out before me and then, sitting back on her heels, she would begin in a sing-song voice to tell me stories of the Golden Palace. "Now I will tell you about the loves of Mangalay and Loogalay," she chanted, and I have always regretted that I did not write down the story of these famous lovers whose memory still clung around the Golden Palace.

I had planned to start down the Irrawaddy by the evening steamer that left about midnight, and having been invited to dine in the cantonment, set off there with only my small bearer Peter, and dispatched Briggs with the luggage to the boat, where I was to join her. But when I explained this at about ten o'clock to my hostess she gasped with horror. "But the steamer," she said, "is miles down the river. It will take you hours to reach it and the night is dark."

However, there was nothing for it but to set off without delay, so climbing into a *ticca-gharry*—a sort of wooden four-wheeler—I started on my journey with Peter on the box.

My hostess was right, the way was long and the night was very dark. I shall never forget that interminable drive through the wilds of Burma, wondering whether I should ever reach my destination. Once when we drew up in a village I thought we must have arrived but it was to find we had only stopped to change horses whilst a crowd of Burmans with flaring torches gathered round and stared at me curiously.

On again through the night and at last another stop. This time no village or human habitation was in sight, we were on the banks of the Irrawaddy, but alas! no steamer was to be seen either. "Where is it?" I asked desperately, and Peter, pointing down the river, indicated that we must get down and walk in search of it. Stumbling through the darkness we made our way along the river's edge until at last we perceived a tiny landing-stage with the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company's steamer *Belu* drawn up beside it, and the unhappy Briggs almost dancing with anxiety on the deck.

"We thought you were never coming, m'm," she cried, as I stepped on to the boat, "and the young gentleman on board says it is very dangerous for you to drive about like this alone at night in these wild parts of the world. Well, I *am* thankful you are safe here at last."

"Who is the young gentleman?" I asked.

"The only passenger on board. He says he knows your family and he's very worried to know what has become of you."

"Well, here I am and now let's go to bed."

Down below a pleasant surprise awaited me, for instead of the usual dingy cabin I found I was to be lodged in a charming room that had been specially done up some twelve years earlier for the Duke of Clarence when he took a trip down the Irrawaddy on the *Belu*, and looked as if it had never been used since then, with its fresh white paint, windows instead of portholes, and portraits of the Royal Family all round the walls. This was luxury indeed and how delicious to wake next morning and lie back on one's pillow watching the banks of the Irrawaddy slip past through the open windows—endless pagodas, monasteries, *pongyi choungs*, and stone dragons rising out of dense palm-groves as we floated by!

The only other passenger on board proved to be a most agreeable young man, named Thomas, who *did* know my family and had apparently been brought up in much the same entourage, for he said he had been regarded as "a brand to be snatched from the burning". We spent a very pleasant day taking our meals together on deck under an awning, playing picquet and discussing philosophy and the religions of the East.

Burma seemed to me an enchanted land. The very air seemed filled with spirit presences, a haunted feeling hung around the silent palm-groves. Wrapped in that strange atmosphere, with the soft air from the river breathing in one's face and no sound but the lapping of the water round the ship's sides, and the cry of the Burmese boatman at the prow chanting out the soundings, it seemed to me very easy to believe in *nats*—river *nats* and wood *nats* all around one.

But the prosaic voice of the skipper roused me from my dreams:

"If you want to get to Prome in time to catch the *Shropshire* in Rangoon you won't do it by this steamer. We shan't reach Prome till Saturday."

The day the *Shropshire* sailed! Who had made a mistake? I, or the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company's time-table? There was no time to discover.

"We're now at Myingyan," the captain went on to say, "the only thing you can do is to go back to Mandalay and take the train from there to Rangoon. That steamer will take you, she sails in the morning."

So there was nothing for it but to leave my pleasant cabin, and travelling companion, waving sadly from the deck, board the tiny steamer drawn up by the river bank and spend the night there. Such a night! Myingyan was a hotbed of flies and mosquitoes and reeked with the smell of *napi*—the decaying fish favoured by the Burmese. I dined *tête-à-tête* with the skipper of this other ship, a very homely person with no conversation, but was somewhat cheered by a really marvellous vanilla *soufflé* surprisingly sent up by the Burmese cook. In the morning we started off, there were no other passengers, so except for meals with the skipper I remained alone on deck. But the river continued to fascinate me and the thirteen hours' cruise back to Mandalay was full of interest.

From Mandalay I travelled back to Rangoon in a carriage with one other passenger, an Englishwoman who had lived some time in Burma and said she could not bear the Burmese.

"Why?" I asked wonderingly, for I thought them delightful.

"They make such bad servants," she said, and she went on to explain that they were apt to leave if one had meals at the same time every day—they thought that boring. It struck me as only amusing and reminded me of Princess Dolgorouki with her, "*Quelle pédanterie!*" when I asked at what time she lunched.

The Burmese, indeed, seemed to me the most lovable and friendly people, lazy perhaps, vague and erratic, no doubt they did make impossible servants with no idea of time. But time in Burma was an arbitrary affair, one did not speak of six o'clock in the morning or evening, but of "the hour when *pongyis* go a-begging" or "when we put the little children to bed", whilst distance was measured by "the time it takes to smoke a cheroot" or "to chew a pinch of betel-nut". One understands that to practical British housewives this sort of thing must be trying.

But Fielding Hall, I found, had not exaggerated the happiness of the Burmese people, the charms of the women or the virtues of the *pongyis* who at their *choungs* in every village received the small boys for eduction and religious teaching and were highly respected by British officials at that time. Alas! I was told some twenty years later agitators had spread unrest in that once peaceful country, using as their instruments the women and the *pongyis*, formerly the most stable elements of the population, but whom they succeeded in infecting with their propaganda. With such diabolical cunning do the agents of world unrest set about their work!

CHAPTER XVI

THE FAR EAST

I WAS heartbroken at leaving Burma, and the passengers on board the Bibby liner, S.S. *Shropshire*, in which I sailed for Colombo, were not calculated to rouse my drooping spiritis. Sitting next me in the dining-saloon was a man who told me at every meal that he was meditating suicide. "I don't know whether I shall jump overboard tonight or wait till to-morrow," he would say; the next day he would talk of some other way of ending his life.

At first I tried to chaff him out of it, but gradually realized it was no laughing matter. The other passengers refused to take it seriously declaring, according to the popular theory, that if anyone threatens to commit suicide that is the very reason for concluding he will do nothing of the kind. "He wouldn't talk about it if he really meant it," they would say, nodding sagely. I felt convinced that they were wrong and so it turned out that they were, for I heard long afterwards that he had blown his brains out in Rangoon a year later.

Ceylon is beautiful, a vast conservatory of tropical plants with a mean temperature of 97° in the shade, more luxuriant than Burma but without its soul. The Cingalese are not a lovable people, not perhaps as "vile" as Bishop Heber's famous hymn declares, for doubtless they have their virtues, but they lack the light-heartedness and the whimsicality of the Burmese. Amidst the palm-groves round Colombo and in the lovely gardens of Peradeniya I missed the haunted atmosphere of the Irrawaddy, I missed the *nats*. Here in trees and rivers no spirit presences made themselves felt. Perhaps up country in the heart of the jungle it is different.

We only spent one night in Colombo, where I joined my two travelling companions again. The heat was stifling, so we set off next day for a tea plantation at Oonoonagalla to stay with some friends of Grace Eustace's who gave us a warm welcome. The scenery on the way was wonderful with mountains in the distance and the most gorgeous vegetation—palms, banana trees, bamboos of a gigantic size and beautiful ferns, mosses and orchids growing in masses everywhere. Animal life, too, was most amusing, and one morning from the terrace of the plantation we watched across the valley the escapades of a rogue elephant making its way through the forest and tearing down trees in its fury.

After only two nights up country we returned to Colombo where we went on board the P. & O. S.S. *Ballarat* and started for China.

Our voyage as far as Singapore was still suffocating. Fortunately the first-class women passengers had an upper deck to themselves at night and how heavenly it was to sleep under the stars, with air like rolls of chiffon breathing in one's face whilst the ship glided smoothly onward over the oil-like sea! But even that southern sea is subject to fits of rage as we were to discover when we turned the corner of the Malay Peninsula and came into the tail of a monsoon.

At Singapore we went ashore, a party of about seven people, and started off in rickshaws to the Botanical Gardens, some five miles out of the town. There we spent several delightful hours whilst the Director, Mr. Ridley, showed us not only the wonderful plants in the gardens but the curious collection of animals, particularly monkeys, of which he had a peculiar understanding.

One gentle chimpanzee was so devoted to him that she would sometimes refuse to go to sleep at night unless he sat beside her, holding her hand. There was also a fine specimen of the cocoa monkey which is employed on the cocoa tree plantations as a most valuable worker. The monkey runs up to the top of the palm, shakes each cocoanut to find out whether it is ripe and on hearing the milk splashing inside it, picks the nut, twirls it between its hands and lets it drop so that it arrived spinning on its point and is not broken when it reaches the ground. A really expert cocoa monkey fetched a high price in the East.

Then there was the bear-cat, an animal with a strange taste in food, for we were told that its favourite articles of diet were pineapple and "Three Castles" cigarettes.

On our return from the Botanical Gardens I was really frightened, for the first time since I had left home. When one is young an element of danger only adds a zest to adventure, but this was rather more than a pleasant thrill.

My two Irish travelling companions started off in a *gharry*, whilst seven of us set forth in rickshaws and by the time we reached the outskirts of Singapore the short Eastern twilight had passed into night and it was very dark. As our rickshaws, drawn by gigantic Chinamen, made their way in single file through the narrow streets dimly lit by paper lanterns, the Chinese, who principally inhabited this quarter of the town, could be seen through their doorways smoking and playing *fan-tan*.

Suddenly as we rounded a corner one young man of the party and I found that we were alone, separated from the other five who had evidently taken a different turn; at that moment our rickshaw men put down the shafts and intimated they would go no farther. A stentorian shout from my companion seemed at first to have some effect, and picking up the shafts they went on again for a little while, then, with more determination than before, they put down the shafts again, crossed their arms and took up a truculent attitude, evidently resolved not to budge an inch. What was to be done? Had they asked for money we should have understood it was a simple matter of more *baksheesh*, but their threatening manner seemed to suggest more sinister possibilities and we wondered whether we were to be robbed and knifed here in this lonely back-street, where, under cover of the darkness, violence might well go on unchecked.

Singapore, we knew, was one of the worst cities in the world where crooks and criminals of all countries congregated. Around us we could see nothing but Chinese to whom it would be useless to appeal, we looked round wildly in the hope of sighting somewhere a white face or a Sikh policeman. It was a horrid moment. And then suddenly—oh, joyful sight! We perceived the file of rickshaws containing our five companions crossing the street at right angles. Our shouts brought them promptly to our rescue and the Chinamen, seeing we were reinforced by several other Englishmen, picked up the shafts and, joining the procession, brought us safely back to the ship.

This sort of hold-up seems to have been a common practice in Singapore, for my two travelling companions, who had driven back in a *gharry*, had much the same experience. I forget by what agency they were helped out of their predicament.

That evening in harbour we were cheered by a treat the captain of the ship had provided for us—a feast of mangosteens he had had kept on ice for our return. Never had I tasted a more delicious fruit, something like a large pipless muscat grape which burst in one's mouth filling it with cool exquisite juice. It was said to be the only fruit grown in the Empire which Queen Victoria had never been able to enjoy owing to the fact that it would not last in transit.

I did not learn to love the Chinese after our arrival in Hong Kong five days later, a fact that may perhaps be set down to the superficial view which is all that a tourist can obtain of these inscrutable people. For at first sight a Chinese crowd is not attractive, cruelty seems to be stamped on too many of those yellow countenances.

I know that China long ago evolved a marvellous civilization and produced countless gems of art and literature. I know that Europeans who had lived long in the country came to esteem the Chinese so highly that they often ended by acquiring the Chinese mind. Everywhere in the Far East one was assured that the Chinaman's word was his bond and that he was infinitely to be preferred to his Japanese neighbour.

But just as it takes some twelve years to learn to read a Chinese newspaper it takes no doubt still longer to reach a just appreciation of the Chinese character. For the tourist that would be impossible, he can only judge by what he sees and what I saw was certainly not pleasing.

I remember a scene that took place outside a shop in Hong Kong, to which I was taken by Mr. Slade, an English resident who knew the Chinese well, where I committed the indiscretion of trying on a beautiful coat of deep blue brocade woven with golden dragons and intended for a mandarin. Suddenly an uproar arose outside in the street and looking out I saw a sea of angry Chinese faces. "Take off the coat or there will be trouble!" Mr. Slade said hastily, and in a second the unlucky garment was off my back. Apparently for a woman to put on a mandarin's coat was a breach of Chinese etiquette I had not grasped. The crowd then dispersed—and I brought the coat safely back with me to England.

The shops in China enchanted me—such marvellous embroideries, paintings, porcelain, ivories, jade and blackwood! But unlike the Egyptian, the Chinaman was not always eager to sell, as I found when Mr. Slade took me to buy brocade. We repaired to the shop of a well-known dealer we will call Foo Ching where the following dialogue took place in pidgin English which Mr. Slade spoke fluently. I quote from my "Journal" written at the time:

> As we enter, Foo Ching and several other Chinamen are sitting round a table at the back of the shop smoking. Mr. Slade advancing says heartily: "Good morning, Foo Ching, you show me one piecee No. 1 Shanghai brocade?" (No. 1 is the only equivalent for "best" in pidgin English.)
>
> Foo Ching looks bored, strolls over to the other end of the shop, takes down the first roll of brocade he sees, slams it down on the counter and returns to his chair. We look at the brocade and find it inferior.
>
> Mr. Slade: "This brocade No. 2 kind. You go catchee No. 1 kind."
>
> Foo Ching (from his corner, without moving or taking his pipe out of his mouth): "That No. 1 kind."
>
> Mr. Slade: "No, no. Me wantee more fat kind. You go catchee."
>
> Foo Ching: "More fat no got."
>
> Mr. Slade: "Other colour no got. Blue colour?"
>
> Foo Ching: "Other colour no got."
>
> Mr. Slade: "This piecee how muchee?"
>
> Foo Ching: "Twenty dollars."
>
> Mr. Slade: "Plentee muchee, more cheap kind go catchee."
>
> Foo Ching: "More cheap no got."

So it resolves itself into our buying that one roll, which is perfectly hideous and very expensive, or nothing. Although the shop seems filled with rolls of brocade that is apparently the only piece we are to be allowed to see, for whatever else we ask for, whatever sort of colour, Foo Ching "no got". It is maddening when one knows that he has probably all sorts of gorgeous materials put away somewhere but is simply too lazy to get them out.

I was able, however, to buy some exquisite embroideries elsewhere in Hong Kong and several beautiful carved stools of Chinese "hardwood".

Dinner with "No. 1 man", as the Governor, then Sir Henry Blake, was called by the Chinese, made a pleasant evening, but our most interesting experience was the day we spent in Canton. We started off, a party of seven, up the river in a steamer named the *Fat Shan* and slept the night on board. As we sat at dinner we noticed in one corner of the dining-saloon a sort of gigantic umbrella stand filled with rifles.

"What is that for?" we asked a ship's officer.

"Oh, only in case the crew turn on us," he returned cheerfully, which was hardly reassuring.

In the morning we awoke to find ourselves moored by the landing-stage of Canton, with teeming Chinese life all around us. The denseness of the population was something to be seen, not gauged by mere statistics. On every side humanity swarmed as on an ant-heap. Chinese families of fourteen filled every barge and boat, every bridge and thoroughfare was packed to overflowing. Here indeed were China's millions with a vengeance!

The progress of our seven palanquins through the streets—none of them more than about seven feet wide—was slow and difficult. Covered palanquins, our genial guide Ah Cum assured us, were essential, for in rickshaws we should have no protection against whatever the inhabitants might choose to pour on us from above. "Foreign devils" were not appreciated in Canton—at every step howling crowds surrounded us, yelling, as we supposed, imprecations which it was as well we could not understand. For the first time we realized that to them we must appear grotesque, for the babies were brought out amidst shrieks of derision to gaze at our strange white faces and European clothes. Trusting blindly to Ah Cum we allowed ourselves to be conducted from shop to temple, and temple to pagoda for six hours on end.

At one moment we found ourselves drawn up outside the gates of a large courtyard, and Ah Cum bidding us descend we entered a lodge at the entrance of what we then discovered to be the prison of Canton. The warders received us amiably and by way of entertainment took down certain objects hanging on nails upon the walls. What could these be? But we were not left long in doubt, these ingenious contrivances were no other than instruments of torture, here a pleasing device for cutting a hundred bits out of a man, there a kind of vice for fastening on his head and screwing it every day a little tighter until its teeth penetrated his skull. . . . If the visitors liked, our genial hosts intimated, some prisoners could be brought in and demonstrated on for our benefit—it would be only a matter of a few dollars.

Is it possible that this ghastly proposal had ever met with acceptance from any previous travellers? As soon as we had grasped their meaning we turned and fled back to our palanquins thankful to be outside those gruesome precincts.

I have often wondered whether for 100 dollars they would have had a convict in and executed him before our eyes. It is possible that a victim might have been willing to submit to this form of entertainment, for the Chinese have little or no fear of death, and, it was said, would readily agree to have their heads cut off, if a sufficient sum of money was given to their families in compensation.

A pleasanter Canton picture printed on my mind is the House of the Dead, where in a row of small compartments were laid the black lacquered coffins containing the bodies of those who had lately died, whilst waiting for burial. Around each little room there ran a shelf on which were ranged the objects that the departed used in his life-time and which he might care to have near him in his long sleep. A touching sight was the coffin of a little schoolboy at the side of which were laid his last lesson-books. He had been learning English, and an exercise-book was open at the place where he had written in his childish hand:

"The lilies and the roses are flowers——" And at that point he had died and the rest of the page was a blank. But the book was put beside him in case he might wish to get up from his coffin and go on with his book. I should like to have seen more of this gentler side of Chinese life.

Education could be a stern matter in China as we realized when we saw the examination hall of Canton. All round a large courtyard were ranged little cubicles in which the luckless students were imprisoned the whole time the examination lasted, sometimes for several days at a stretch, and where they were kept under lock and key, their food being passed into them by a little window. At the end of the time, we were told, several were usually taken out dead, but what of that? The survivors could be counted on to have filled in their papers without help from the outside.

Our stay in Hong Kong was enlivened by a curious incident that had nothing to do with the Chinese. In the P. & O. ship coming from Colombo we had been much amused by a gay American travelling with three companions. He was evidently the show man of the party, always dressed in the most exquisite white ducks and apparently acquainted with all the smart set of America. He was a very sociable person and on finding some of us playing piquet, said he had never played it and was delighted when I offered to teach him the game.

On arrival at the Hong Kong Hotel he blossomed out into still greater magnificence and entertained us all on his verandah with strawberries out of season and an exhibition of his latest creations in the way of ties and handkerchiefs from the Rue de la Paix, at a marvellous dinner-party with large bunches of Parma violets for the ladies and a picnic to Bay View at which he himself grilled chicken and fried eggs over a fire of sticks.

But one morning he was nowhere to be seen, he and his three companions had vanished without a word of farewell. It was not until we reached Japan that we heard the explanation—they were a well-known party of card-sharpers for whom the police were on the look-out at all the Treaty ports. Suspicions had been aroused on board ship when the American had been convicted of playing with marked cards which he had tipped the smoke-room boy to produce when cards were asked for. And this was the man I had taught to play piquet!

CHAPTER XVII

JAPAN

IS there any thrill like waking up in the morning to find oneself in a new country? One April morning we found that we had arrived at Nagasaki, in Kiushiu, the southern island of Japan. But the first day, spent on shore, was disappointing; Nagasaki is not a romantic spot and it was only next morning that I began to feel I was really in Japan, goal of my early dreams at last.

Looking out of my port-hole at dawn it seemed to me at first that I was back on the Riviera—was not that the coast between Agaye and Théoule, red rocks, blue sea, and green pine-trees as I had always known them? But what Provençal boatman ever looked like that ivory-faced old man in his blue kimono, his head thatched with a spreading straw hat, paddling his queer craft through the water? No, this was not the Mediterranean, it was the Inland Sea, we were arriving in Nippon, the main island of Japan.

Gradually, as I gazed, I felt as if a willow pattern plate was coming to life before my eyes. Where else had I seen those strange arched bridges, those curving eaves, those gnarled trees in fantastic shapes? This feeling of unreality did not leave me on landing, Japan seemed to me like a toy country, not to be taken seriously. Did people really live in those little wood and paper houses, really walk in those tiny Japanese gardens with their dwarf trees, bronze storks and flat stones on which to step from point to point?

In those days only the big towns of Japan were at all Europeanized, the villages, particularly up country, remained perfectly primitive and unspoilt. And even in the largest towns there were only a few Western features—telegraph poles, tram lines and railway stations—the architecture was still almost entirely Japanese. Tokyo, which was enormous, covering, forty years ago, the same area as London, was simply a vast sea of wooden one-storey houses for, on account of earthquakes, the Japanese had then wisely refrained from erecting the high structures of masonry which in later disasters proved so perilous.

I once asked a Japanese how many earthquakes usually occurred in the course of a year in Japan; he answered, "I think about 365," a typically Japanese way of saying they were of daily occurrence. But in spite of this they never lost their terror for the inhabitants. "I suppose you have grown quite accustomed to earthquakes?" I said thoughtlessly to an Englishwoman with whom I lunched in Tokyo, but she shuddered as she answered: "Oh, no, we never speak of them." During the seven weeks I spent in the country we did not, however, experience a single shock.

We soon learnt to love Japanese houses. The perfect cleanliness of the fine matting, the polished boards on the floors over which one might only walk in stockinged feet, and the almost complete absence of furniture was wonderfully soothing. Whenever possible we stayed in Japanese inns or in the Japanese part of a European hotel, and I could well understand how the Comtesse de Polignac, who lived near us at Cannes, should, after travelling in Japan, have wanted to erect a Japanese house in the garden of her villa "Les Lotus".

I remembered going to see this after its triumphal completion, for there had been an unforeseen hitch in the proceedings. The Comtesse had bought the house in Japan and had it transported bit by bit to Europe together with fifty Japanese workmen to put it together again. But on arrival at Cannes they found they had forgotten to bring their tools so all went back to Japan to fetch them—a quite simple way out of the difficulty from the Oriental point of view.

The Japanese were not fond of showing their homes to foreigners. Cecil Hanbury, who had entertained many Japanese at La Mortola on their visits to Europe, received cordial invitations from them to avail himself of their hospitality should he ever go to their country. He went there some time later and, taking one of his former guests at his word, wrote to say he was about to arrive in Japan and would like to visit him. The Japanese replied with the utmost courtesy that he was extremely sorry not to be able to invite him to stay as all his twelve country houses had just been burnt to the ground.

On arrival in Japan we had been advised to engage a guide named Ito, a little man with side whiskers, dressed in a loud check suit and bowler hat, looking rather like a bookmaker; he did not fit at all well into the picture. But as we knew nothing of the language it would have been difficult to travel up country without him.

One evening after he had gone to bed we found ourselves in a most awkward predicament. Ellie Archdale, having strained a muscle walking over rough ground in the mountains, bethought herself of calling in a masseur. The masseurs in Japan were always blind men who walked up and down the streets ringing a bell like a muffin-man. Hearing this bell under her window Ellie had the masseur called in and he immediately set to work, kneading her remorselessly, on the spot where he believed the trouble to be. This was about 10 p.m. Towards midnight, when we were all in bed, I heard shouts for help and rushing into Ellie's room, found the masseur still kneading whilst Ellie groaned, "He *will* go on rubbing the same spot and it's getting so tender, but I can't tell him to stop!" None of us knew how to say in Japanese, "It is enough" or "Please go away!" and since it is impossible to communicate with a blind man by signs we were at a loss how to get rid of him. We tried drawing his hands away but back they went to the tender spot again. At last I was obliged to go and wake up Ito who, entering, with the magic word, "*Takusan!*" (enough) rescued poor Ellie from her misery.

Ito, however, cast such a blight over the first weeks of our stay in the country, taking us only to the "show places" and to the shops where doubtless he obtained a handsome commission, that at last we grew restive and insisted on exploring back streets for curios, and picnicking instead of going to the inns he proposed. This, of course, annoyed him, but the climax was reached when one morning he explained to me in his usual sort of pidgin-English that it was not the custom in Japan for a man to let "radies" walk in front of him. (The Chinese and Japanese have a way of transposing their l's and r's in English). "When I travel," he went on to say, "my wife she walk behind, she cally my bag." "That," I could not refrain from replying in his own jargon, "that because you not civilized, we in England civilized, ladies walk in front."

We were not surprised when next morning Ito came in to say he wished "to tender his lesignation", giving as his reason our habit of taking our meals on the grass, and this having been rapturously accepted by us all three in chorus, we settled down to enjoy Japan.

As it was necessary for one of us to be able to make ourselves understood, I set to work to learn a little Japanese, but it was no easy task. The difficulty consisted less in grammar or pronunciation, than in construction and the various forms of speech. For I found there were a number of different forms of Japanese—coolies' Japanese, commercial Japanese, Court Japanese; the Emperor, I believe, had a Japanese all to himself. Then it was essential to make use of honorifics if one did not want to appear discourteous; to learn which things had to be distinguished as "*o*" (honourable), hot water being honourable, "*o yu*" but not cold water, which is simply "*mizu*". And instead of the brief imperatives of "*ao*", "*lao*" and "*jao*" (come, bring, go) which served our purpose in India, a Japanese servant must be asked "to deign" to bring one's tea, and that anyone knocking at one's door must be invited "to condescend to make an honourable entry". The omission of any of these little flowers of speech would indicate a lack of what Ito called "Japanese poriteness".

I found even a slight knowledge of Japanese extremely useful, not merely as a means for explaining our wants but for inspiring confidence, and persuading Japanese art dealers to produce things they would not have shown to anyone obviously new to the country.

The curious distaste for showing their wares to strangers which characterized the Chinese, extended also to some of the Japanese shopkeepers, who would keep their best things in the background rather than expose them to the profane gaze of the tourist. On one occasion I saw a beautiful vase in the window of a European shop in Yokohama and went inside to make enquiries. I was told that it was modern china called Makudzu, made at a kiln near Yokohama and much valued in Japan, but the output was small and this was the only piece they had.

After buying it, I decided to visit the kiln in the hope of discovering other specimens of the kind, and on arrival found an old man sitting on the floor in what appeared to be a perfectly empty room. I asked him in halting Japanese to show me some vases, but he shook his head and intimated that he had nothing for sale. However, by exerting all the arts of diplomacy I persuaded him to let me push aside the sliding panel of a cupboard built into the wall, after the Japanese fashion, and there inside were the loveliest vases, three of which he ended by allowing me to carry off.

The collector who revered only the antique found, however, less to interest him in Japan than in China, for antique Japanese art was almost entirely copied from the Chinese, and old Satsuma could not compare with Sung or Ming for beauty. But some of the modern Japanese seemed to me to have surpassed their modern Chinese rivals, notably Makudzu and the exquisite Satsuma of Yabu Meizan in Osaka, whilst no modern Chinese embroideries could compare with the work of Nishimura or Takashimaya in Kyoto.

The Japanese forty years ago were artists to the core; they really loved the things they made. An ivory carver from whom one had bought a little figure would return next day with a tiny square of *crêpe* lined with silk to wrap it in; he could not bear to think that the object on which he had lavished so much skill might be roughly treated.

Money was not the sole consideration with these people; they could only work by the inspiration of the moment. For this reason it was almost impossible to get them to copy anything, "No, we tired making that, we make something else now," would be the answer whatever sums one offered them.

Or perhaps the sun was shining and it seemed a pity to stay indoors, then the Japanese would shut his shop for the day and go out with his family to look at the irises.

It was a kindly provision of Nature that a country as lovely as Japan should be inhabited by a people so capable of appreciating its beauty. In the spring, seas of pale pink cherry blossom cover the hillsides, and azaleas in all shades of rose and apricot grow with the profusion of gorse on an English common, some varieties attaining such a height that riding along mountain paths one looked up through azaleas to the sky. And below, the ground was carpeted with pale blue violets and japonica.

The Japanese in those days worshipped Nature, a *kuruma ya* (rickshaw coolie) would dash to pick me flowers and bring them back triumphantly, expatiating on their beauty, and at a turn of the road, coming suddenly in sight of Fuji-yama,the white pointed mountain of Japan, he would put down the shafts of the rickshaw and prostrate himself to the earth in veneration.

Arranging flowers was almost a religious ceremony in old Japan, performed with much solemnity after years of laborious training. We watched an expert one evening, an old man with a hideous but charming countenance, give an exhibition of his art, in an hour and a quarter he had filled three vases. One I particularly remember was an arrangement of white peonies and perfectly bare brown twigs, which he took infinite pains to bend, so as to make them all take the same direction, giving the effect of leafless trees upon a windswept hill.

We spent several enchanting weeks up country in Japan, riding up steep mountain pathways on rough ponies, putting up at inns and tea-houses and boating on the lovely lakes of Chusenji and Hakone. Nowhere did we find a trace of the xenophobia we had met in China, everywhere we were welcomed with smiles.

Kindness, especially to children, was a striking feature of Japanese life, the spring festival in honour of little boys was in progress during April, and large red balloons in the shape of fishes floated from the roofs of houses blessed with sons.

It is true that, as everywhere in the East, except Burma, women occupied an inferior position and, as Ito had said, walked behind their husbands, unless they had adopted European dress (highly unbecoming to them), as at the British Legation in Tokyo, where they enjoyed the privilege of going through the door before their lords and masters. No Japanese, however, would have thought of offering his seat to a lady in a train.

But the little girls were happy, running about shod with cotton socks and straw sandals, in pleasant contrast to the little girls of China who, in the old days, had their feet reduced to the required dimensions by strapping the heel to the toe so as to form a sort of hoof. I measured a Chinese woman's shoe on my hand in Shanghai and it was exactly the length of my forefinger.

Japanese children were early taught obedience, and respect for sacred things. Seeing the floor of a temple strewn with coins, I asked if there was no risk of money left in this way being stolen, but was told, "No child would think of taking money offered to the temple."

I loved the merry gods of Japan one saw everywhere, portrayed in pictures or in the tiny wood or ivory carvings known as *netzukes*—jovial Dai Koku, prosperous Hotei with his vast stomach, above all Jiro Jin with his long beard and towering forehead, the benevolent god of good luck and children. A more serious personality was the sage Dharma, represented only by a head and shoulders, because he had sat and meditated so long that his arms and legs had dropped off and he had to be carried about on the back of a disciple.

It was impossible not to love the simpler Japanese, the little old men and women one met on the mountains, greeting one with a smiling, "*O hayo!* (Good day)," were charming. Sometimes, too, I would come up to my room in an hotel and find a couple of pedlars, an old husband and wife, who had spread out their wares and were engaged in wandering round the room hand in hand, examining my possessions. An indiarubber hot-water bottle filled them with amazement and they would touch the warm soft thing with their fingers wondering whether it was alive.

European clothes were a never ending source of interest to the Japanese. Coming out of our inn at Yamada, an unsophisticated village some seven hours' journey from Kyoto, we found the whole street blocked with a dense crowd waiting to see us appear, and as we set out for a walk they all followed us, clattering behind us on wooden clogs and whispering comments.

Yet that same morning my progress to the bath had created no excitement. There was no bathroom in the inn and the *nesan* (maidservant) had led me clothed in a kimono down the village street to the bath-house, a building that looked like a shop, with one side facing a garden, made entirely of glass. In the middle of the room was a high wooden tub filled with steaming hot water which I was invited to enter in full view of the garden where a Japanese man sat peacefully smoking a pipe. Neither in the street nor when I hastily sprang into the tub was a single head turned in my direction, and I realized that once divested of my European clothes I ceased to be of the least interest to the population. Baths indeed were frequently taken in public by the Japanese themselves, and nowhere except in the most highly Europeanized hotels could one expect to find a lock or bolt on the bathroom door.

Clean bathrooms were, however, to be found everywhere, usually with deep wooden baths sunk in the floor and always beautifully hot water, however primitive the other arrangements might be. In one place the bath was filled through a thick bamboo pipe connecting with a shed at the top of the garden, where an old man heated the water and poured it in bucketfuls down the pipe. The only way of regulating the temperature was by using the bamboo as a telephone and shouting to the old man: "*O yu*" (honourable hot water) or "*mizu*" (cold water), according to one's requirements, with the risk of receiving a volley of boiling water in one's mouth whilst one was speaking. Still, on the whole the plan answered very well.

In those days the people all retained their national dress, the men only supplementing it occasionally with a European hat, the combination of a billycock and a low-necked kimono producing the oddest effect.

The women wore nothing over their carefully arranged *coiffures*, and kept almost entirely to dark blue or slate grey for their kimonos, with wide silk *obis* swathed round their waists and wooden clogs or straw sandals over their calico-shod feet. Gorgeous kimonos, such as one sees on the London stage, were only worn by *geishas* or the women of the Yoshiwara—the prostitutes' quarter of the town—though perhaps princesses in the privacy of their apartments may have indulged in brighter garments than one saw abroad in the streets.

In adopting Japanese dress it was necessary to be very careful, for every shape and colour had its significance, one form of *obi* distinguishing the married woman, another the widow, and another the young girl of marriageable age. This was explained to me as I sat in a shop choosing kimonos and *obis* to bring home with me, for when my choice fell on a beautiful rose-coloured *obi* I was gently reminded, "You no can wear that, it runatic colour." It seemed a pity that so charming a tint should be the badge of the demented.

Japanese parasols were still in fashion, particularly on wet days when the rain poured relentlessly through the paper, reducing it to pulp; in fine weather it was usual to appear with a "best Birmingham" black silk umbrella as a protection from the sun.

We always enjoyed getting into Japanese dress, which we found singularly restful, except Susan Briggs, who, throughout our travels in the East assumed an air of martyrdom.

I can see her still, moving gloomily around my room in a kimono much too short for her, deeply resentful because on our arrival at an inn in the mountains of Japan, wet through from a rainstorm, we had all been obliged to accept the kind offer of kimonos from the innkeeper's wife in exchange for our soaking garments—a change that we much enjoyed but which outraged Briggs's feelings!

Living in the Japanese style, however, sometimes led to embarrassing situations. It must be remembered that only the outside walls are made of wood, the rooms being divided from each other, and also from the verandah, by partitions of thin rice paper framed in wooden slats, made to slide in grooves so smoothly that at any moment two rooms can be thrown into one. Hence privacy can never be ensured, for there is nothing to prevent one's next door neighbour from pushing the partition away or poking a small hole in it with his finger.

It was thus that Ellie Archdale met with a strange experience at Miyanoshita, where we stayed in the Japanese part of the hotel. Waking in the morning she was astonished to find a large Teutonic countenance asleep beside her, breathing heavily into her face. At first she could not imagine what had happened, but gradually realized that her bed and that of a German in the next room, were both pushed up against the same paper partition and in turning over he had given it only the light touch necessary to make it slide away, leaving nothing between the two sleepers. Fortunately she was able to replace the partition hastily before the German awoke.

To be provided with a bed at all was a concession to European habits. The Japanese themselves slept on mattresses laid on the floor with large padded kimonos for bedding, all of which were rolled up and put away behind the sliding panels of the wall cupboards in the day-time. The only furniture consisted of a *kakemono*, or long roll picture, in one corner, and under it a bronze vase containing a branch of cherry-blossom or azalea with perhaps a bronze incense burner, and a few flat cushions on which to sit.

Chairs were only provided for Europeans and made it difficult to conform to Japanese etiquette. For should any guest arrive it was necessary to greet them by bending forward until one's face touched the floor, an easy attitude to assume when sitting on one's heels. But when I took tea with an Englishwoman in Tokyo, who kindly gave me a chair, I found it extremely difficult each time a Japanese guest entered, to plunge on to my knees tea-cup in hand, and land with my nose on the matting.

"Tea ceremony", as it was called amongst the Japanese, was a most curious rite, which had nothing to do with the pleasant habit of tea-drinking as we know it, or as it was carried on in the tea-houses all over Japan, where the tea drunk by the Japanese, known as *Nihon cha* in contradistinction to *Nankin cha* preferred by Europeans, was a sort of green powder which, dissolved in boiling water, served without milk or sugar and accompanied by pink bean paste cakes made quite an agreeable meal.

But "tea ceremony" was quite another matter, not a question of drinking tea or the art of making it, but solely that of pouring it out—which takes many years to acquire. It did not seem to matter whether the resulting beverage was good or not, proficiency consisted in the manner of manipulating the tea-set. This solemn rite was usually carried out in a theatre before a crowd of admiring spectators who understood the skill of every movement just as music lovers can appreciate the execution of a brilliant pianist.

On an occasion of this kind, we sat on the mats with a number of serious Japanese men who, by the respectful reception accorded them by the manager, appeared to be magnates of no small importance, and watched with bewilderment the careful handling of each cup, the studied curve of the performer's arm as she raised the tea-pot, and of her fingers as she moved each spoon. This, we were told, was the result of three years' practice carried out for twenty minutes every day. The audience was filled with rapture at the perfection she had now attained.

"Tea ceremony", which took place in an outer room, was followed by the "cherry-blossom dance" inside the theatre and was really charming. The plan on which the theatre was arranged in Japan seemed to me interesting, as reminiscent of the theatre in England in Shakespeare's day.

We did not attend any serious plays, for Japanese drama is apt to be almost as lengthy as a Burmese *pwe* and to the foreigner would seem hardly less tedious, though if there had been a Sada Yacco, whom I saw afterwards in Paris, I would willingly have sat through a night to watch her. But the shows we saw consisted mainly of music and dancing, the music produced on samisens and kotos and on small drums that the *meikos* sound with their knuckles. Japanese music has a weird fascination of its own, at first one misses the melody and harmonies of Western music, but after a while one begins to fall under the spell.

The performance usually begins with a few preliminary sounds, hardly to be described as chords, evoked from the samisens by the *meikos* sitting stiff and impassive on their mats. At the first note a strange sensation came over one, a subdued thrill of expectancy, provoked by the slow solemn beats of the rhythm.

Then the *geisha* comes forward, moving silently in time to the music, first one foot and then the other, softly padding on the mats, her brocaded sleeves waving like the wings of some brilliant butterfly. In her eyes, dark and fathomless as the eyes of a spirit, there is nothing of the coquetry of the Western dancing girl, she does not even smile and her lips are closed like the bud of a flower. She hardly lifts her feet from the ground, she goes through no contortions like the Burmese dancers, her skill lies in the rhythm of her movements, executed in perfect harmony with the throbbing of the drums and the wailing minor of the samisens and kotos. As one listens one seems to be transported into a land of shadows, to hear the onward march of time, to see before one's eyes a ghostly pageant—*daimyos* with their glittering swords, shoguns, samurais, ronins, princesses in their gorgeous robes, all marching with muffled tread to the beat, beat of the music.

I shall never forget the sacred dance we attended at a Shinto temple in a cryptomeria grove amidst the shrines of Ise near Yamada.

After casting our shoes at the entrance, we were shown into a sort of chapel, the farther end divided off by a bamboo rail, after the manner of the chancel in a Christian church. Before this rail we sat upon mats, whilst on the other side of it were ranged a white altar, various religious accessories and musical instruments. After a few moments four priests entered, attired in moss green silk, followed by six dancing girls in short white silk kimonos and enormously wide terra-cotta silk trousers that trailed behind them on the ground.

The ceremony opened with a prayer, the priest praying for us all by name, after which the "dance" began. This consisted in four of the dancing girls waving branches of sacred trees, tied with purple ribbon, in time to the music of a flute; a gong and a large drum breaking intermittently into a weird and plaintive chant, which somehow inspired one with a feeling of mysterious awe.

After the procession had left the chapel, strange viands were offered to us in the shape of dried fish, tiny oranges and rice, accompanied by saki (the wine of Japan made from rice) and eaten with a pair of chop-sticks. We were also presented with a number of paper charms which had all been blessed by the god of the temple, and would bring us good luck for the rest of our lives.

Japan, no less than Burma, seemed to me a land of spirits, not so much happy spirits of the woods and rivers like the Burmese *nats*, but the spirits of the dead which seemed to hover around the Shinto temples where the people went to invoke their long departed ancestors, kneeling before a large white sheet. There amidst the silence of the woods one might sit for hours on the steps of such a temple, feeling the spirit world all around one. Belief in the immortality of the soul became a very real thing in the atmosphere of old Japan.

The religious rites and ceremonies of the Japanese in those days were extraordinarily quaint and sometimes childish. Surrounding some of the temples were numbers of stone dragons round the legs of which the faithful tied little bandages as an act of sacrifice but, it was explained to us, one must be careful to tie the knot with one finger only, otherwise it did not count.

A very curious place of pilgrimage was the temple of Sengaku-ji at Takanawa near Tokyo where the Japanese lined up with little sticks of incense to burn before the shrines of the famous forty-seven ronins, those heroes of the eighteenth-century Japan who died in defence of their honour. To such a point did this veneration go that one old man, visiting the shrines, was so overcome with emotion that he also committed *hara-kiri*, on the spot, and a forty-eighth tombstone was added to the rest.

For Takumi-no-kami, having been insulted by Kotsuké-no-suki, a court official, attempted his life and, failing, was obliged, according to the curious code of his country, to commit *hara-kiri*. Then forty-seven of his followers set out to avenge his death and, such was the devotion of their leader, Oishi Kuranousuké, that in order to throw his enemy off his guard, he pretended for years to be sunk in debauchery. So at last Kotsuké-no-suki relaxed the precautions he had taken for his safety and fell a victim to the blows of Kuranousuké and his band of avengers. But honour obliged the forty-seven ronins in their turn to commit *hara-kiri* and there they lay more than a hundred years later, venerated by their fellow-countrymen.

I did not wonder that the Japanese loved Nikko. "See Naples and die!" said the Italians, and the Japanese declared that no one could use the word "*kekko*" (magnificent) until he has seen the temples of Nikko, those marvels of Japanese art. Indeed one on completion seemed so beautiful to those who had erected it that they feared the wrath of the gods and deliberately turned one portion of the carving upside down so as to spoil the effect and save the arch from destruction.

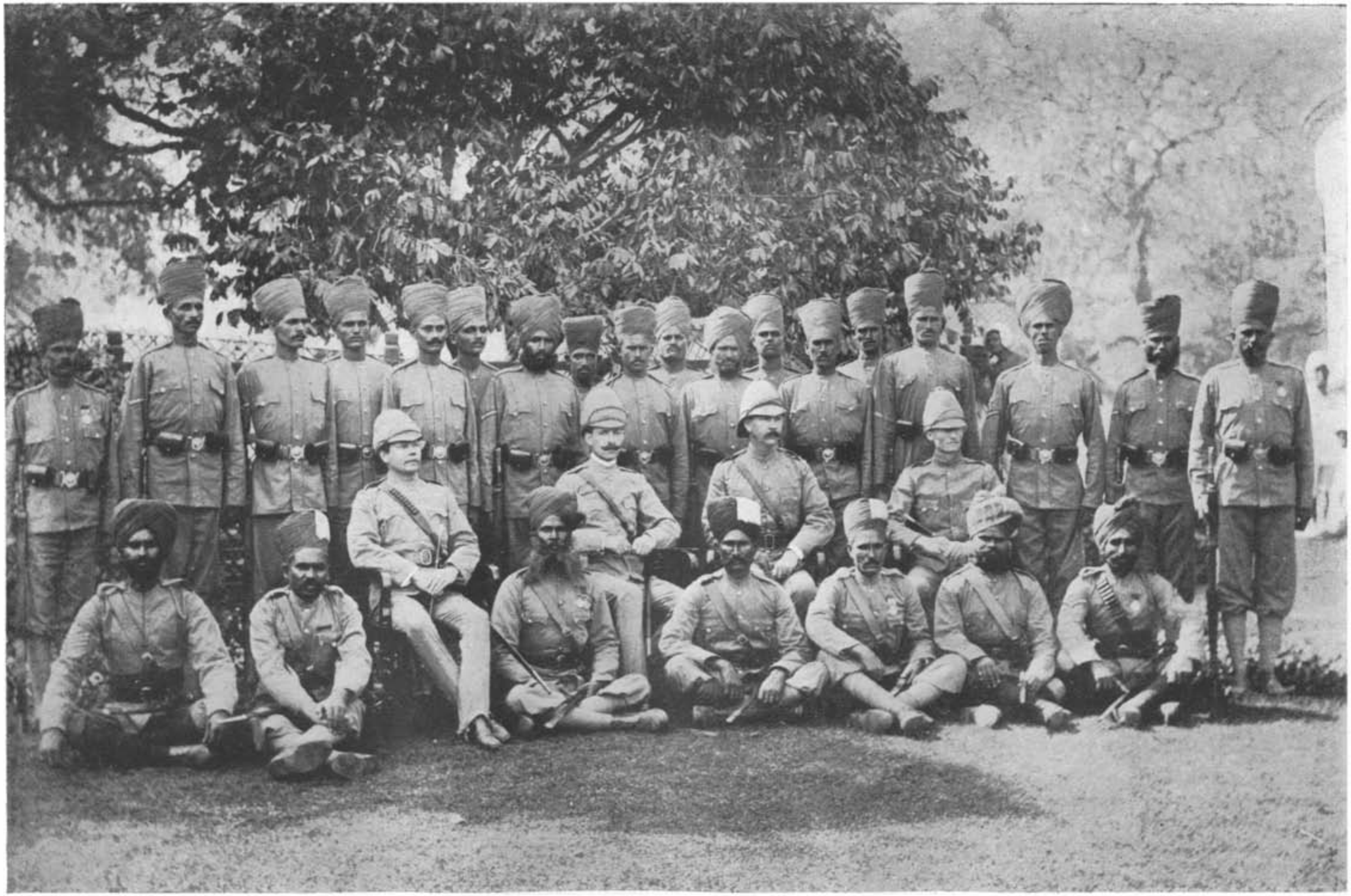
One picture that stands out in my memory is that of the temple at Kamakura, a lovely spot that reminded of me Juan-les-Pins in the old days, with pine trees growing along the silvery beach. It was there that the famous Dai-Butsu, a gigantic image of Buddha, had been constructed out of hollow bronze with an opening at one side through which one entered and mounted upwards to look out through the back of his head. This was regarded as so sacred that we were forbidden to take a snapshot of it, though photographs of it were easily obtained.

But the most interesting feature of Kamakura seemed to me the temple of Hase-Dera then nearly 500 years old, dedicated to Kwan-se-on, the goddess of mercy whose golden image, preserved in the precincts, was said to have worked miracles. The local priest, anxious to restore it, had issued a beautiful appeal for funds in which this paragraph occurred:

> "Buddhism is no narrow creed confined to one community or nation, it is the law of the Universe which was before beginning and is for ever without end; it is the law of Cause and Effect and it teaches of a Divine and Transcendant power in Nature, vast and boundless as eternal space and yet governing the most trivial circumstances of men's lives and providing a means of Salvation and eternal happiness benevolent and welcome as light in a dark night."

It was Buddhism with its doctrine of the Inner Light, its teaching of love and mercy, Shintoism with its belief in the existence of the soul after death, which made the spiritual life of Japan as I knew it. If, as I was told some years later, religion has been destroyed there by the tide of materialism emanating

The Author at the age of 22



My husband, Arthur Webster, with his police, is the second British officer seated from the left from the Western world and of militarism propagated by Germany, it has been the end, not only of a wonderful civilization, but of all that made life worth living in that once peaceful and happy country.

In the light of events that took place at the end of the Second World War it will no doubt be said that I have painted too rosy a picture in this chapter. But I can only write of Japan as I saw it, and at that date there was no trace of the cruelty we are now assured to have been always inherent in the Japanese character.

Such cruelty as they have shown in the recent war must, I think, have been produced by the military caste inflamed by the ruthlessness the Germans have always displayed in warfare. Militarism is bound to flourish in any country where women exercise little influence, and the German idea of "*Kinder, Küche, Kirche*" (Children, kitchen, church) as the only rightful sphere for women, no doubt found a ready echo in the minds of the Japanese.

If anyone doubts my view of Japan as it existed in the 'nineties of the last century I would refer them to the delightful book of Mrs. Hugh Fraser, wife of the British Minister in Tokyo at that date, where she speaks of the kindliness of the people, their concern for the sick and poor, the consternation of the whole population at the attempt on the life of the Czarevitch by a mad policeman during his visit to Japan—a violation of their whole code of honour and hospitality.

When I arrived in Tokyo Mr. Hugh Fraser had left, but Mr. Gubbins (whom Mrs. Fraser often refers to as Mr. G.) was still at the Legation. Sir Ernest Satow, a curious and rather sardonic personality was now Minister and called on me the day after my arrival; on the following day Mrs. Gubbins chaperoned me to a tennis party at the Legation, a pleasant house in a charming garden. I was particularly fascinated by the maze before the front door which, I observed to Sir Ernest Satow, must provide a most convenient bolt-hole for him to slip into if he wished to escape from an importune visitor. He replied that he had not thought of it in that light, but he would certainly bear the suggestion in mind.

The cosmopolitan atmosphere of these parties at the British Legation was delightful, here were specimens of a number of different nationalities with French as the accepted medium for conversation.

There were also several British officers from the *Barfleur*, then in harbour at Yokohama, with whom we made friends, Captain Colville and the flag lieutenant Mr. Bowden Smith in particular, who joined us in our expeditions up country and afterwards entertained us to lunch in the Admiral's cabin on the *Barfleur*. Amongst the foreign diplomats I met at the Legation were two Belgians, Paul and Adolphe May, who afterwards came to call on me in Yokohama. They were in great form at the Nippon Club spring race-meeting where I remember hearing them discussing their bets, thus:

"*Mais, Adolphe mon cher, vous avez backé un complete outsidère!*"

"*C'est vrai, j'aurais du backer le favourite.*"

"*Je le crois bien, dans ces country meetings il ne faut jamais backer un outsidère.*"

The race-meeting itself was a great occasion. At eleven o'clock in the morning the Emperor Mutsu Hito made a triumphal progress along the Bund, or sea-front of Yokohama, which had been decorated with little coloured lamps in his honour, but as, of course, they did not show in the day-time and were taken down at nightfall, they somewhat failed in their effect; so did the fireworks which were let off in bright sunshine.

The first we knew of the Mikado's arrival was when little Japanese policemen came running up to our rooms in the hotel which overlooked the Bund, and ordered us to go and stand in the street below since it would be sacrilege to look down on the Imperial head from our windows or even from the terrace; at the same time our cameras were taken from us lest we should commit *lèse-majesté* by photographing him.

The precautions taken for preserving the sanctity of the Imperial presence did not, however, extend to the race-course, for once arrived there we were all packed into one small Grand Stand—the Emperor, ourselves, the postman and Susan Briggs. It was a curious scene; one felt as if one had walked on to the stage of Daly's Theatre—with Japanese ladies in their national dress, foreigners in every kind of sporting get-up, British officers in naval uniform and a Japanese band playing selections from *The Geisha*. For although the play itself was banned in Japan, mainly on account of the word "Jap" recurring in it which was regarded as offensive, the music of that charming operetta was much appreciated there.

Our seven weeks in the Land of the Rising Sun had passed all to quickly and now the Canadian Pacific steamer *Empress of Japan* lay in port, waiting to bear us eastwards to America.

To drown the sadness of departure we spent our last evening at "The 100 Steps Tea-house" in Yokohama. After a dinner of bamboo shoots, ginger root and tiny raw fishes off the end of chop-sticks, the *geishas* did some dances. They began to perform "Chon Kina" but as this seemed likely to become somewhat *risqué* we cried, "*Takusan! Takusan!*" (Enough! Enough!) whereat they smilingly replied, "Then we will play at 'Tiger'." And so we did, according to their instructions, advancing in single file to the beat of the samisens and jumping out on each other from behind a screen—a singularly infantile form of amusement.

The *geishas* indeed were all very young, some were mere children; one little girl of about eight sat close beside me on the mats, stroking my hand. "Can one kiss her?" I asked the lady of the tea-house, not knowing what form of endearment was employed with children in Japan. But our hostess shook her head. "She would not understand, she has not yet learnt. Next year she will learn in the European school." So it appeared that even "the Kissing Duet" in *The Geisha* was true to life in this particular!

After the *geishas* had given us songs and music they said to me: "Now, please, will you sing to us? Sing us something from *The Geisha*!"

Casting about in my mind for something that could not wound Japanese susceptibilities, I hit on "The Goldfish", which pleased them very much, then we went on to songs in other languages, ending up with "*Ach wie ist's möglich dann*" in which the *geishas* joined, for it had evidently been taught them by German tourists.

So at last we bade them "*Sayonara*", that lovely Japanese word for Good-bye, and made our way very sadly down the 100 steps.

The rest of our journey round the world was uneventful, though our voyage across the Pacific might have ended in disaster, for half-way across something went wrong with the engines and we were nearly brought to a standstill. That, in those days, would have been the end of us, for wireless had not yet been adopted at sea, and owing to the vast extent of the Pacific it was said that no two ships were likely to sight each other, so that signals of distress would have been sent up in vain.

However we reached Vancouver safely and started on our long journey across Canada—seven days and nights in the train, broken only by a short stay at Banff in the Rocky Mountains. But, as I have said, I do not love mountains, and after the azalea-tipped hills of Japan and the snowy peak of Fuji-yama, the Rockies appeared to me singularly grim and unsmiling.

After that the four days' journey across the prairies seemed interminable, with nothing to vary the monotony of those vast plains and no sign of life except prairie dogs perched on tiny hillocks, and picturesque groups of Red Indians in skins and feathers on the platforms of the stations we passed through. Now and then embryo towns could be seen springing up in the wilderness. It is strange to think that what looked from the train windows like collections of mere shanties, made of match boarding and corrugated iron, bearing the curious names of Moose Jaw and Medicine Hat, are now flourishing towns, whilst Winnipeg, where we spent some hours and which seemed hardly less desolate, has become a large city.

Toronto, where we arrived at last, had however mellowed and for all its air of modern cleanliness, its red gabled villas with gaily flowering gardens, seemed to me to have retained an old world charm, whilst its fine public parks and buildings were pleasantly reminiscent of an English country town.

From Toronto we took the steamer across Lake Ontario, and arrived at Buffalo in the evening. I shall never forget how beautiful the river looked in the summer twilight—Niagara seen from the Canadian side was truly magnificent—no words can give any idea of its grandeur.

At Buffalo I parted from my two travelling companions, and set off for England alone with Briggs. I did not like New York, where I spent two days and a night, the chessboard pattern of the city, the streets all numbered instead of named, the skyscrapers, the trams that hardly gave one time to board them, the rush and hustle, all gave the impression of highly developed mechanization, which, to my mind, contrasted painfully with the London of those days, with its queer winding streets, its leisurely horse buses and tinkling hansoms, its lovely parks and gardens and general atmosphere of *laisser aller.*

I was glad to go on board the Cunard liner S.S. *Servia* (only 6000 tons), which took exactly nine days to cross the Atlantic, owing to the necessity of dodging icebergs.

A man I once met said to me, "I could write all the history of my life in smells." I can understand what he meant—the dusty smell of Egypt, the scented dusk of India, the clean teak smell of Burma, the exotic odours of Ceylon, the spicy aroma of China, the odour of flowers mingling with the incense-laden air around the temples of Japan, the aromatic firwoods of Canada, I had inhaled them all on my journey round the world. And now as I awoke one morning there was wafted through my porthole an odour so familiar that it brought tears to my eyes—the smell of malt and smoke and brine, not perhaps a romantic blend, but none the less dear for all that, the smell of England!

Travel is glorious but I know of no more rapturous sensation than to set foot in one's native land again after long wanderings on alien soil.

CHAPTER XVIII

LONDON IN THE 'NINETIES

AFTER returning from my journey round the world I began to feel the need of a *pied-à-terre* in London, where I could house the things I had collected on my travels, so looked around for a flat and meanwhile joined a club. Both proceedings were regarded in those days as very daring, women's clubs had only just come into being, the "Pioneer" was, I think, the first and so "advanced" that to spare the feelings of my family I chose a really "quiet" resort, the "Green Park Club" in Grafton Street, where no smoking was allowed, and the foot of man might not cross the threshold. None the less it horrified my mother and once again I regretted having to cause her pain, but to stay at an hotel would have appeared more improper.

I found a flat finally in Hans Mansions, in a new block which had just been built over Harrod's Stores, then a fraction of their present size. My flat, Number 9, now done away with and thrown into the Stores, was charming, with central heating, that made it as warm in winter as in summer, and large rooms flooded with sunshine.

But once at Hans Mansions the old problem of chaperonage began again. "You cannot live alone," said the family, and it was agreed that some "companion" must be found. Meanwhile I was fortunate in securing good maids, including a really marvellous French cook, and I lost no time in parting with the melancholy Briggs. The change, however, was not at first much for the better, as, at my mother's desire, she was replaced by Bantling, a sanctimonious creature who had been partly trained as a Mildmay deaconess and had a way of casting her eyes up to Heaven in moments of religious fervour.

But there was one really bright addition to the party at Hans Mansions. Whilst staying on the river, at Maidenhead, in the summer, my friend Richenda Gillett came to me on a visit, and brought with her a paper bag which looked as if it contained a bun. But what was my joy when she opened it and disclosed the most delicious puppy, a few weeks old, just a tiny square bundle of black and white wool with a paw at each corner and dancing brown eyes that radiated mischief. "Gill", as I always called Richenda, had bought him for half a crown in Leadenhall Market, where he formed one of a litter of supposed wire-haired terriers, and for a time we expected him to grow into a pure specimen of that delightful breed—fox-terriers, whether smooth or wire-haired, have always been my favourites in the world of dogs.

We christened the little fellow Zola on account of his passion for bringing unpleasant things, such as the backbone of last night's fish, to light and laying them on the drawing-room carpet. As weeks went by and he developed into a shaggy dog with long hair falling over his bright eyes and with hind legs too long for his little body, we began to have doubts as to his ancestry. He was, I believe, a blend of terrier, spaniel, poodle and sheepdog, nevertheless the result was charming, indeed the admiration he excited was sometimes quite embarrassing; sentimental females would stop him in the street and rave over his beauty.

Personally I prefer an intelligent mongrel to the narrow inbred terriers that are now the fashion. Zola was certainly a marvel of intelligence, able to find his way about London alone and with a passion for doing tricks that would have made his fortune in a circus. He took, indeed, such a pride in the accomplishments I taught him with the aid of biscuits, that after a while he would refuse to eat a biscuit unless he had first been asked to do a trick. He was fond of music, too, and would throw up his head and sing in a plaintive tremolo that appeared to give him exquisite pleasure.

I was glad we had called him Zola for the name once saved his life. Always an anti-motorist, he had a habit of rushing at the front wheels of a car and trying to bite them. One day as I was walking with him through a village in Suffolk, a car came along at a furious pace and Zola as usual flew towards it. "Zola! Zola!" I shouted frantically, thinking his last moment had come this time. But at that the car stopped dead and a voice cried, "*Il s'appelle Zola, il ne faut pas le tuer!*" For by a lucky coincidence the car was occupied by two Frenchmen who, hearing his name, immediately jammed on the brakes.

Zola, however, was no chaperone and I was continually pressed by my relations to engage a companion. "Remember," said one, "you must never allow a young man inside your door!" I cannot say I obeyed this injunction implicitly, but I met the first objection by having friends to stay with me on long visits, so I was never alone. Edith Butler often came over from Ireland, and delighted everyone with her piano playing and talent for conversation. Gill, too, came to me for some time whilst working at a hospital as a medical student.

A friend who now came into my life and became more to me than any other was Mary Davies, the daughter of Sir Henry Davies, an ex-Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab. Her mother having died when she was a child, Mary lived with her father in Wilton Place. When I first met her she was about twenty-three, very attractive, with a whimsical sense of humour and a most original turn of mind. To the world she appeared to be a mere butterfly, fond of gaiety and always dressed in lovely clothes, often with a green parrot on her shoulder. Parrots adored her; she seemed to have a peculiar understanding of their psychology.

She was fond of all animals and used to frequent Jamrach's where all kinds were for sale, but unlike some impassioned animal lovers her heart was also full of love and sympathy for human beings. Only her friends knew the extent of her devotion to her old father, once a brilliant intellect but who had now lost his memory and would sit for hours talking to himself of things that happened long ago.

As a relief from this sad companionship Mary would come round to my flat and philosophize by the hour. Sometimes she brought her cousin Ada Marriott, a most lovely creature like a Greuze, who had just returned from New York, and delighted us with the real "darkie" songs she had picked up on the roof gardens of that city. Zola adored her and would sit listening with pricked ears whilst she sang, and when she rose from the music-stool would seize her by the tail of her gown and drag her back to it by way of an encore.

Mary contributed greatly to the gaiety of life at Hans Mansions and would regale me with stories of the adventures she and Ada had had together, how they had gone to masked balls at Covent Garden, entering into the game of make-belief in the Continental spirit, great fun, of course, but in the eyes of society quite shocking. Who would have guessed in those days that this gay girl who loved to scandalize people would stand out as one of the greatest heroines of the First World War?

I knew at first few "Society" people in London, for having lived so long abroad I felt like a foreigner in my own country. Zola, however, did his best to make pleasant acquaintances for me by calling on the other occupants of the flats, snobbishly picking out titles, such as Lord Claud Hamilton, a charming old gentleman who kept a special cushion for him on his visits, and Lady Hastings, once a famous beauty, known as "the pocket Venus", the story of whose flight with Lord Hastings out of the door of Marshall and Snelgrove's whilst still engaged to Mr. Henry Chaplin and the subsequent victory of the latter's horse "Hermit" which ruined Lord Hastings, journalists never tired of recounting when Derby Day came round. Lady Hastings, who later married Sir George Chetwynd, was still beautiful when I knew her, and I thought her one of the most charming and simple women I had ever met.

One day when I went in to tea with Lady Hastings who should I find sitting on the sofa but Paul May, one of the two diplomat brothers from Tokyo. He sprang up and bounded towards me. "You remember me?"

"Certainly."

He turned in ecstasy to Lady Hastings. "She remembers me!" and then, bending in my direction, "I cannot tell you how flattered I feel!"

Soon after he invited me to a dinner-party at his flat nearby at which no less than seven languages were being talked round the table, and he himself conversed with me in Japanese.

This, and the longing to revisit Japan and to get more off the beaten track, prompted me to learn more of that language, and I made enquiries for a teacher whom I soon found in the person of Mr. Owaru Suwo, a young clerk in the Japanese Naval Office who volunteered to come and talk to me for an hour one evening a week. He was a charming young man with no idea of time, who would stay on talking long beyond the hour agreed upon.

When at the end of several months I asked him what I owed him he replied, "It is a pleasure to me to teach my language, I could not accept anything for it."

What was to be done? I asked a Japanese lady I knew and she assured me that it would be impossible to insist on payment but one might offer Mr. Suwo a present.

"It need not, however, be anything of value. If you spend one shilling and sixpence it will be quite enough. We have a proverb that says, 'Even a pine needle given from the heart is precious'. He will appreciate anything you care to give him."

Finally I presented him with some books which appeared to delight him, but this may have been only what Ito used to call "Japanese poriteness". Anyhow he had increased my longing to re-visit his country.

There seemed, however, no hope of this at the moment for no-one I knew wanted to go with me so far afield. The South African War was now occupying everyone's thoughts, and all through that Autumn of 1899 grim news was reaching us of reverses at the front. At Trent, where I stayed, long lists of casualties were read out at meal-time and groans went round the table as names dear to those present rang out remorselessly; in London the cries of the newsboys shouting " 'orrible slaughter!" sounded perpetually under our windows. This ghoulish practice was mercifully put down during the First World War.

I used to wonder whether all this need be, and wanted to be convinced that it was necessary for I hated to feel that England might be in the wrong. But I have always had a horror of war and could not help asking whether the whole matter might not have been settled by arbitration. Yet even to raise this question was to be stigmatized as "pro-Boer" although one's sympathies were whole-heartedly with one's own people. It was *their* blood one grieved to see shed, splendid young lives sacrificed—perhaps needlessly? But there were forces at work of which I knew nothing at the time which might have made any understanding with the Boers impossible.

A journey I made to Germany just after the war had ended showed me that we had worse enemies to fear. I was still suffering from internal catarrh, and as no English doctor was able to diagnose the trouble I was advised to go to Wiesbaden for a cure. But the German doctor proved equally futile and the country itself most uncongenial. The only thing I really enjoyed was the opera; a most marvellous rendering of *Oberon* was given with scenery painted on gauze that moved on rollers across the stage so that one really seemed to be driving through a forest full of fairy life, a striking contrast to the crude scenery of Covent Garden.

But nothing could make up for the unpleasantness and hostility of the German people at that date. Cries of "*verfluchte Engländerin!*" pursued one down the street and if one attempted to board a tram the women would spread themselves out saying, "*Da ist kein Platz, Fräulein.*" On one occasion they became so insulting that I could contain myself no longer and turning on the whole tramful of chattering women I said in a voice of command, "*Schweigen Sie alle!—sogleich!*" (Be quiet, all of you, at once!) Somewhat to my surprise an instant silence ensued and they all looked at me respectfully. It was a revelation to me in German psychology.

The Germans admire nothing so much as force and courage. Anyone who imagined that they respected the British pacifists during the First World War was strangely mistaken. Besides, to give them their due, they are patriotic, and have a hearty contempt for people who are not willing to stand up for their own country. It will probably be said that their hostility in 1901 was caused by the South African War and was to be met with on the same account in France as well as Germany. I can only say that I was in and out of France all through that time and never met with the least unpleasantness from the French. If the Germans insulted us it was less because they disapproved—as did many other nations—of our action in going to war with the Boers than because they despised us for not bringing off a speedier victory.

In their eyes the war had been a display of weakness on the part of Great Britain and provided an incentive to their own schemes of *Weltmacht.* A map of the world was exhibited in the window of the principal bookseller in Wiesbaden with the words, "*Zu Deutschland gehört die Welt!*" in large letters beneath it.

From that moment I never doubted that we should have to fight Germany.

CHAPTER XIX

A WINTER IN EGYPT

THE last years of the nineteenth century were often enlived by controversy on what was known as "the Revolt of the Daughters"; a certain Mrs. Lynn Linton provoking much innocent mirth by her fierce denunciations of the rebels, who, after all, often had just cause for complaint. Where girls were concerned I must admit that those days were not spacious, for them it was a period of great retrogression; in the late Victorian era they had less freedom than the spirited heroines of Jane Austen's novels and were hardly allowed to express an opinion on any subject—"What can you, a mere girl, know about it?" was the crushing reply to any such attempt. Still less were they able to take up a profession.

The counterblast to this system of repression was the campaign for "Women's Rights", for the Suffrage movement was just beginning. I took no part in this for I could not see that the vote would prove the panacea for all the disabilities from which women suffered at that period. What they all needed was an object in life.

It was not merely a matter of work as a means of livelihood, the theme of most feminists to whom economic independence was the one and only desideratum. Who had shown the need for women to find an outlet for their energies apart from financial considerations, the tragedy of starving minds in the midst of material plenty? For men a profession was generally regarded as necessary, but at that date the only career open to a woman of the educated classes was that of a hospital nurse, a school teacher or a district visitor.

None of these spheres of usefulness appealed to me. Marriage, the one vocation women were expected to embrace, did not attract me, because I felt it to be the end of all adventure and it terrified me by its irrevocability. For in those days it was regarded as irrevocable, a life affair, and I think rightly. It has always seemed to me that the remedy for unhappy marriages is not "easier divorce"—though that may be sometimes the only way out of an intolerable situation—but in less easy marriage, that is to say in more serious reflection before taking the plunge.

To be really happy one must have a great affection or an absorbing interest; to have both is heaven on earth. "*Il faut faire le bonheur de quelqu'un!*" I remember my mother saying and at that time of my life there was no-one to whom I was necessary; I had no niche in the world. I had freedom, the independence for which so many women crave, but is freedom in itself an unmixed blessing? The Arab wandering in the desert is free but if he lacks water is he happy? That was the trouble with many of us in those days; we were restless and dissatisfied because we were unemployed—*désoeuvrées*, as that untranslatable French word expresses it, and so we sought relief in mere amusement. But to live only for amusement seemed to me like making one's dinner off cream meringues; recreation, to be enjoyed, must come as the corollary to work.

Once again I felt the urge to work seriously at writing. But I must see more of the world if I was to write anything of value. So I must travel, if possible in the Far East, but finding no-one to go with me I had to content myself with Egypt and fell in with the suggestion of a certain Lady L. that we should spend the winter there.

The voyage out was saddened by the news of the death of Queen Victoria, which reached us at Gravesend where our ship put in for repairs. Egypt when we reached it was cold and misty, the glamour it had held for me as my first glimpse of the East had faded, the thrill of that experience was not to be repeated. Cairo still seemed to me a place of noise and tumult which no longer amused me; the whole atmosphere was charged with violence and unrest, the cruelty to animals sickened me.

The striking contrast to the tumult of Cairo was the desert; for whilst in the city there was always deafening noise, in the desert there was almost deafening silence. I loved riding there, especially by night, a weird and strange sensation, and driving out to Mena House by day. This was the Egypt about which Edwyn had told me so much, that I wanted to see more of. I longed to go up the Nile but Lady L. was unwilling to forgo whatever social amenities Cairo had to offer, though owing to mourning for the Queen these were not of an exhilarating kind; no dancing was allowed, a few luncheon parties, quiet dinners and dreary evenings at bridge made up our programme.

A further blight was cast over our stay by a most untoward incident. On our way out to Egypt an aged German royal Princess had come on board at Malta, accompanied by a lady-in-waiting named, I think, the Comtesse Milewska. The Princess, having seen us playing bridge, expressed the wish to join us and took her place at our table, with the Comtesse seated at her side murmuring terms of endearment.

At one moment the death of Queen Victoria was mentioned, whereat the Princess observed:

"Ah, yes! Three things always happen at once. The Queen is dead, the Empress (Frederick) is dying, it will be my turn next."

These words seemed to throw the Comtesse into a state bordering on hysterics, her caresses grew more than ever impassioned, her voice broke and finally bursting into tears she cried in German:

"No, no, Schatz, it will not be you, not you, you must not say it!"

The Princess took no notice but continued to play on immovably, but under the cover of her deafness the Comtesse turned to me and whispered:

"But it is true all the same. She is very ill, she is dying, but she does not know it."

Some days after this painful scene, when we had arrived at the Hotel Savoy in Cairo, the Comtesse rushed into my room and began to pour forth her woes. The Princess, she explained, was not well off and was being exploited by a gentleman to whom she had trusted her business affairs. She had some priceless pearls which he was trying to persude her to entrust to him to be re-strung. "But he will have them changed!" wailed the Comtesse, "he will have false pearls substituted, and then I shall be accused! Already I have spent hundreds of my own money to pay the Princess's expenses. What am I to do, oh, what am I to do?"

I tried to console her and advised her to consult the German Minister in Cairo. But I never saw her again. The very next morning, we were told, the Comtesse, whilst out riding, was arrested by the German police and whirled back to Germany.

At this moment we moved out to Ghezireh Palace Hotel and for a while saw no more of the Princess. Then suddenly one day we met her out driving; she signalled to us to stop and in a great state of agitation told us that she was now alone with only a German maid and would like to come and join us at our hotel.

So to the Ghezireh Palace she came, and, to my dismay, took to having her meals at our table. I am a royalist to the backbone, but to have the rôle of unofficial lady-in-waiting thrust upon me when I wanted to study Egyptian life was maddening. Besides, the Princess seemed to me almost as old as Rameses II in the Ghizeh Museum.

But she was evidently very ill, really dying, as the Comtesse had said, and I felt terribly sorry for her, so when she could no longer leave her room and sent me messages to come and see her I used to sit by her and take down German letters she dictated to the German Empress and other royal personages telling them of her condition.

Then she would talk to me sadly of her poverty, whether real or imaginary I could not tell. One day she said:

"I have no money. When I leave Cairo I shall die in the street."

"Oh, no, ma'am," I said cheerfully, "the Emperor will not allow you to do that!"

But she shook her head. "Oh, yes, he will. He will not care. And if I go to London no-one will care for me either."

Convinced that this was only a delusion of old age and illness I said soothingly:

"Oh well, ma'am, if it comes to that, I've got a flat in London, I won't let you die in the street."

"Very well," she said at once, "I komm!"

I was appalled. What on earth should I do if by a miracle the poor old lady recovered and really came to join Zola and me at Hans Mansions? However, she was obviously so ill that it seemed quite safe to offer her unlimited hospitality.

After a while her appeals to the German Royal Family met with some response and a Grand Duke was sent to look after her. But he evidently found Cairo life more amusing, and after entertaining us all at a magnificent luncheon with champagne flowing he went back to Germany, leaving the Princess still alone with the German maid. And at last we were obliged to go home, too, leaving the Princess at the hotel, where she died a few weeks later.

The astonishing sequel to this incident, which appeared at length in the London Press, was an action brought against the Grand Duke for misappropriation of her money by the Comtesse Milewska whose room had been searched and her handbag containing about 20,000 marks confiscated by orders from Berlin. The Duke's counsel, however, declared that it had been taken by her *homme de confiance* which quite accorded with all that Milewska had told me about him. But I never heard how this strange affair ended.

CHAPTER XX

EDWARDIAN ENGLAND

AFTER my return from Egypt I was taken terribly ill with ptomaine poisoning and the doctor gave as his opinion that I could not live through the night, which, with a temperature of 106·8 and a pulse of 140, seemed not unlikely. It was a curious sensation to feel oneself sinking through one's bed, but at the time it did not greatly distress me.

It is a comfort to know that when one is ill enough to die one no longer clings to life. I remember thinking quite calmly, "Now I have been round this world and am going to another one; I wonder what it will be like?" But I did not go. In the morning I was better; by the end of the week I was going about as usual and able to enjoy the pleasures of the season.

London, now that the reign of Edward VII had begun, became very pleasant, gayer probably than it had ever been since the days of the merry Stuarts, or was ever to be again. It was said after the French Revolution that those who had not lived before 1789 had never known *la douceur de la vie*, so might it be said of our own times, that those who had not lived before 1914 could have no idea of the perfection to which civilization had attained.

Travel by road, rail or sea had become cheap and easy, home life had been brightened by new schemes of architecture, house decoration and gardening, and craftsmanship had achieved a pitch never dreamt of during the Victorian era. How beautifully things were made in those days! What exquisite furniture, glass and china, what lovely dress materials were to be found in the London shops! And to what an art had bookbinding been brought! After the First World War had burst over the succeeding Georgian era, with its mass production, life was never the same again.

I now felt quite at home in London and no longer like a foreigner in my own country. Life had become a merry whirl of theatres, supper parties, days on the river, summer afternoons at Hurlingham or Ranelagh. In this last connection I managed to horrify my mother for I had told her in a letter that I had been to Ranelagh and she wrote back saying, "How can you enjoy going to a low dancing-saloon such as Ranelagh?" She was, of course, thinking of the Ranelagh Gardens on the banks of the Thames which in the eighteenth century really was a low resort where people of all classes went to dance; of the delightful country club with its lovely gardens, reedy ponds, its golf course and polo matches—now alas! a thing of the past—she knew nothing.

Dances, however, in that first Edwardian era were still, as in Victorian days, for the few, not for the many in Society. There was no dancing, as there is today, at hotels and restaurants, there were no night clubs except the Supper Club in Grafton Street, to which one went on Sunday evenings on the invitation of a member—which was quite "the thing to do". The only public ball recognized by Society was the Caledonian Ball every season, which was a gathering of the clans and their friends; apart from this, dancing was confined to private houses, and to a close ring of hostesses. To give a dance was like taking a ticket for all the other dances of the season, invitations poured in on one from other dance-givers who might be quite unknown to one, and who might unblushingly leave out their oldest friends if they were unable to make the same return. It seemed to me a most detestably commercial development of the "cutlet for cutlet" system.

This, and the snobbishness that then prevailed, were the less pleasant side of London life. My mother's aloofness from the world and her complete disregard for wealth and position had not prepared me for the value attached to them by Society. I had imagined love for titles to be peculiar to parvenus like the people who gathered round the Grand Dukes at the Cannes Golf Club, something ridiculous, to be laughed at; now I found it amongst people of all classes, even those who might have been expected to know better.

I could understand respect for breeding, pride in an ancient or an honoured name. On the continent of Europe, in France before the Revolution, in Austria before the First World War, the "aristocracy" formed a caste apart, a "de" or "von" really denoted a family of ancient lineage living on their lands from time immemorial. "Nobles" were thus bred as scientifically as Pekes or Derby winners and the *Almanach de Gotha* formed a studbook to which one could refer. The sixteen quarterings demanded in Vienna might be very absurd, nevertheless by their insistence on intermarriage between those of equal rank they maintained the standard of the breed.

In England alone, rank has never been synonymous with breeding. The "de" or "von" of nobility have no equivalent in our country, where the oldest families have lived on their lands for perhaps a thousand years without, in most cases, acquiring a title or any distinguishing badge of rank. Yet the odd anomaly remains, that whilst there is no country where rank means so little as in England there is none—except America—where it counts for so much.

This being so it was not surprising that society mothers in the past should have sought these advantages for their daughters, and the London season have become for them one wild struggle to secure *partis*. But too often the "eligibles" refused to be lured, preferring the front row of the stalls at the "Gaiety" to any London drawing-room; men of any kind, even the merest "detrimentals", were difficult to collect in sufficient numbers to make up a successful ball. Only supper tempted them and, knowing the welcome that awaited them, young men coming out of the theatre would hail a hansom, give the order to be driven "to the first awning", make a bee-line for the supper-room, and after enjoying quails and champagne would depart peacefully without entering the ballroom. I remember hearing of one unfortunate hostess whose dance was completely spoilt because the rumour went round that at another dance that night ortolans figured in the menu and the men all left in a body.

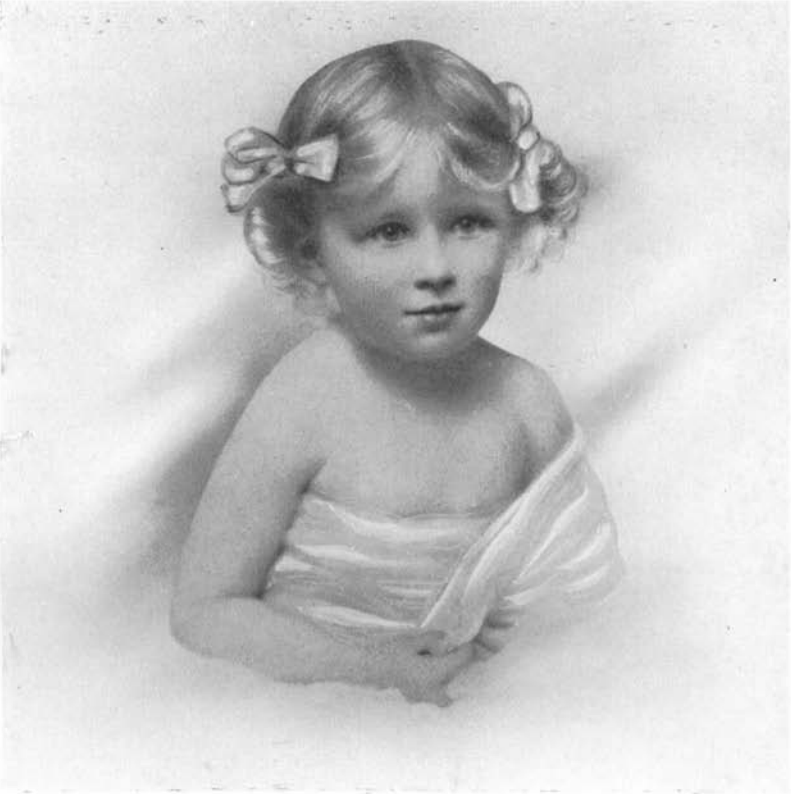
The season was thus a most strenuous time for society mothers, obliged to sit up round the walls of a ballroom till the small hours of the morning, whilst the girls stood in rows waiting to be picked out by a partner or left indefinitely as "wallflowers". The modern plan by which a girl can take her own partner to a dance seems to me much to be preferred. But in those days it would have been quite shocking, for no girl could go out with a young man alone to any entertainment, even in the day-time. A man who wanted to ask a girl to dine or to supper had to invite a married woman and another man to keep her company so as to make up a *partie carrée*, a not inconsiderable expense which naturally limited these occasions.

But although the freedom given to girls today has no doubt brought more colour and movement into their lives has it not gone a long way to dispel romance? In the days when a man had to scheme and contrive to see a girl alone there was an excitement about such meetings not to be found now that girls are so readily accessible and, when met, so approachable. The "*purdah* system", as one might almost term the seclusion in which they were kept fifty years ago, had the effect of wrapping them in a sort of mystery which made men eager to break through, now that veil has been rudely torn aside—and sun-bathing has left little to the imagination. Forbidden fruit is always the sweetest, but now that nothing is forbidden has it not lost something of its savour? I may be mistaken, but when I watch the young people of today I cannot help thinking that they fail to get the thrill out of life that we did in our day.

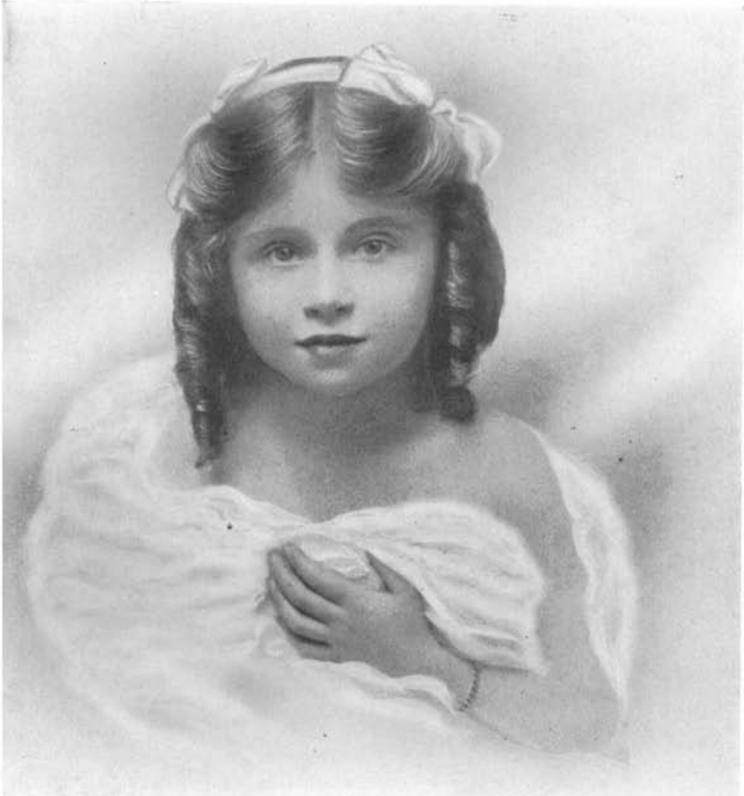
Being independent I was never what is called in India "strictly *purdah*" and with other girls in the same circumstances managed to defy the most stringent rules of chaperonage by going about together, with our men friends, most often during summer-time in punts on the river, which was, of course, regarded as too emancipated. Captain W. in the —— Guards—with whom I had made friends in Egypt—was often with us on these occasions, and we usually took Zola with us, for he was very happy sitting at the head of the punt, barking at passing craft, and had discovered grand ratting was to be had along the banks.

Captain W., however, seemed to think that Zola monopolized too much of our attention and on one occasion vented his resentment of Zola's charms in a most ungenerous manner. He was rather a connoisseur of art and had taken me to a picture show during which we had left Zola outside, sitting on the floor of my victoria. On coming out again we found an extraordinary woman with a string bag on her arm standing in front of him with her hands clasped in ecstasy and exclaiming: "Oh, but he is *too* beautiful! A perfect Bhutia!" And turning to me she went on: "When can I see him again? I *must* see him!"

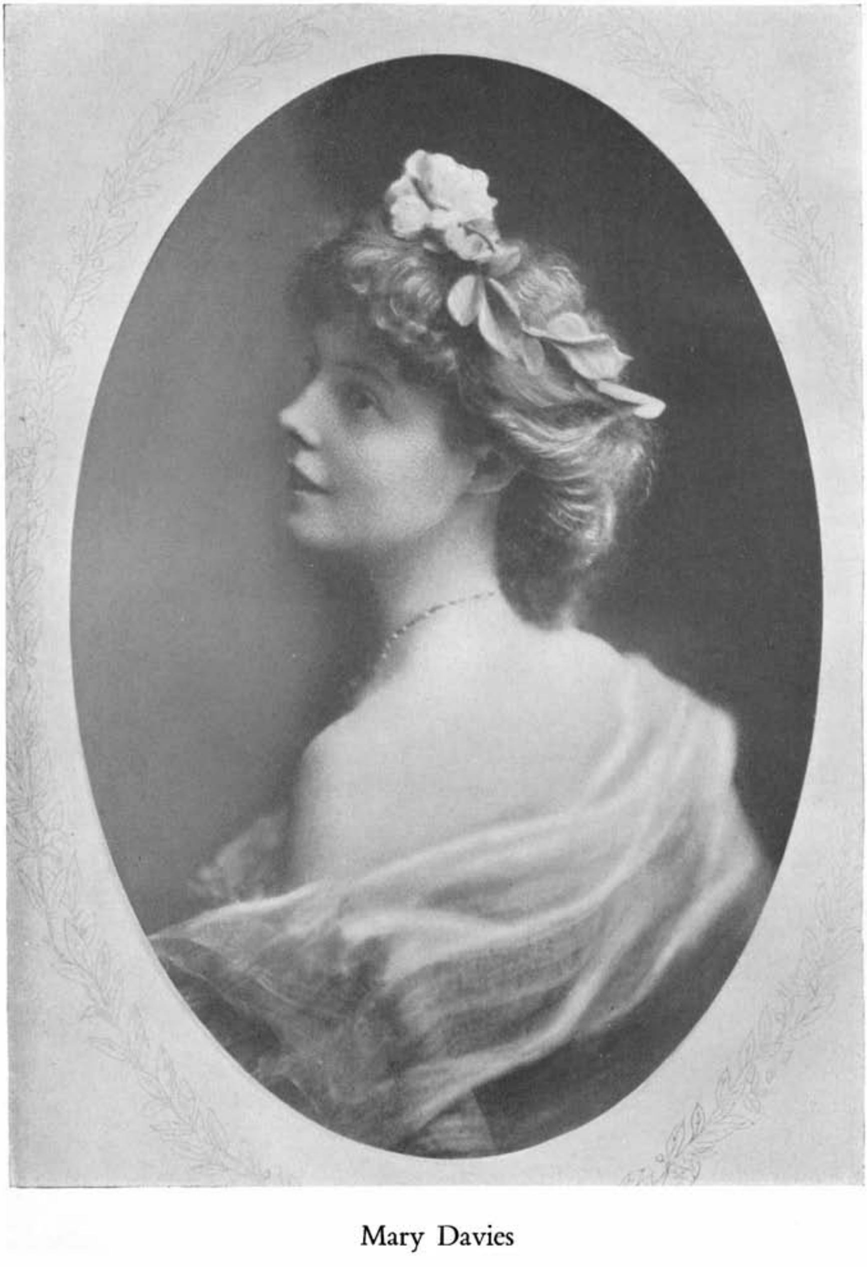
Thinking she was mad or merely another of the many sentimental females who were wont to gush over Zola's beauty I answered, "I'm afraid you can't see him again," and got into the carriage.



Rosalind



Marjorie



Mary Davies

As we drove away Captain W. said quietly: "I suppose you don't know who that was? Miss X, the greatest animal painter of the day. She has painted Queen Alexandra's Bhutia terriers and apparently took Zola for a pure specimen of that race!" And knowing something of Zola's very doubtful ancestry he smiled sardonically.

Why had he not spoken in time? If only he had revealed the strange lady's identity I should have jumped at her request for a further meeting and Zola might have figured in the Royal Academy!

The little dog had not been happy whilst I was away in Egypt. Gill had sent him to stay with a Quaker brother and sister who happened to be Socialists and insisted on their charwoman having meals with them and addressing them as Edward and Margaret. The charwoman didn't like it, nor did Zola, so he went out and tried to commit suicide by throwing himself into a pond and holding on to a water lily with his teeth to keep him under water when they tried to fish him out. But he was rescued and returned in due course to Hans Mansions.

He was happier there now as Bantling had departed. Zola detested Bantling, and on his walks with her always strained at his lead so as to keep as far away from her as possible. But now she was replaced by Eleonore, a most delightful French maid who added greatly to the gaiety of our lives. She did hair wonderfully and taking up her stand behind me in the morning at my dressing-table would enquire cheerfully, "*Coifferai-je Mademoiselle ce matin à la Cléo de Mérode ou à la Liane de Pougy?*"—two of the leading French *comediennes* of the day.

I was never very fond of French plays or novels, for ever centring around the "eternal triangle", until de Flers and Caillavet came out with their brilliant series—*Le Bois Sacré*, *L'Habit Vert*, etc., just before the First World War, which, by the death of one collaborator, brought them to an end. In general French humour, always derisive, usually at the expense of someone *en place*, provoked smiles but seldom that hearty laughter which greeted the glorious wit of Gilbert and Sullivan operas and the clean fun of the "Gaiety" with young Grossmith, Huntley Wright and Connie Eddiss, or of the music-hall comedians—Dan Leno, Herbert Campbell and Dan Rolyatt. I am sure it is our British capacity for seeing the funny side of *things* that has contributed to the health of the nation and helped to counteract the gloom of our climate, as well as to thwart the efforts of revolutionary propagandists.

In looking back at the past I cannot remember any great figures on the tragic stage, Henry Irving and Ellen Terry had been the leaders but in my youth were long past their prime; Ellen Terry whom I saw only once, in *Cymbeline*, was still charming, but I could not understand how Irving had achieved his reputation, his mouthing diction and way of shooting his eyebrows up and down seemed to me terribly stagey and affected.

There were several very good actors in the "problem plays" that were then the rage—George Alexander and Charles Wyndham, the Vanbrugh sisters and in a lighter vein that delightful *comedienne,* Ellis Jeffreys. But how meaningless those old plays—*The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* or *The Liars*—would seem to the present generation! All the barriers against which they tilted have been swept away, and with them most of the "situations" which made drama in the past. The more license is admitted in society the fewer plots there will be for dramatists or novelists, for if divorce is everywhere accepted as the natural corollary to marriage where is the thrill of wedding-bells and where the tragedy of conjugal infelicity?

On the European stage there was to my mind one outstanding figure—one supreme genius—Eleonora Duse! I saw her when she came to London in *La Tosca* and *La Gioconda,* and for weeks afterwards I could not bear to go to a theatre, every other performance paled beside her presentation of human emotions. No longer young, with no make-up to conceal her pallor, already greying hair and far from classical features, she gave one almost a shock when first she came upon the stage; but, after five minutes one could look at no-one else. I shall never forget her in that last act of *La Gioconda,* when having lost her arms she cannot take the sea-shells held out by the peasant girl Beata, kneeling before her, the ship-wrecked expression in her eyes as she says, "*Non ho piu mani!*"

I saw her again in Germany in *La Dame aux Camélias* in which I had also seen Sarah Bernhardt who repelled me as much as La Duse attracted me. It seemed to me that neither woman was exactly fitted for the part, that Sarah could never have had Marguerite Gauthier's good moments, or La Duse her evil past. "*Regarde donc le fange de ton passé!*" I felt that Eleonora could never have walked through mire.

For "society girls" of my day the London season ended with a round of social engagements in the country, Goodwood, Cowes, Scotland, shooting-parties in the shires, later hunt balls throughout the winter. Not having been brought up in that milieu I had no set programme of this kind, but I paid a few country visits which I confess I did not greatly enjoy; for one thing I felt the cold terribly after the Riviera. The Spartan habits of the British upper classes never ceased to amaze me, I remember one country house in which there were something like seventy rooms, but there was no electric light, and the only "bathroom" contained a sort of tin tub that a campaigning ancestor of the family had used during the Napoleonic wars.

I did not enjoy going out with the guns for I could not bear to see the birds killed, beautiful pheasants soaring over the woods, their plumage gleaming in the autumn sunshine, their tails streaming in the breeze, then suddenly dropping like stones to earth. I know that the best kind of men love sport, but somehow I never felt I could live happily in the country-house set of people. The amazing seriousness with which they took all the details of hunting, shooting, cricket, even golf remained incomprehensible to me. Yet such is the triumph of matter over mind that they sometimes succeeded in making me feel that their outlook was the only sane and normal one, and that affairs of state, the problems of the Universe, were of no account compared with such momentous questions as which colt would stay the course at the St. Leger or how many blows from a stick would get a small white ball into a hole.

The advent of motor-cars did, however, lend a zest to country life for they brought with them movement and variety. The first car I remember seeing was at Cannes in about 1900, when I looked out of my bedroom window and saw what looked like a round governess cart chugging along the Californie road, and inside it the Prince of Wales wearing a yachting cap and looking, as someone remarked, like a very big egg in a very small cup.

I think it must have been in the following year that I drove a motor for the first and last time in my life. I was staying with the Alfred Mulhollands at Debden Hall in Essex, where they had just started a Panhard car and also a de Dion Bouton with a voiturette attached to the back. The latter was standing at the front door one day when Alfred suggested I should try it and, although I told him I had no idea how to drive, he insisted on my mounting the seat, then turning on the switch, he hastily sprang into the voiturette behind me and off we went full tilt up the drive.

"How do I slow down? We're going much too fast!" I shouted to him.

"Press the button on the right!" he called back.

But there were several knobs and I pressed the wrong one, for it was the accelerator and we shot forward out of the lodge gates at what seemed to me a terrific pace. Well, there was nothing for it but to keep one's head, steer straight and trust to luck in not meeting any obstacle to block one's way, for I had not the faintest notion how to stop the engine. We must have gone several miles before at last I succeeded in pulling up and, having now discovered which knob to press, managed the return journey successfully.

"How could you trust yourself to me?" I said to Alfred when we were safely home again. "We might both have been killed."

But he only laughed and said, "I knew you had a pretty cool head."

However, I did not feel that motor-driving was my vocation; I have no flair for machinery, and as a family we are all too much given to fits of abstraction to keep our minds fixed on the wheels. Not one of us has ever learnt to drive a car and I never attempted it again.

At that time I was often ill with the same internal trouble, later to be diagnosed as colitis, from which I had suffered at intervals ever since my college days, and which nearly had a fatal ending after my return from Egypt. The London doctors, at a loss for a remedy, could think of nothing better than to remove my appendix, and at last I submitted to this tiresome and—at that date—extremely painful operation.

When it was over I was ordered a sea voyage and at one moment thought of going out to India with Mary Davies. For old Sir Henry had now died and Mary was to live with her brother, a Deputy Commissioner in the Punjab. At that moment, however, a hunting cousin, Ulrica Bevan, daughter of my Uncle Dick, who thought she would like to go to the East, though she was not sure she could bear to spend a winter so far from the

Pytchley, suggested that we should go together to Ceylon, and as that balmy island seemed an ideal place in which to convalesce, I decided to set off with her and to join Mary Davies later.

This meant parting with both Eleonore and Zola. For when I told her that I was going on the long trail again Eleonore said in that case she would marry the chef she had met at the sea-side hotel where we had stayed that summer. "Then," I said, "you will soon be leaving for your honeymoon?"

"Oh no, Mademoiselle, I shall put on a Casino hat and we shall make the *tour du Parc*. Then I shall return to Mademoiselle in the evening." And so she did, only leaving me when I sailed.

So I lost Eleonore and ever afterwards regretted it. For thirty years she never once missed sending me a Christmas card "*de sa toute dévouée Eleonore*", often reminding me of the happy days we had spent together. Dear Eleonore! I lost sight of her in the maelstrom of the Second World War.

CHAPTER XXI

ACROSS THE WORLD AGAIN

IT was a bitterly cold December day when my cousin and I set forth from Marseilles for Ceylon in the Bibby liner, S.S. *Shropshire*, very different to the comfortable P. & O. ships in which I had made earlier voyages. We shivered miserably as we crawled into our narrow bunks in our tiny cabins, and wondered whether we had been quite mad to leave our cosy firesides.

But by the time we reached Port Said the weather had grown warmer and we received the usual rapturous welcome from the natives who seemed to be well up in the doings of Court circles in England, for the young Arabs had named their donkeys after the ladies then enjoying the royal favour—Mrs. Langtry, Lady Warwick and so on, and as I walked into the hotel where we stopped for coffee and cigarettes, I was greeted by a long-robed native bowing low with the words, "Enter, O Mrs. Cornwallis West!"

Ceylon, when we reached it, made up in heat for the cold we had suffered on the voyage, and we spent a very merry Christmas at the delightful Galle Face Hotel, where we danced to the band of the Gloucesters and sat out in the long cool verandahs drinking lemon squashes.

After a week in Colombo we went up country to Kandy, where we visited the "Temple of the Tooth", where devotees were offering huge white jasmine flowers to Buddha; and the lovely gardens of Peradeniya, where mangosteens were ripening, later to Nuwara Eliya (pronounced Neuralia!), the mountain resort of Ceylon, so chilly and sunless that it reminded me of Scotland, but was beloved for this very reason by British residents in Ceylon, who were wont to allay their home-sickness by the sight of open fires.

I was touched by the hospitality of some of these people; on stopping at a bungalow in the mountains to ask my way I was greeted by a charming Englishwoman who begged me to come and stay with her, which I would gladly have done if we had not been due elsewhere. I realized how great the loneliness of these exiles must be during the few days we spent with some friends of my cousin on a tea plantation at Nawala Pitiya in a long low bungalow perched on a ridge amongst the mountains, miles away from any other Europeans.

The silence was only broken by the thousand weird voices of Nature so different to the pleasant country sounds one heard in England. The birds seemed to have no songs, like the blackbird or nightingale, but rather to be the victims of some distressing nervous affection of the throat, terribly irritating to listen to; one sounded like a person in violent hysterics emitting a series of convulsive shrieks all on the same note, another trilled like an electric bell, yet another went on hooting like a steam whistle. I could understand now what Europeans, who had lived through hot weathers in the plains of India, meant when they spoke of the agony caused by the maddening crescendo of the "brain fever bird".

There was one bird in Ceylon the natives held in terror, they called it "the bad bird" and said it was an omen of death, so when it ventured near the house they all fled in alarm and no servant would go back to work until "the bad bird" had been killed or shoo-ed off the premises. Then there were the insects, grasshoppers vibrating, mosquitoes trumpeting and horrid fleshy pink lizards which stuck to the walls and ceilings clucking loudly.

But there was one charming sight. After dark the fireflies lit up the whole garden as if with hundreds of tiny electric lamps and, looking down into the valley, one could imagine one saw the lights of a town below, only to discover there was nothing there but a swarm of fireflies in the vast loneliness of the hills.

Apart from this isolation the tea-planter's life in Ceylon seemed to me very pleasant and I found the tea itself extraordinarily stimulating. It was the only time I have ever really enjoyed that beverage. The kindly British habit of offering one "a nice cup of tea" under any circumstances—accident, illness or merely *ennui*—has always left me cold; coffee and a cigarette are what I crave under these conditions. But tea picked on the plantations, especially the tips of the leaves known as "orange pekoe" and brewed next day was very pleasant and had the effect of making me feel positively brilliant, though doubtless this was not apparent to those around me.

But now I was again struck down by a return of my old complaint, and once back in Colombo had to take to my bed under doctor's orders, and exist on liquid food, which in England would have meant beef tea, but in Ceylon took the form of turtle soup, described in the dictionary as "the chief glory of aldermanic banquets". In that luxuriant island it provided, however, the commonest form of diet, being made out of the gigantic turtles inhabiting the ponds and rivers, and was indeed delicious.

From my room in the Galle Face Hotel I could enjoy glimpses of what the missionary hymn truly describes as "Ceylon's coral strand". How heavenly it was to wake in the morning in floods of glorious sunshine and feel the soft air blowing off the sea, to look through towering cocoa palms to the pink sands and shining blue sea beyond! At night I could see through the black shadows of these palm-trees the path of moonlight on the sea glittering to the horizon and all day and all night I could hear the waves breaking softly under my windows with a dreamy ripple.

But as the daylight grew the heat became terrific, so terrific that the doctor ordered another sea-voyage, and, as the P. & O. *India* was then in port at Colombo, bound for Australia, my cousin and I decided to embark for that distant land.

This proved a most unfortunate expedition. On arrival at Melbourne cold despair settled down on us both when we contemplated the country we had travelled so many miles to reach. By this time my cousin had decided that she could not miss the hunting any longer, at intervals throughout the journey I had heard her murmur, "Today they are drawing such and such a cover!" or "Today they are meeting at So-and-So!" until at last I cried, "Oh, go back to England!"

Now in Melbourne a brilliant thought struck us both. The P. & O. *Arcadia* was in harbour about to sail for home, and so after only one night in Australia, during which the hotel she was in caught fire, my cousin went on board, back to the Pytchley, leaving me alone with Miss N., a girl I had engaged in Colombo as a sort of nurse-attendant, who happened to be a native of Sydney.

So to that city we went on together and, as I was too ill to travel up country, we spent a dreary ten days exploring the neighbourhood. We duly admired Sydney's harbour which, in its natural formation, is very fine, being enclosed like a great lake and surrounded by pine-covered rocks, something like the sea-coast of Japan, but lacking the beauty of other great harbours of the world; such as Naples or Nagasaki, for its shores are cruelly marred by hideous villas, hotels and even factory chimneys.

The only place of interest I could think of was Botany Bay, for I had once seen a convict ship moored in the Thames, which some hundred years earlier had plied between London and Australia and had made a deep and terrible impression on me, which was increased by reading *For the Term of his Natural Life*. So one afternoon we set forth in a hansom for that historic spot, and after about an hour's jolting over stones and boulders, arrived at a desolate sea-shore with nothing but a few dreary houses and "pot-house" hotels as signs of human habitation. So after noting the white monument which marked the spot where Captain Cook had landed, we drove back to Sydney. And this was absolutely all I saw of Australia!

The expedition was nearly fraught with disaster, for on our way to Botany Bay we had passed a notice bearing the words "Zoological Gardens", and as I can never resist a glimpse of animal life we turned in to inspect it. But the frightful odours of the lions' cages, which were apparently never cleaned, drove us out again. Next day I developed a terrible throat: sent for a doctor who, after glancing at it, remarked grimly, "I shouldn't like to see a child of mine with a throat like that."

"You mean diphtheria?" I asked.

He nodded. "Of course, if you went to the Zoo. . . ."

So that was it! I had caught diphtheria off the lions!

My throat certainly had a sinister appearance, studded with what looked like neat round spots of white leather. But thanks to the family constitution I have always had amazing recuperative powers and a way of outwitting doctors' verdicts. But the next day the spots had vanished and I had completely recovered, in fact I was now feeling better than I had done for a long while. So finding the P. & O. *India* was still in Sydney harbour and about to return to Ceylon, I bade farewell to Australia and embarked in her with my companion.

The voyage this time was quite a pleasant one, we touched in Tasmania, for huge cargoes of apples to be brought on board, and had time to go on shore at Hobart, and visit Fern Tree Gully which was delightful. The interest we aroused in the Tasmanians was extraordinary. In those days visitors from England must have been rare, for crowds of people came on board at Hobart to look at us through the windows of the dining-saloon, as if we were some strange animals at feeding-time, and when we were on deck they wandered round examining us, and especially our clothes, with the greatest curiosity.

"Crossing the line", that is to say the equator, was great fun, with its traditional ceremonies of tarring and feathering members of the crew, and throwing them into a sail filled with sea-water.

Now once more restored to normal health, I was able to enjoy the delights of travel and particularly of Colombo. I had made no particular plan of where to go from there, but on arrival found a letter from Mary Davies inviting me to join her and her brother at Simla, to which I joyfully agreed. A small P. & O. boat, the *Palawan*, was due to sail in a few days for Calcutta, so I spent a strange and exciting time at the Galle Face Hotel, repacking, shopping, swimming and, by great good luck, taking part in a most amusing sport.

This was a pearl fishery, the first that had taken place for ten years and was now going on off the west coast of Ceylon. The oysters were fished up from their beds and sold all over the Island; one could buy them in the *Pettah* of Colombo for about £1 a 100, a pure gamble, for no-one could know what was to be found inside them, there might be nothing—a decaying oyster, or a pearl of priceless value. The Bond Street jeweller stood no better chance than the casual tourist!

For the pearl is in reality a gastric tumour formed in the body of the oyster, which, finding itself afflicted by some irritating particle, such as a grain of sand, proceeds to coat it round with the iridescent substance that turns it into a pearl. The "cultured pearls" now on the market are apparently made by the same process, the irritant being artificially introduced but not producing quite so perfect a result.

Now since the oyster must have been dead some days before its tissues are sufficiently relaxed for human fingers to detect the presence of a pearl inside it, which, though small, may be of great value, the process must be carried out in the fresh air if one is not to be poisoned by the odour. Accordingly a party of us from the Galle Face Hotel repaired one afternoon to the pink beach with natives carrying our pails of oysters. Then seated on the sand with one native holding a parasol over one's head, a second keeping a handkerchief soaked in *eau-de-Cologne* close to one's nose, one remained in front of one's pail whilst a third native, sitting opposite one, opened the oyster and then handed it to one to feel for the pearl. The state of one's fingers after this can be imagined; it took me three hours of scrubbing in every kind of disinfectant to get rid of the smell, only the excitement of hunting for pearls had kept me up to the end. And after all we found only a few small ones, for the larger ones are usually produced in the lower beds which were not to be taken up until the following year.

I am fond of pearls and precious stones, though I do not care for diamonds, but emeralds and Burma rubies fascinate me, so did some of the strange gems to be found in the island.

I have always regretted that I did not get a specimen of that lovely stone the alexandrite, an emerald by day and an amethyst by night—or is it the other way round? I forget. Sapphires of all shades, deep blue, bright blue, light blue, white, even mauve, were ridiculously cheap in Ceylon; I bought a handful for a little over £3 and have never understood why they should fetch such high prices in London.

I was sorry to say farewell to Ceylon, where I had spent a delightful time, but the *Palawan* was waiting, and so with Miss N. still in attendance I went on board and set sail for Calcutta. It was a hot and delicious voyage going up the Bay of Bengal, and our fellow travellers were quite pleasant except for one Frenchman in khaki pyjamas which he never changed, who had been placed next to me at meals and who told me his doctor had ordered him never to take a bath. Fortunately I was able to get moved away from his vicinity.

When we reached Calcutta, we met with a most distressing *contretemps.* My dressing-case containing all my money, letters of credit, my most precious personal belongings, and the stones I had bought in Ceylon, was carried on shore by a native and suddenly found to be missing. Wildly we searched all over the quay, the dressing-case was nowhere to be found. Finally we decided that after all it must have been left on board and turned to go back to the ship to look for it. But to our dismay the *Palawan* was no longer there, she had moved away from the landing-stage and could be seen slowly making her way down the Hooghly to some distant point where she was to be moored.

There was nothing for it but to follow her. It was now quite dark and the prospect of setting forth on the black water of the river was not alluring. There were only natives round us, no British sailors or officials to whom we could turn for help. In halting Hindustani we explained our predicament and found at last a small native boat, in charge of an aged man attired only in a loin-cloth who looked exactly like Charon out of Dante's *Inferno.* He and his mate volunteered to take us down the river, indicating by signs that the *Palawan* could not be far away. Trusting to this assurance we set off hopefully, but as each bend of the Hooghly revealed nothing resembling a British steamer our hearts sank lower.

That strange and rather terrifying voyage seemed interminable, but at last, after what seemed an endless age, the large black bulk of a British steamer loomed before us out of the night.

"Is that the *Palawan?*" I shouted.

"Na, na, this is naw the *Palawan!*" a broad Scottish voice replied cheerfully from the deck, and never have I been more thankful to hear the homely accents of Caledonia. "But she's close by, gang right on!"

And sure enough she was! Another moment and we were beside her, and this time it was our friend the Captain who answered our shouts for help.

"What *are* you doing there? Come up on deck at once!"

In a second we were out of the boat and up the companion ladder, tumbling metaphorically, if not literally, into his arms.

The kindly skipper listened sympathetically to our sad story and said a search for the missing dressing-case should be made at once. But it was nowhere to be found! However, he entertained us royally on ham and strawberry jam—for we were starving—and, after scolding us well for setting out on our wild adventure, said he would arrange for one of his officers to escort us back to shore.

So we set off in a dinghy, with British sailors this time in charge of us and safely landed on the river bank.

But not in Calcutta! the *Palawan* was too far down the river for that, and the men could only be spared to go as far as the shore of a native village several miles out of the city. It was now past midnight, everyone was asleep and we stumbled over recumbent forms as we made our way along the village street where there was no sign of life. But the ship's officer, who had come on shore with us, succeeded in discovering an ancient landau parked in a shed, and a sleepy native willing to drive us into the town.

At last we arrived at the Grand Hotel in Calcutta and next morning the missing dressing-case arrived there too. It had been brought on shore with another passenger's luggage and was peacefully sitting in the hall of another hotel, whilst we were madly searching for it on the Hooghly. So that perilous expedition need never have been made!

CHAPTER XXII

SIMLA

FORTY years ago the journey up to Simla was an arduous one, fifty-six miles in a *tonga* from Kalka station, with a night spent on the way in the rest-house of Dharmpur. No motors had yet penetrated to that distant hill-station where horse-drawn vehicles were not allowed to anyone except the Viceroy and his military secretary, the Commander-in-Chief and the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab. The rest of the community had to content themselves with rickshaws, the reason for this being that the roads were too narrow for carriages to pass each other without the risk of going over the *khud* into the valley below.

Here Mary Davies and her brother met me and we travelled together up to their house, Townsend, on the hill called Jakko. It was not a balmy spot, a rather gaunt house with wooden balconies and no flower garden, perched on the hillside and looking out over a panoramic view of the Himalayas. Though not a lover of mountains I can appreciate their beauty if the foreground provides some warmth and colour, as in Japan, where their sides were carpeted with flowers, or, as in Italy or Switzerland, where blue lakes and rushing rivers relieve the monotony of rocky heights, but a waterless landscape gives no relief.

The arid firclad range of the Himalayas oppressed me, I do not remember ever finding a wild flower on the way up Jakko, nor ever hearing a bird sing. The only sign of life was provided by the monkeys which bounded in the branches of the trees and woke one early in the morning dancing on the tin roof of the house. There were leopards, too, in the woods, but they seldom ventured near human habitations, though occasionally they were known to carry off luckless dogs from the verandahs. But what really struck a chill to my heart was the sound of the jackals howling at night like souls in pain.

Society at Simla seemed to me hardly more exhilarating than the scenery, it was entirely official, people ranked according to their place in the Precedence List of India, apparently a most formidable document which they seemed to know by heart. For at the end of every dinner party it was for the *burra mem*, that is to say the lady highest on that list, to make the move for departure, no-one dared to leave until she had led the way, and everyone seemed to know who was the *burra mem* on each occasion.

I remember once after having tea with some people on their verandah, going through the drawing-room on my way to the front door, and, the floor being covered with soft rugs, I did not know that a *burra mem* was following behind me, until she suddenly leapt forward to get first through the door, glaring at me the while over her shoulder. For, of course, as a mere globe-trotter I had no place in the Precedence List at all.

Globe-trotters were not loved in Simla, largely owing, I think, to Rudyard Kipling's description of "Paget M.P.", the arrogant tourist who set out to know all about India after a brief visit. I could not help feeling some resentment towards Kipling, for his creation of this character; it did infinite harm to the unassuming visitor to India.

Elsewhere in the East, as I have said, I found British residents extremely friendly and often amazingly hospitable, like the lady in Ceylon who had invited me to stay with her without knowing anything about me. And I shall never forget how my kind hostess in Rangoon wired to me after I had left for Mandalay, whilst the small-pox epidemic was raging, "If you have caught the infection come back to us." To invite anyone with confluent small-pox to come and have it in one's house, seemed to me the climax of generosity.

But Anglo-Indians, as English residents in India were then called—for at that date the term was not applied to half-castes who were known as Eurasians—seemed haunted by the fear of entertaining a Paget M.P. unawares, and had in consequence become less friendly than in the past. Smarting at the idea of being patronized by some new arrival from England they determined to be first in the field by calling every traveller contemptuously a "t.g." or "travelling gent", and by replying to any remark he might make about India with a resentful glare, as much as to say, "What do *you* know about it?"

But after all it is not necessary to live for years in a country to gain certain definite impressions, this must surely depend less on the length of time one spends there than on one's powers of observation. I frequently met Anglo-Indian women who knew nothing about India and had not even troubled to learn Hindustanee.

Simla was indeed the centre of the universe to its *habitués*, the great world outside it seemed hardly to exist for them. Where, we wondered, were the sprightly ladies Rudyard Kipling had discovered "under the deodars"? The men had become almost as limited in their outlook as the women.

"If only they would talk about something else besides polo ponies!" one young man, also a newcomer, said to me with a groan as we rode together round Simla. "But it's just the same in the plains. One day I really thought they'd struck a different note. I went into the mess and heard two fellows talking. One said to the other, 'Take Shakespeare now!' Thank heaven, I said to myself, there's someone here who cares for Shakespeare, so I stopped to listen. But the fellow went on, 'He always buys his ponies from So and So.' Shakespeare was only another man in the regiment!"

As the season wore on and the warm weather came a certain liveliness sprang up in official circles. But Viceregal Lodge was not conducive to hilarity; the parties there were terribly formal, conducted with regal ceremony.

Lord Curzon was the Viceroy, and a most admirable one, but many stories were told of his pomposity in private life. It was said that when on a tiger hunt a photograph was to be taken of the party and just as the camera man was about to snap the shutter, Lord Curzon called a halt, left the group and reappeared in a top-hat and frock coat, which in the heart of the jungle, with the corpses of slain tigers in the foreground, seemed somewhat out of keeping.

The affair of the rice pudding made a great stir the summer I was in Simla. Major Raymond Marker, one of the Viceroy's A.D.C's. and a most delightful personality, occupied the post of what he called "Martha" at Viceregal Lodge, his duty being to order meals with due regard to the state which Lord Curzon always insisted on keeping up. One day, however, Lady Curzon, tired of the elaborate dishes that made up the menu, confided to Major Marker her craving for a plain rice pudding, and this duly appeared on the table at lunch. Then the storm burst. Outraged at the sight of this plebeian fare Lord Curzon took Major Marker severely to task and the luckless A.D.C., gallantly shielding Lady Curzon, who dared not admit her share in the dreadful solecism, received the full tide of His Excellency's wrath on his own head.

Lord Kitchener, as Commander-in-Chief, kept up less pomp at his fine house, Snowdon; his A.D.C's., Major Frank Maxwell and Captain Victor Brooke, were young and full of spirits, and he himself possessed a certain quiet sense of humour.

On the fourth of June Lord Curzon gave an Eton dinner at Viceregal Lodge, and Lord Kitchener, not being an Etonian, suggested that as Lady Curzon could not qualify for the banquet, she should dine with him at Snowdon, and his staff should each invite one lady to make up the dinner-party. I was naturally delighted when Captain Victor Brooke's choice fell on me.

When the evening came I realized the importance of arriving punctually, but being usually rather vague about time got into a panic at the thought that I was late in starting, so urged my *jhampannis* to greater speed with the usual promise of more *baksheesh*. Accordingly I was whirled to Snowdon at a breakneck pace, only to find on arrival that, far from being late, I was much too early, no one else had arrived and when I was shown into the drawing-room it was to find only the huge figure of Lord Kitchener towering on the hearthrug.

So for twenty minutes I was alone with this formidable personage, for none of his staff came to relieve the situation. I cast about me frantically for subjects of conversation. What on earth was I to talk about to the "*Jungi Lahd*", that is to say "the Lord of War", as the natives call the Commander-in-Chief? Then by good luck I hit upon one topic that interested him—cretonnes! I admired the covers of the chairs and sofas in the drawing-room, and instantly his somewhat grim features brightened, for he was particularly fond of house decoration. So from that moment all went well.

The dinner itself was magnificent, exquisite food eaten off gold plate, and fourteen well-chosen guests in all. I was glad to be sitting opposite Lady Curzon, who, dressed regally in brocade, struck me as wonderfully beautiful.

Lord Kitchener and all his staff seemed to be enjoying themselves immensely; wine and wit—of a simple kind—flowed freely. But how little did any of us guess that evening, that in fifteen short years nearly everyone present, and all these strong men, would be dead! Lady Curzon died only three years later, Lord Kitchener and all his staff—Colonel Hubert Hamilton, the most charming of them all, Major Maxwell and Captain Victor Brooke, perished in the First World War. So far as I know I am the only survivor of that gay banquet.

Lord Kitchener was not really as formidable as he at first appeared, but he was, no doubt rightly, a tremendous believer in discipline and, as I noticed at that Simla dinner-party, adopted an autocratic manner even with his staff. But they adored him none the less on this account. And when, a week or two later, he came to supper on the stage of the Simla theatre he was amiability itself.

The Simla A.D.C. (Amateur Dramatic Company) was an important feature in the life of that hill-station. The theatre itself was built on quite professional lines, and the plays presented were not of the futile kind with which amateurs usually have to content themselves, but really first-class works for which a good deal of local talent could be found. I was therefore duly elated when I was asked to take the second part in *The Marriage of Kitty* which I had seen in London. As at Biarritz where I had played Mrs. Coleman in *The Passport*, this was a character part and so appealed to me. I could not have endured playing the *ingénue* and this part was taken by Simla's leading actress, a charming woman who played it admirably, though as she was old enough to be my mother a rather absurd situation was created.

However, I thoroughly enjoyed myself in the rôle of Madame de Semiano, the Peruvian adventuress, and the comments of India's leading paper, the *Pioneer*, were very amusing.

> "A part which might well have tried an old actress and was certainly a heavy ordeal for a young one, was that of Madame de Semiano. Though fresh to the Simla stage, and, as far as is generally known, to any stage, Miss Nesta Bevan played the part with a flow of foreign excitability and a mysterious creepiness of manner that could hardly have been improved upon by a trained hand. It has to be borne in mind that the Peruvian widow is supposed to be of beautiful even dazzling appearance, otherwise the whole story would be meaningless. Attired brilliantly and looking impressively handsome, Miss Bevan cleverly contrived to impart to her sinuous figure a weird snake-like sway of movement. . . . Indeed, had Miss Bevan's been a colourless instead of a spirited piece of acting the good work of the other actors would have fallen comparatively flat. . . . So promising a young actress should be heard of again soon."

We played *The Marriage of Kitty* four nights running to a packed house, and I returned home in my rickshaw nearly buried in bouquets.

It was on the last of these nights that Lord Kitchener came to supper with us on the stage and sat between Kitty and myself as we had taken the two leading parts in the play. The rest of the cast seemed somewhat overawed by his presence, but I found that if one did not appear to be afraid of him he ceased to be formidable. I think he was rather tired of being deferred to as a great personage and found it refreshing to be treated as an ordinary human being for once.

I remember that I asked him whether he had ever acted. He shook his head. "I don't think I could act. I should never be able to get through a big part."

"No," I said reflectively, forgetting for the moment who he was. "But then one does not begin with a big part, one begins perhaps by bringing in a letter on a tray."

This remark gave rise to the story which went round Simla that I had suggested to Lord Kitchener he should play the part of a butler. Of course, I meant nothing of the kind and was speaking only in general terms; at any rate, he took it in this sense, and far from appearing offended, thawed still further and discussed all sorts of topics with gaiety and humour which made him a most delightful neighbour. I have always been glad to have had this glimpse of the kindlier side of this man of iron.

As the season wore on, life at Simla became quite a whirl of gaiety—gymkhanas and races at Annandale, rides out to Mashobra, lunches, dinner-parties and dances, endless dances, so that one was seldom in bed till four o'clock in the morning. Once I had longed to dance, but now I grew sick of the sound of a waltz tune, for the monotony of it all had begun to pall on me. It was like always going to a dance at the same house—the same band, the same decorations, the same people at each.

The only occasion when a new note was struck was the Black Hearts ball. The Black Hearts were a band of bachelors who every year entertained Simla at a ball, and this year asked Florence Brett, a delightful American girl, and me to arrange and lead a cotillon, and being very generous gave us *carte blanche* with regard to favours. We had a grand time hunting materials for these in the bazaar, and devising new and original figures, which we led with zest. The ball, a fancy-dress one, of some 500 guests, was a huge success, and Florence and I were presented with gold trinkets when we were made honorary members of the Black Hearts in recognition of our efforts.

But a little of Simla goes a long way, and a whole summer there had been too much. Often I had looked across the miles of bare grey mountains and longed to get away beyond them, but it was considered dangerous to go down to the plains during the hot weather: one might die of heat apoplexy in the train. So I was obliged to wait until October, and then with a deep sigh of relief set off joyfully once more on my travels.

CHAPTER XXIII

KISMET

IT has always been my experience that the pleasures one plans and strives for end in disappointment. Perhaps that is why in the past women who lived for "Society" so often got the hungry look that one does not see in the faces of people who take amusement as a recreation from work. The London season followed by a round of house-parties made up their lives, a ceaseless struggle for enjoyment, fraught, except for the very few, with pin-pricks, thwarted ambitions, blighted hopes. If the Second World War put an end to what always seemed to me the social treadmill and set these women to useful work, it served some purpose.

I had never trodden the treadmill, but there had been moments when like every other young and eager spirit, I had wanted just "to have a good time" and that was what inevitably proved a mirage.

I had set out for Cairo looking forward to a round of gaiety and had found nothing to enjoy except the desert, I had gone to Simla expecting to find life "under the deodars" amusing and had been bored to tears. On the other hand, I had started for Biarritz with the idea of having a quiet time with Aunt Carrie and had been caught in a whirl of gaiety; I had had other happy times too, in Ireland, on the Italian lakes, with Harry and Enid Sulivan in Norfolk, later in Suffolk; above all, I had had a glorious time going round the world.

These happy moments were all impromptu, never striven for, never planned; they just happened. For real happiness is the most elusive thing in the world, we set out to seize it and it eludes our grasp; then suddenly it bursts upon us like sunshine from behind the clouds, wrapping us round in its warm rays. How truly Emerson had said, "The things that are for thee gravitate to thee!"

It was with no idea of amusement, that, after going down to the plains of India, I accepted the invitation of Mrs. K., with whom I had made friends in Simla, to go and stay with her at Fatehgarh, near Cawnpore. "It will be deadly dull for you," she said, "no gaieties and no occasions for you to wear your Paris frocks, but bring your oldest clothes and come and cheer me up!"

How little did I dream as I got into a wooden *ticca-gharry* at Fatehgarh station that here in this strange out-of-the-world spot I was to meet my fate!

It was, however, a lovely place seen in the golden light of an Indian autumn, with all its luxuriant vegetation freshened by the rains. Fatehgarh had once been a big cantonment and had figured tragically in the Indian Mutiny; the K.'s house was set a little way out of the city on the green banks of the Ganges in a half-wild garden surrounded by seas of tamarisk jungle.

"There is really nobody to ask to meet you," Mrs. K. said regretfully, "except Arthur Webster, the D.S.P. (District Superintendant of Police). He is one of the best riders in the United Provinces."

Two years earlier I had had my hand told by Mrs. Robinson, the famous Bond Street palmist. "You will go on a long journey soon," she said, "and on the other side of the water you will meet a man, not a soldier, but in Government service, with hair going grey at the sides. His name will be Arthur and something beginning with an M. He is the man you will marry, and be very happy."

Not a word of this recurred to me when Arthur Webster, D.S.P. of Fatehgarh, with thick fair hair prematurely grey at the sides—for he was only 37—came to dine with us. It was only long afterwards that I remembered this curious prophecy which I had written down at the time and was to be so exactly fulfilled, except for the M, which is, after all, only a W upside down!

A few days later we went to tea with Arthur Webster in his bungalow, a delightful thatched house surrounded by the English garden he had made, its smooth lawns shaded by old *mohr* trees and borders of sweet peas, stocks, larkspur, tall sunflowers and phloxes. As we drove up to the door, several dogs were sunning themselves on the steps, and a three-months-old foal was peacefully cropping the carnations by the door.

Beyond the house were the public gardens Arthur Webster had transformed from a wilderness into a small park with good grass tennis courts and masses of flowers, for he had a passion for flowers and wherever he went throughout his life his first thought was to make a garden.

Three weeks later we were engaged! Emerson had been right again: "When I come to my own we shall both know it!"

Those were wonderful days that followed—long drives through the scented Indian twilight behind Arthur's tandem which he drove as skilfully as he rode his perfectly trained polo-ponies, rides along the river banks, camping-out expeditions in the jungle, all in the soft warmth of an Indian autumn.

These patriarchal journeys about the district filled me with delight; early in the morning our tents would be struck and we would set off on an elephant or on ponies across country, arriving in the evening to find a fresh camp arranged exactly like the one we had left. As we reached the spot the grunting of camels, bleating of goats, mooing of cows, cackling of hens, announced the presence of the whole farmyard that travelled with us, for in those spacious days the progress of a police officer through his district had not become the signal for outrages but, on the contrary, for manifestations of loyalty on the part of the *zemindars*. This, of course, depended on the character of the officer in question; and as Arthur Webster was always careful to see that his camp followers did not prey on the villagers, and paid their just dues to the *bunnias* before leaving, he enjoyed the widest popularity.

I remember one glorious day we spent drifting down the Ganges in a country boat, shooting at the crocodiles that swarmed along the banks. It was my first experience of "bagging" anything, for I have an instinctive horror of taking life. I cannot conceive how people can wish to kill mild, kind giraffes or harmless deer. When riding through the Indian jungle we sighted a herd of black buck in the distance at which most *shikaris* would have loved to fire, we both wondered what object there could be in bringing down that splendid antlered stag marching majestically at the head of his little flock of wives and in leaving a forlorn procession of gentle widows to mourn his loss.

Beasts of prey, however, are a different matter. Arthur Webster, who was a brilliant shot, had killed tigers and hundreds of leopards during his twenty years in India, and had one of these crossed our path, I could have pulled the trigger of my gun most joyfully. As it was, my bag consisted of one solitary "mugger", the only animal I have ever killed; for when I thought of the wretched Indian women dragged down by those cruel jaws whilst washing their clothes on the river banks I could feel no compunction at having removed one such monster from the world.

After we had pitched our camp by the Ganges that evening we received a visit from the Rajah of Tirwa, who had ridden out to greet the "Captain Sahib" and was most anxious to amuse us in every possible way. He began by showing us his watch and making it strike, with which we were duly impressed and delighted. Then he said, "Now you must see my palfrey jump and my *shikari* shoot fish." Shooting fish certain promised to be a most novel form of entertainment, and full of curiosity we descended to the bank of the Ganges, where the *shikari*, an aged man with a long grey beard, awaited us. After scattering marigolds on the surface of the river, presumably to propitiate the gods, the old man produced a fishing-rod and began to angle in the usual manner. We then discovered that the Rajah's knowledge of English being somewhat limited, he had not realized the difference between the words "shoot" and "catch", and all the entertainment he had proposed to offer us was to see his *shikari* catching fish with a rod.

The spectacle of the jumping palfrey proved hardly more exhilarating, for the fat white beast could do nothing more than tumble across a privet hedge. The Rajah then invited me to ride it, and not wishing to offend him, I mounted its back and started off. The sensation was extraordinary; I had not felt anything like it since the day in Egypt when I had been bolted with on a camel from Mena House to the pyramid of Menkere, for the palfrey had apparently been taught no paces, and shook me up and down until I felt that every bone in my body would be dislocated. However, the Rajah meant it kindly, so thanking him for his hospitality we bade him farewell.

Arthur Webster had been much amused by Lord Curzon's attitude towards the Indian mind. He was one of the few men not overawed by the Viceroy's magnificence, and so got on with him quite easily. He had been appointed to police the Viceregal camp at the recent Delhi Durbar, and later to go out tiger shooting with His Excellency. Whilst they were going through a very wild bit of jungle on an elephant, Lord Curzon noticed several Indians squatting on their heels beside their path who merely stared up at the Viceregal procession without moving. Thereupon he turned to Arthur and said solemnly, "Webster, have these men no more respect for the person of the representative of their Sovereign than to remain seated in his presence?" Arthur had only to utter a brief word of command for the men to spring startled to their feet; but what, he said afterwards in telling the story, could these jungle men know about "their Sovereign"? They had never heard of King or Viceroy, they had probably never even seen an elephant before, and were merely overcome with amazement at the unwonted spectacle.

The police officer, more perhaps than any other official, learnt to understand the Indian and consequently to appreciate his good qualities; so in time he became in reality what the natives were wont to call him—"the protector of the poor". During the whole of the twenty years he had spent in India, Arthur told me that he had never once heard a murmur against the British Raj—on the contrary, the people would come to him and say, "Sahib, see that my case is tried by a Sahib and not by a *kala admi*!" (black man). Such was the confidence they then felt in British justice.

Arthur had come out to India when very young; he had wanted desperately to go into the army, but his father, then a Commissioner in the United Provinces, had insisted on his trying for the police. It went against the grain, for he had no taste for the detection of crime—"My sympathies," he would say, "were so often with the criminal." But he set to work, passed his examinations and when barely eighteen was already in charge of a district fifty miles from any other European. At that age and in the heat of the plains he had sometimes found it difficult not to show irritability, but he never forgot the reproof administered to him by his old bearer, Karim Buksh, whom one day he had rated for some oversight: "*Sahib, hum log bhi admi hain!*" (Sahib, we people, too, are men.) The quiet dignity of this reminder made a deep impression on him, and after that he never failed to show his men sympathy and consideration, whether they were Indian or British. He liked to remember how, when he was still very young, his old Scottish Police Inspector had said to him on retiring, "You have always treated me more like an old gentleman than a subordinate."

But all the summers in the Plains had done their work, and repeated attacks of malaria were undermining his health. "Get him out of the country as soon as possible," his doctor said to me. I had read Kipling's *The End of the Passage*, so could imagine what all those hot weathers must have meant.

Accordingly we decided to return to England and find employment for him there; it was arranged that I should go on ahead, and Arthur should follow by a later boat, when he had settled his affairs in India. So we parted, and I set sail from Bombay.

When the D.S.P. of Fatehgarh announced to the Police of his district that he was going back to Belaiti to be married to the Miss Sahib who had gone home, and that he would probably never return, there was great lamentation, and on the fateful day of his departure sixty bearded Sikhs stood weeping on the platform as his train moved out of the station. For years afterwards they continued to write to him, letters ending with some such assurance as "Praying every evening that you may be made a Lord". One, breaking into verse, wrote:

"How sweet the hours we once enjoyed
How dear their memory still
But thou hast left an aching void
The world can never fill."

At the last moment of leaving Fatehgarh a contretemps occurred which might have proved fatal. One of his men was taken ill with plague and asked for him. It was his duty to go and he went, but, knowing the frightful danger of infection and being possessed of too vivid an imagination, by the time he reached Bombay he had developed symptoms of plague, even to swellings under the arms. "I suppose I'm in for it?" he said to the medical officer in charge of embarkation; but the officer knew better. "Not a bit of it, me boy! Go on board, you'll be all right!" And, sure enough, once at sea the swellings subsided and every symptom of plague vanished.

I found the family in a great state of flutter over my engagement, my mother in particular was agitated because I had told her nothing of Arthur's ancestry. For although she was the last person in the world to care for rank, she had a great regard for breeding. I ought, of course, to have mentioned that Arthur's father belonged to a good old Forfarshire family, that his mother was one of the well-known Templers in Devonshire; but I had merely written about him himself, his tastes, his character, and enclosed his photograph, which was what seemed to me to matter. I might have added that his love of animals endeared him to me further and that he had a glorious sense of humour, the best antidote to the small disagreements that are bound to arise in the happiest married life; a serious quarrel is impossible if one can laugh at the same things together.

But my mother was alarmed and wrote indignantly. I replied with warmth, protesting at her want of confidence in my judgment; so Aunt Carrie had to intervene.

> "Of course" (she wrote from Cannes, where she was staying with my mother), "it did seem very odd that you told none of us anything about his people. I know how curiously unwordly and unsnobbish and absent-minded you are, but even allowing for all that, one would think you naturally would have told us who he was!"

However, all was well in the end. Arthur arrived home safely and was heartily approved by the whole family.

We were married at St. Saviour's, Walton Street, on May 14, 1904. Edwyn, who was to give me away, actually remembered the date in time and arrived, not too unpunctually, at Hans Mansions to take me to the church close by. My nieces, Violet and Rosie Sulivan, Hubert's daughter Dolly,[1] little Nancy, daughter of my dear cousin Elsie Blomfield, and Arthur's niece Lorna Hewett were bridesmaids. Millie's charming little boy, Ashley Hart Dyke, was page. His mother had given him strict injunctions to be very good during the ceremony, and he had answered that he would, if he could be given a little sister as a reward. Millie said she could not promise that, to which he replied that a wheelbarrow would do instead. This was duly presented to him, for he behaved perfectly, holding up the train of my white satin dress from Paris, copied from a picture of Madame de Pompadour. I carried a sheaf of white lilac, and every 14th of May in the years that followed, white lilac had to appear on our dinner-table.

At the church door a charming sight awaited us. Eléonore, who came to dress me for my wedding, had given Zola a bath and parted his hair from the tip of his nose to his tail, completing this exquisite toilette with a bow of white satin ribbon and sprig of orange-blossom attached to his collar. Here they were outside the church, Eléonore, with Zola in her arms, showering us with silver horse-shoes and Zola barking with excitement.

That was the beginning of thirty-eight years of perfect peace and happiness.

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[1] Now Mrs. Noel Bligh.

CHAPTER XXIV

TEN PEACEFUL YEARS

IT has been said that a happy woman has no history. Certainly those ten years of my life, from 1904 to 1914, offer little of public interest. We lived peacefully in the country, first at Banstead, then a rural village untouched by the growing fringe of Suburbia that encircled London, later in the Surrey hills between Witley and Chiddingfold.

The London doctors having confirmed the verdict of those in India on my husband's inability to stand the climate any longer, he was able to retire on a medical certificate and draw his pension, but unfortunately never entirely recovered his health. So we settled down to gardening and farming, and now, for the first time since leaving Trent, I was able to enjoy country life, for these pursuits gave us both plenty to do. With some fifteen acres of grazing, a farmyard well stocked with cows, pigs, poultry—chickens, ducks and turkeys—a large, productive kitchen-garden and a carpenter's shed in which we turned out lovely garden seats, we were happy from morning till night. One summer during the cook's holiday I took over the dairy and thoroughly enjoyed coming down early in the morning, at 6.30, to take in the milk, skim off the great rolls of yellow cream and churn them into the most delicious butter I have ever tasted. Our herd of Jerseys and shorthorns became quite famous in the neighbourhood, for it was known that we had them regularly tested for tuberculosis, and the villagers poured in to buy our surplus milk.

Our two babies, Marjorie and Rosalind, completed our happiness. Remembering the shadow that the grim side of religion had cast on my childhood, I did not talk to my children about death and the Hereafter. But the conception of a God of Love became very real to them. When some years later they asked me, "What is an atheist?" and I replied, "Someone who does not believe there is a God," they looked at me wonderingly and exclaimed, "Oh, but how *dull* that must be!"

In those halcyon days one circumstance alone disturbed our peace—my husband and I were both frequently ill and no doctor seemed able to diagnose our trouble. So having rung at the doors of Harley Street in vain for years, we decided to go abroad in search of health. My mother had died at Cannes in 1909 so it was no longer to the Riviera that we wended our way but to Switzerland where amidst the snows of Davos my husband regained something of his former strength though to the end of his life he remained extremely delicate.

Meanwhile I suffered from the same attacks of pain which had spoilt the best years of my youth and were now found to be colitis for which the London specialists could find no cure. Dr. Axel Munthe in his *Story of San*

Michele makes light of this complaint, treating it as a nervous affection of the rich and idle. Fortunately there was one man who knew better—Dr. Combe of Lausanne. He knew, of course, that a nervous form of colitis existed which he differentiated from the microbial form of the disease, and by studying the ravages of the *bacillus coli* under the microscope had devised a scientific diet system to arrest them. So, having heard of the wonderful cures he had effected, we set off whilst in Switzerland for Lausanne to consult Combe.

We found a man of about fifty with greying hair and a thin lined countenance, already suffering from the strain of overwork. "Yours is a bad case," he said at the end of our interview, "but I can cure you if you will promise to obey my orders to the letter for two years, never breaking the rules for a single meal." I promised and kept my word. In eighteen months I was completely cured. Moreover, I was only one of the many hundred patients of Dr. Combe who filled three hotels and a clinic, blessing the day they came to him.

Working in conjunction with Combe was Vittoz, the well-known psychiatrist whose system was, I believe, founded on that of Dr. Paul Dubois of Berne, author of the treatise *l'Education de Soi-même*. Briefly it consisted in restoring the balance between the conscious and the sub-conscious brain. In cases of *déséquilibrement* the sufferer allows himself to be dominated by the latter, dwelling on imaginary ills, haunted by some disturbing memory, hag-ridden by some fear. Vittoz, by judicious questioning, would elicit the nature of the trouble and then proceed to what he called "breaking the *cliché* on the brain". All this might be described as psycho-analysis, the term said to have been invented by Freud, but which differed fundamentally from the Freudian system. Vittoz did not believe in dredging in the sub-consciousness for long forgotten memories better left dormant and liable to create a complex—only another word for *cliché*—but in finding out the active cause of mental distress. The cure consisted in strengthening the conscious brain by mental exercises, by fixing the attention on concrete objects, teaching the patient to use his five senses, and to use his hands either by manual labour or in sports and pastimes.

Vittoz again did not believe in giving play to undesirable impulses for fear of producing "inhibitions"; on the contrary he taught his patients to exercise self-control.

In *The Green Carnation* Mr. Robert Hichens makes one of his characters say: "If we check our tendencies, we drive the disease inwards; but if we sin, we throw it off. Suppressed measles are far more dangerous than measles that come out." How little did we dream when we laughed over this theory in the "Naughty 'Nineties" that it would ever be made into a scientific system seriously accepted by members of the medical profession! It was certainly rejected by Vittoz. Still less did he encourage morbid pre-occupation with sex; his system was essentially sane and healthy.

The foregoing résumé of Vittoz's system is perhaps unscientifically expressed being only taken from the conversation I had with him in 1911. For whilst at Ouchy doing the Combe cure I became so interested in some of his patients that I asked him for an appointment so as to hear about his theory from himself. I was glad I had done so for in after years I saw something of the harmful effects of the Freudian variety of psycho-analysis and my experience of Vittoz's methods enabled me on at least one occasion to direct a sufferer to the curative form of that science.

A woman I had only met once came from a distance to see me and when I had begun to wonder what was the reason for this visit, she said: "I have come to see you because I felt you would help me. For some time I have been having attacks of acute melancholy and I am afraid I am going out of my mind. What do you advise me to do?"

I said, "Go at once to Lausanne and consult Vittoz."

She took my advice and not only recovered her complete mental balance but proved so apt a subject that she was able, under Vittoz's direction, to treat some of his patients successfully.

Combe and Vittoz are both dead now, but I believe their systems are still being carried on at Lausanne. I do not know whether anything is being done on the same lines in England.

With health restored the urge to write returned to me. During the past few years my husband and children, gardening, farming and such desultory hobbies as flower painting and photography, had absorbed all the energy I had to spare. But now once more the craving which, from the age of seven, had possessed me returned with force and I embarked on a play which, through a theatrical agent, was finally sent to George Alexander to read. For weeks I waited in trepidation to hear his verdict; at one moment my hopes were raised sky high for I was told that although it was one of 500 submitted for his consideration, he was giving it a second reading. In the end it was returned, but nothing daunted I set to work again.

This time it was on an idea which I had often discussed with Mary Davies, with whom I still kept constantly in touch. Long years before we had both longed for work; now we had both found it. For Mary, whilst in India, always intent on devoting herself to some cause, had set herself to study the plague under a doctor who encouraged her talent for scientific research and now at the Pasteur Institute in Paris was training to become a professional bacteriologist. With her quick sympathy and receptive mind she entered eagerly into my scheme for a novel which was to be a picture of Victorian society as we had both seen it and to be called *The Sheep Track.*

Most authors have, I imagine, drawn on their own lives for their plots and characters and this was to be no exception to the rule. It was, in fact, frankly a *roman à clef,* many of the incidents recounted had really taken place and the people described really existed.

At that date of 1913 this was still possible without the risk of legal proceedings, for the paralysing regulation which now demands that every novel should be prefaced with the words "the characters in this book are entirely imaginary and have no relation to any living person", had not yet been introduced. Had this rule always been in force I wonder how many of the great novels of the past could have been published, certainly not *David Copperfield*, *Villette*, most of Thackeray's or in our day own such brilliant satires as *Dodo* or *The Londoners* and many others. Indeed, the main interest of the classics of fiction lies in the fact that they were drawn from life and present pictures of the times. Provided that "nothing is set down in malice" it seems a thousand pities that this practice should have been discontinued.

At present it is up to anyone out for money to sue an author for libel on the strength of a fancied resemblance to the plaintiff's character or circumstances, although nothing damaging to his reputation may have been said about either. The haunting fear of libel intimidates publishers and inevitably cramps the style of novelists, hence perhaps the decline in life-like character drawing in works of fiction during the past twenty years.

The Sheep Track suffered from no restrictions of this kind and when it was finished I cast about me for a publisher. I was fortunately given an introduction to John Murray, so one morning, armed with the typescript, I made my way to Albemarle Street and was ushered into the presence of Mr. Murray's son, now Colonel Sir John Murray, who received me very kindly and promised to give the book his early consideration.

With what renewed trepidation did I pass the next ten days, expecting by every post to see the parcel returned to me with "Mr. Murray's polite regrets", etc.! For of course it would be refused! Had not every author, even the greatest, at first met with rebuffs, wandered from publisher to publisher before at last finding the one who dared to back the maiden effort?

I have often thought how through mere errors of judgment many great books must have been lost to the world. Novels which would have stood on our bookshelves next to *Vanity Fair* and *Pride and Prejudice* may, just because they did not happen to hit the fancy of a publisher's reader, have ended their existence in the waste-paper basket. When one thinks of Charlotte Brontë weeping silent tears behind the pages of the *Quarterly* with its cruel *critique* of *Jane Eyre*, which, if the publisher had been of the same mind as the reviewer, would doubtless never have seen the light, one realizes on what slender chances of selection a work of genius may depend. Even Shakespeare, we know, was not appreciated in his lifetime.

How could I hope to fare better than such illustrious predecessors setting forth on the thorny path of literature? Of course my book would be returned, and by way of nerving myself to bear the shock I made out a list of publishers to whom it should next be sent for no doubt it would go the round of them all before—if ever it found acceptance.

Then one morning I knew that the blow had fallen, my parcel was returned to me. Sadly I cut the string, yes, here was my manuscript but—oh! joy! with it a letter from Mr. Murray, junior, saying they had no hesitation in accepting it and were returning it only for a few cuts to be made. So my first book had been taken by the first publisher who had seen it —it seemed unbelievable!

That day I walked on air. At last, at last, the dreams of my whole life had been realized, the craving to write was no longer to vent itself in futile effort, the magic world of literary *work* was open to me. I can honestly say ambition played no part in my thoughts, I had never said to myself like Marie Baschkirtseff, "I will be famous!" It was the act of writing that I had always loved just as the musician loves to draw his bow across the strings of his violin, whether an audience is there to applaud him or only the four walls to hear his playing. I loved, as I still love, the tools of the writer's trade, pens, pencils, paper, the actual formation of the letters for I could never compose on a typewriter!—and then the joy of achievement, of feeling the current of thought pass from brain to hand, the rare satisfaction of finding the right word to express the idea, of seeing just what one had wanted to convey set down in black and white.

All this I had known in the past when filling copybooks with childish writing, when scribbling on my desk at college or in my cabin on board ship, for writing was as necessary to me as walking to a hiker, and if no book of mine had ever been accepted I should still have gone on writing, adding to the pile of manuscripts that filled the drawers of my table which I had not felt worthy to be submitted for publication. But with all this there had been the sense of futility, the feeling that I was wasting time on work that led to nothing, now at last these misgivings were dispelled and I could go on writing with a clear conscience.

The Sheep Track came out on February 12, 1914, and by July had gone into its fourth edition. The reviewers on the whole were kind, only a few radical papers were, for some reason, hostile, which seemed unaccountable for the book touched on no political questions and tilted against the conventions of a society which left-wingers of that date professed to despise. One in the *Daily News* even referred to it as an example of "writing badly"; the *Herald* of New York, however, said, it is "so well written that it is quite possible that some author of established reputation has chosen to begin again under a *nom de plume*".

It seemed indeed that I had "arrived", literary agents wrote asking to be allowed to deal with my future work, requests for short stories came in, an American magazine offered as much as £40 a story. But I have never been able to write to order and already my mind was at work on quite a different line, not fiction this time but a romance of real life.

CHAPTER XXV

THE CHEVALIER DE BOUFFLERS

FOUR years before the publication of *The Sheep Track*, whilst we were wintering in Switzerland, I had gone down to the library of the hotel to look for some amusing book. Taking one after another out of the shelves I came upon a volume of historical essays by Imbert de Saint-Amand entitled *Portraits de Grandes Dames*. I turned over the pages and found familiar names—Madame du Deffand, Madame de Montespan, Louise de la Vallière, yes, I had read about them all. But who was the Comtesse de Sabran? I had never heard of her, nor of the Chevalier de Boufflers who appeared to be her lover. I began to read extracts from their letters and as I went on an extraordinary sensation came over me, the feeling that I had read them all before, that I knew the writers and had somehow been closely connected with them in the past.

I shall never forget that moment in the drab library of the Swiss hotel, when, looking out of the windows at the snow falling slowly over the grey mountains, I saw another world opening out before me, the brilliant world of eighteenth-century France.

When I returned to London I went to Langlois, the French bookseller in South Audley Street, and asked the proprietor for any books he might have about the Chevalier de Boufflers and Madame de Sabran. "*Ma foi, je n'en sais rien*," he answered, "*mais je m'informerai.*"

A few weeks later a large parcel arrived from Langlois, it was the voluminous *Correspondance de la Comtesse de Sabran et du Chevalier de Boufflers* published in 1875, long since out of print and forgotten. Now that I could read these wonderful love letters in their entirety the sense of familiarity grew stronger still, yes, indeed I had known these people, theirs was the world I had once lived in, I could see them, hear their voices with an almost painful pang of recollection.

Now all the memories of my childhood came flooding back to me, the sense of apartness from the family circle in the old days at Trent, that first journey to Paris, the arrival at the Gare du Nord, I could well remember being put into the omnibus and looking up with wonder at the flaring arc-lights. Then after that many visits to Paris—Paris which was said to be so gay but to me was always a place of ghosts where once terrible things had happened. In vain I had been taken to the Grand Magasin du Louvre and given a toy balloon with a pheasant painted on it, in vain I had been led through the gardens of the Tuileries on which the windows of the Hotel Meurice where we stayed looked out, the sense of oppression never left me. Walking through the streets, especially in the Rue Saint-Honoré, I would say to myself, "I have seen these streets running with blood."

In those days I knew nothing about the French Revolution, even as I grew older I took no particular interest in it, still at college I never cared for history. It was only long afterwards when reading the correspondence of the Chevalier de Boufflers and Madame de Sabran that the curious sense of familiarity crept over me, these were people I had known and talked with, I was transported back to that world of eighteenth-century France, I could hear the music to which they danced, smell the scents they used, move amongst the powdered heads, the brocaded coats in the salons of Paris.

Above all it was in the French Revolution that I found myself! Every moment of that terrific drama was real to me. The Reign of Terror! Now I understood the "haunted" feeling that ever since I was five years old had come over me in the Rue Saint-Honoré, that Via Dolorosa of the Terror along which the tumbrils moved in slow procession from the Palais de Justice to the Place de la Revolution, now the Place de la Concorde.

What is the explanation? That I had lived before during that frightful epoch? I admit that ever since the days when my cousin Merty Moore had talked to me of Theosophy, and still more since I had travelled in Buddhist countries, I had always been drawn to the doctrine of reincarnation. I do not say I believe in it for on such a subject who can dogmatize? One can but speculate, and to me it seems the most probable clue to the mystery of those vague memories with which some of us are born or again of what are known as "infant prodigies", children like Mozart who knew more of music than he could possibly have learnt in this present life. I have referred earlier in this book to the curious attraction monasteries seemed to hold for my ultra Protestant mother, the monastic seclusion in which she wrapped herself—had she been an abbess in a former incarnation? but a more remarkable case was that of my friend Rosamund Fox-Strangways who, as a girl of seventeen, went to Palestine to stay with her sister Connie Newton. Rosamund had never been in the East before, or studied it, although she had always "had a feeling for it". Immediately after her arrival in Jerusalem she was standing on the verandah with her sister and her friends when she noticed a woman coming up the garden path carrying a bundle. She was vaguely wondering what it contained when the people standing round her exclaimed, "We did not know you spoke Arabic!"

"I don't," Rosamund answered, "I don't know a word of it."

"But you asked that woman in perfect Arabic what she was carrying!"

Moreover, the woman had answered her in Arabic and she had understood. But she never spoke it again.

Many great minds outside the ranks of Buddhists or Theosophists have unconsciously inclined to the theory of reincarnation, Wordsworth was no professed believer in it when in an inspired moment he wrote his immortal poem—perhaps the finest in the English language—and seemed to have obtained a sudden glimpse of pre-natal existence.

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting
The soul that rises with us, thy life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting
And cometh from afar."

Reincarnation appeals to the reason and to our sense of the divine ordering of human life because it is the one theory that accounts for its apparent injustices and the inequalities of fortune with which many people are born. I have never been able to see that it is in conflict with the Christian faith. When His disciples said to Christ, "Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" our Lord did not reply, "How could he have sinned before he was born?" but only answered, "Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

But whilst inclining to the doctrine of reincarnation I see that there may be alternative theories to account for pre-natal impressions, notably *ancestral memory*, that is to say memories handed down from some possibly distant forbear, or again these impressions may be conveyed from the minds of those who have passed over, *spirit presences* around us, or even of those still living on this earth.

Telepathy, that is to say thought transference, is a subject of which we know very little at present. But just as the air is filled with waves of sound which, until the invention of wireless telegraphy, we were unable to hear, I believe that it is full of thought waves—"thought vortices", to use the term of the Atomic School of Greek philosophers—which one day we may learn to capture. Most people are aware of the "atmosphere" in certain houses, how in one there is a feeling of peace and happiness whilst another breathes unrest, legacies left behind by those who lived in them before. When these have materialized they have been known as ghosts.

But what are ghosts? To say one does not believe in them is merely absurd in view of the countless well-authenticated cases of apparitions and haunted houses. I have known too many people who have seen them to doubt the reality of these visions, people who were moreover of the rather matter-of-fact and unimaginative type. Miss Jourdain, one of the two authors of *An Adventure* at the Petit Trianon, who once came to see me, struck me as a particularly sane and well-balanced personality. Perhaps the most convincing story of this kind was told me by my husband's niece, Lorna Hewett, who was certainly not given to romancing.

When her father, Sir John Prescott Hewett, was Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces, living in Government House at Lucknow, Lorna, then a girl of about eighteen, having been taken ill, went to bed early. She was still awake when she heard a sound and, looking round, saw a man in a blue coat with brass buttons and white nankeen breeches, coming into the room from the verandah. She made an exclamation of surprise, whereat he murmured something and went out again. The next two nights the same thing occurred but the last time he came into the room, threw himself into a chair exclaiming, "There, I've brought it back!" and deposited something on the floor with a thud. Then he vanished.

A few weeks later Lorna was taken into the mess of Hodson's Horse to which Jack Atkinson, the man she eventually married, belonged, and there on the wall was a picture of the man she had seen in her vision. It was Hodson himself who, she now heard, had died in Government House on one of the three nights when he had appeared to her and who had been accused of looting, the thud being apparently the bag of loot he was returning.

If imagination could make one see a ghost I should certainly have seen one for I have always been so afraid of them that I could never sleep well in an old house and nothing would induce me to stay in a haunted one. But though I have never for a moment imagined that I saw or heard anything I have *felt* something in the atmosphere of a house very vividly. Once it was in London when we took a house for the winter and my bedroom, a very pleasant one, somehow "gave me the creeps". We heard afterwards that the house was known to be haunted, two people having committed suicide there.

Are ghosts to be explained by this phenomenon of thoughts and sensations lingering in the air or are they really, as it has hitherto been supposed, the spirits of the departed? What we need is a body of serious scientists to examine all forms of psychic phenomena in the same spirit as those who discovered radium or wireless telegraphy.

I believe that the great discoveries of the future will relate to communication with (*a*) other worlds and (*b*) "the other world", that is to say between the earth and other planets and between the visible and invisible worlds in which we live. Some day, perhaps, we shall capture the thought-waves in the air just as today we capture sound waves in a radio set. Then we shall not only be able to tune in from one and to another but to extract thoughts and sensations latent in the air which have hitherto only rarely or spasmodically made themselves felt.

So to return to my own story. The feeling of familiarity which came over me when studying the Chevalier de Boufflers and Madame de Sabran might be explained by the theory of reincarnation or of ancestral memory. I have no French ancestors, but my mother may have read about these people just before my birth or my grandfather, Philip Nicholas Shuttleworth, may have been impressed by memories of the French Revolution, still fresh in people's minds when he visited Paris with Lord Holland in 1815, although his letters written from there at the time convey no such impression. Or again I may have received thought-waves from those who had passed over or others still on earth.

Sceptics or materialists will say that all this is nonsense, that the simple explanation is that I was interested in the French Revolution and gave rein to my imagination. But I am deeply interested in the Elizabethan era, the mystery of Shakespeare fascinates me, I know of no subject in which I could become more engrossed, yet never for a moment have I felt that I lived at that period, to me it is merely history, wonderful, absorbing history but with which I have no personal connection and of which I know no more than I have read in books. But in eighteenth-century France, and particularly in the Revolution, I am at home. I know what it *felt* like to live in those days.

So I resolved to reconstruct the story of the Chevalier de Boufflers and Madame de Sabran which at the outset had seemed to me so strangely familiar, and which had never been related in its entirety even in France. It was an enthralling task. I remember being told after my book came out and was being discussed in a London drawing-room, that a Frenchman present whose grandfather had been guillotined, remarked, "No one could have written that book who had not lived at the Court of Marie Antoinette."

I was very happy writing it. In our lovely Surrey home, looking out over the Weald of Sussex, all the world seemed at peace and I could work without distractions. How strange amidst the settled calm of twentieth-century England to look back upon the stormy period of the French Revolution! The contrast provided just the stimulus needed to prevent country life degenerating into mental stagnation.

Then dawned the memorable August day when we had motored down to Goodwood for the races, and as we were standing by the course a friend came up to us and said abruptly:

"So in a few days we shall be at war with Germany!"

The news fell on our ears like a thunder-clap. Wrapped in the calm of the long summer days, far removed from political circles, we had paid no heed to public events, had felt no repercussion of the tremors that were shaking the soil of Europe at that moment, we had only vaguely realized that Germany was a growing power to be reckoned with one day. And now the hour had struck. Three days later war was declared. It was the end of an epoch, the peaceful England we had always known was to be no more.

CHAPTER XXVI

FRANCE IN WAR-TIME

ALTHOUGH the actual outbreak of war came to us as a shock we never for a moment doubted its inevitability. Brought up on the memories of 1870 I entertained no illusions on the nature of Prussian militarism. How often with our little French friends at Cannes did we listen to stories of their summers in Alsace where little André playing in the garden wearing a pinafore with a *tricouleur* stripe would have it torn off him by German policemen who had spotted that forbidden design from afar. And we would sit round singing:

"*Vous avez pris l'Alsace et la Lorraine,*
Mais notre coeur vous ne l'aurez jamais,
Vous avez pu germaniser la plaine,
Mais malgré tout nous resterons français!"

Passing through Paris every year I would gaze sadly at the statue of Alsace draped in mourning veils and wreaths in the Place de la Concorde and long for the day when these funeral trappings would be triumphantly removed.

My own experience in Germany had intensified these feelings, and neither my husband nor I could understand how our country could remain deaf to Lord Roberts's courageous warnings of the German menace. We trembled lest England should fail at the last moment to stand by France, and all through that fateful Sunday of August 3, 1914, we waited in agonized suspense for news. The terrible but necessary decision of the following day relieved our minds but filled our hearts with grief. The die was cast. *Der Tag* had come at last.

For with the outbreak of war one's whole outlook on life was changed, things that had meant so much had lost their value, nothing seemed to matter but the fact that Lord Roberts's prophecy had come true and the German tiger had sprung as it had openly threatened for so many years to do when the propitious moment came.

Outwardly, however, life went on much as usual. It was strange during the Second World War to remember how little in comparison the First one affected the civilian population. There was so far no danger of air raids except by infrequent Zeppelins, there was at first no rationing for there was no shortage of food or of any of the commodities of life.

So after a while I settled down seriously to finish the story of the Chevalier de Boufflers. But for this purpose it was advisable to collect some fresh material, if possible unpublished documents. Where were these to be found?

Only in Paris. So although the war was raging I resolved to try to get there. It was the autumn of 1915, and although the German armies were pouring into France civilian travel had not been stopped, but the passage across the Channel was deflected from Folkestone to Dieppe, a matter of eight hours sitting on my hat-box, the only perch available. The sailors breathed a sigh of relief as we steamed into port without being torpedoed.

On shore a long queue formed for the inspection of passports, my first experience of this formality. The crowd was swelled by a number of Belgian refugees fleeing from the advancing German hordes and a murmur of sympathy went up at their forlorn aspect. "*Ah, les braves Belges! Les sales Boches!*" But the voice of a young girl of about fifteen with a pigtail stemmed the chorus: "But no, ours was the fault, because we were not prepared for war!" A singularly bright child, I thought.

My first check occurred with the passport officials who put me through a searching enquiry:

"Why do you wish to go to Paris?"

"To find some historical documents."

"For what purpose?"

"To write a book."

"On what subject?"

"Oh, around the French Revolution."

"*Comment? Encore un livre sur la Révolution?*" and a groan went up from them all. However in the end they let me through.

Paris, when at last I arrived there, seemed to me a city of the dead. The great *poussée* at Loos was in progress and the deepest anxiety prevailed. Fortunately for me the prestige of England stood high at that moment. "*A une Anglaise je ne puis rien refuser!*" said the official at the Conciergerie when I begged for permission to go round the prison on an off day so as to be able to re-constitute the scenes of the Terror in telling the story of Delphine de Custine. It was not till some years later that I was able to penetrate into the lair of Fouquier-Tinville in the Tour d'Argent where Jerôme abstracted Delphine's dossier from beneath the fatal pile of death sentences.

The great object of my journey was, however, to get at the documents I needed which meant a visit to Plon-Nourrit, the publishers of the famous *Correspondance* in 1875. Monsieur Duivon, the manager, was cordial and said that all the documents hitherto unpublished were in the possession of Monsieur Gaston Maugras, author of the brilliant series *La Cour de Lunéville* ending with *La Marquise de Boufflers et son fils le Chevalier*, but he added: "Will he show them to you?" That seemed doubtful. However, Monsieur Duivon was willing to give me a letter of introduction to the eminent historian.

Armed with this I made my way to Monsieur Maugras' charming *appartement* in the Champs Élysées. His manner at first was somewhat dry. "I regret that I have nothing to communicate. Such documents as I possess I propose to publish myself."

"*Mais voyons, monsieur,*" I began persuasively, "would you not give me advice, you who are so *documenté* on the eighteenth century?"

We went on talking and suddenly I noticed the photograph of a familiar face on his table.

"Surely," I said, "that is Dr. Combe?"

"*Mais oui, c'est bien Combe, c'est mon ami, c'est mon sauveur!*" he cried rapturously. So it appeared that here was yet another case of Dr. Combe's almost miraculous treatment of colitis.

"Come back on Thursday," Monsieur Maugras went on, "and we will lunch together *à la régime*!"

So on the appointed day I returned to find him in the kindliest of moods.

"I have decided to show you the documents," he said, "and to let you make use of them."

Then we sat down to a wonderful *déjeuner* with chicken cooked as only the French can cook it and *maccaroni à la Combe.*

I told Monsieur Maugras that I wanted now to go and look at the house of Madame de Sabran in the Rue du Faubourg Saint Honoré.

"*Mais c'est depuis longtemps démolie,*" he answered. A block of flats now occupied its site.

However, I determined to visit the spot so as to be able to visualize her life on the eve of the Revolution. Luckily I had a letter of introduction to our ambassador, Lord Bertie, from his brother who lived near us in Surrey, and with this I made my way to the British Embassy, once the Hotel de Charost, a few doors off the house of Madame de Sabran.

Lord Bertie, a most charming and interesting personality, received me very kindly and showed me all over the beautiful old house, he led me up the staircase with its exquisite *rampe* to the bedroom of Pauline Borghese which he had recently occupied himself, but now in war-time it was swathed in dust-sheets which he removed to show me the fine Empire furniture beneath. He even took me up in the lift to a housemaids' bedroom and threw open the shutters so that from the top floor I could gain a glimpse of the view over the Champs Élysées on which I could imagine Madame de Sabran looking out for the last time before her flight from Paris on July 13, 1789, the day before the taking of the Bastille.

But which was her house? As I wandered along the Avenue Gabriel in the Champs Élysées past the high iron *grilles* of the gardens leading down from the glorious hotels of the eighteenth century *noblesse* I wondered whether Monsieur Maugras was right in saying it had been demolished. Peering through the railings one of these seemed to me strangely familiar, a house that appeared to be shut up, with a long stone terrace leading down to a great deserted garden overgrown with weeds and lush, brilliantly green grass beneath the shade of the spreading trees.

Yes, surely that was the garden in which Eléonore had walked on summer mornings long ago, that was the terrace on to which the Chevalier would watch her coming out from her drawing-room windows, that rank grass had once been smooth lawns on which her children played. Going round to the Rue du Faubourg Saint Honoré I looked for the entrance from the street, and found it to be a tall dark red *porte-cochère* with a design of wreaths and cupids at the top. This struck no answering chord, but from the garden side each time I have passed the house since that day the strangest feeling has crept over me, a flood of memory almost painful in its intensity, and I cannot help believing that that indeed was the house of Madame de Sabran.

My journey to Paris in search of fresh material for my book had not been in vain for Monsieur Maugras, true to his promise, with extraordinary kindness, copied out for me in his own hand a number of the unpublished letters he possessed and even posted me two of the originals for reproduction in photostat and these appear on pages 258 and 402 of my book. I had all the pages he had written out for me bound into my copy of *Le Chevalier de Boufflers et la Comtesse de Sabran* by Pierre de Croze, which I hope will eventually find a home in the London Library for the use of future students of the period, for as far as I know Monsieur Maugras, who died some years ago, never published them in France. I sent him, of course, a copy of my book and was delighted to find it met with his warm approval. I had ended it with a sigh for it was a real grief to part from the lovers with whom I had lived for two years, sharing their joys and sorrows, and indeed even moved to tears by the death of Armand de Custine under the Terror.

The Chevalier de Boufflers: a romance of the French Revolution, beautifully produced by John Murray, appeared in March, 1916, and had an excellent press; several reviews, notably in the *Daily Chronicle* and the *Evening Standard*, were extremely appreciative, but I was disappointed to meet with less scholarly criticism than I had expected.

In France I felt that the discovery of so wonderful a romance set in the stirring days of the Revolution would have been dealt with by *savants* who had specialized in the period, and reviewed in well-chosen language commenting on the style of its writing; to British reviewers it was no more than a story to be smiled over as a pleasant bit of light reading. Style, I found, counted for little or nothing, and I remembered how Mr. Arthur Humphreys, the brilliant leading spirit in Hatchard's of that day, had said to me at the outset of my literary career, "Remember, in this country good writing counts for very little!"

It wasthus not until Lord Cromer came out with a splendid page of fine literary criticism in the *Spectator* of August 26, 1916, that I could feel the book had really come into its own. In a letter to my cousin David Bevan, Mr. St. Loe Strachey, editor of the *Spectator*, wrote, "I never heard Cromer more lyrical over a book; he was fascinated by it."

Lord Cromer himself had been so distressed to find that he had referred to me wrongly in his review as Miss Webster, that I was urged to write and tell him that I did not mind. In reply he wrote me a long and most delightful letter which I have always treasured and which spurred me on to further efforts, of which more anon.

Another letter that gave me great pleasure was addressed to my husband by Sir Edward Marshall Hall, the eminent K.C., who said: "Will you forgive me if I venture to offer to your wife through you my sincere congratulations on having written and compiled one of the most delightful books I have ever read? My appreciation is shown in a practical form in that I have bought six copies of *The Chevalier de Boufflers* for Christmas presents."

I was again delighted to read in some war book that my gay Chevalier had cheered many of our wounded officers in French hospitals at the front for that I felt sure he would have loved to do. Boufflers, I had often thought, would have found himself peculiarly at home in England where his sense of humour would have been even better appreciated than in France. The French, in general, and particularly since the Revolution, have found cause for mirth mainly in a derisive vein, making fun of people, especially of men in public life. Boufflers saw the funny side of *things* and gave a whimsical turn to everyday happenings in the good-humoured way that appeals to our less critical temperament. That is perhaps why my story of his life had a success in England, for it has gone into no less than fifteen editions and was still going well thirty years after its first appearance.

I had hoped during my flying visit to Paris in 1915 to see Mary Davies, who had recently created something of a sensation in medical circles. The outbreak of war had opened a fresh field for her activities in scientific research, and she had been taken on as a trained bacteriologist at the American Hospital in Neuilly where she worked under an American, Dr. Taylor.

The Germans, in direct violation of the Hague Convention to which they had subscribed in 1907, had launched the first attack by poison gas to be employed in warfare on April 22, 1915, and terrible cases of gas gangrene poured into the hospital at Neuilly. Dr. Taylor immediately set to work to devise a counter-serum and told Mary that the results of his experiments could best be tested on a healthy subject. Mary thereupon, without telling him of her intention, abstracted a tube of gas gangrene poison from the laboratory and returning to her lodgings injected into her own thigh a sufficient quantity of the poison to kill fifty guinea-pigs. She then rang up Dr. Taylor and invited him to come and try the counter-serum. Frantic with anxiety the doctor, knowing that Mary had risked the loss of her life if not of a limb, rushed round to her *pension* to find her alive but aproaching the crisis to which the injection must lead. Mercifully the counter-serum acted successfully; the crisis passed, Mary was restored to almost complete health, and its efficacy having now been proved the serum could be employed for the victims of gas gangrene in the hospital.

Anxious to congratulate my friend I made my way out to Neuilly only to find that she had just left for England. Her landlady received me with tears in her eyes. "*Oh, Madame, c'est la chose la plus sublime qu'on a fait pendant la guerre! Mon Dieu, quel courage, quel héroisme!*"

It was indeed sublime, but Mary did not think so, to her it would have been only natural to sacrifice her life to save that of a single soldier. Her only thought now was to get on with a further experiment. Wounds, they had found in the laboratory, were almost invariably complicated by a secondary infection owing to the cloth of a soldier's uniform being driven into the wound and setting up a septic centre. If therefore the cloth of uniforms could be not only sterilized but treated in such a manner as to act as antiseptic this further danger would be eliminated. For months Mary worked at experiments along this line and at last succeeded in producing a cloth that resisted all attempts at contamination. But alas! the authorities would take no notice; in vain she interviewed army officers, politicians and other men in public life, in vain she drew out her own savings to finance the venture—for the process was costly—all turned a deaf ear to her pleadings.

When she died twelve years later columns in the Press acclaimed her as a heroine, declaring that she had refused all honours. The truth is that none were offered her, though had they been she would certainly have refused them; what broke her heart was her failure to achieve the purpose for which she would willingly have sacrificed her life. I have stacks of her letters written throughout those years of intensive research in varying moods of buoyant hope and deep discouragement, and through them all the sparkling vein of humour that made her personality unique. One day perhaps her whole story may be told.

CHAPTER XXVII

ENGLAND IN WAR-TIME

THAT journey to France in the midst of the war had shown me that the French were much more alive to the dangers of German espionage than we were in England. The notices in the railway carriages: "*Silence! Les oreilles ennemies écoutent!*" had no parallel in our country where people talked in the most incautious manner, and German tradesmen—hairdressers, bakers, etc.—as well as restaurant keepers were allowed the utmost latitude. Anyone who showed anxiety with regard to this question was derided as a victim of "spy mania" and heavy penalties were inflicted on those who ventured to express suspicions of any particular individual.

Rumours of the kind were however current in the neighbourhood of our house which, overlooking the Weald of Sussex towards Chactonbury Ring, provided a strategic position for enemy agents. Accordingly my husband, on account of his police experience, was asked by the X Office to carry out investigations. This proved a most interesting field of observation—mysterious flashes seen at night, carrier pigeons intercepted and other happenings of a highly suspect nature were duly noted in his reports. Together we traced out on an ordnance map the points at which these phenomena occurred and a curious line of communication could be traced out between Aldershot and the sea.

It was a most exciting experience for Army officers also engaged in the work of contre-espionage called at our house as a point of observation to compare notes with us but too often complained of the hopelessness of their task: "It is no use our reporting anything; we are up against a brick wall."

A most amusing adventure was when one spring evening Mr. William le Queux, the novelist, who had been officially enlisted in the spy hunt, arrived at our door with Lord T., an immense wireless apparatus mounted on a lorry which made a terrific noise coming through the village and a number of naval operators. Wireless was then in its infancy and the apparatus set up in one of our fields was surmounted by a high mast at the foot of which the investigators seated themselves and invited us to join them in their task of listening-in for any German messages that might be passing through the air. At about 11 p.m. they announced that they had been able to contact a German agent and reply to him in German code inviting him to meet them at a certain spot in the woods below the house.

It seemed to us unlikely that any German spies would fall into this trap, however, Mr. le Queux and Lord T. set off hopefully for the *rendez-vous*, having roped in our head gardener, all three armed with revolvers ready to shoot down the unwary Hun at sight. Needless to say they drew a blank and returned chilled at dawn to snatch a few hours' sleep.

Nothing daunted, however, they proposed on the following evening that we should all motor up to the top of Hindhead and experiment with flashlights. Accordingly at midnight we took up our stand beneath the gibbet and signalled across the Devil's Punch Bowl to Aldershot. Again nothing happened, which was not surprising. What was, however, surprising and still more disquieting was that a party of unknown people should be allowed to flash lights with impunity across country. At one moment we hoped that some vigilance was being exercised over activities of this kind, for when we started home we were stopped on our way through Hindhead by a policeman. But it was only to tell us that our tail-light was not in order, merely an offence against motoring regulations which were apparently of greater importance than the safety of the country.

The thinnest excuses were made at the time for the laxity shown to German agents. I remember one German being reported as constantly telephoning to another in a manner that aroused suspicion, but the authorities having tapped his wire assured the informer they were satisfied that the two friends were a perfectly innocent pair of astronomers, only communicating with each other on the movements of the stars. It would be difficult to imagine a simpler method for conveying information about the movements of troops or ships at sea.

The attitude of the general public towards this question was usually one of complacency. "After all what harm are spies doing?" But this contention was not borne out by events. Ships were blown up, even in port,[1] and mysterious accidents occurred from time to time which aroused a certain amount of anxiety and questions were asked in the House of Lords to which no satisfactory replies were made.[2]

Our own experiences left no room for doubt that what came to be called "the Hidden Hand" was at work in our midst. It was not only a matter of espionage but of sedition on the Home Front. Socialists and Pacifists were allowed to preach defeatism and discourage recruiting; people who had openly sympathized with the enemy emerged from the conflict with honours. "I pass in England as a pro-German and as a matter of fact rightly," Lord Haldane was reported as saying after the war had ended. "This feeling for the German people has never altered in me and I have never concealed it."[3] There was no need to conceal it; in that First World War it was patriots who had to show caution in their utterances. That we ever won it was the matter for surprise.

The fact is that we were in no way organized for a conflict so prolonged and so skilfully prepared by underground methods. Food rationing, as I have said, was not introduced until 1917 when England was on the verge of starvation and then very inadequately administered. The winter of 1917 to 1918 was a terrible time. Our men having been called up we had been obliged to leave our house and farm above Chiddingfold and move into two smaller houses, one in London, the other in the village of Brook, near Godalming, where unfortunately we could obtain no pasturage for our herds of cows and were obliged to part with them. Two pints of milk a day for eight people, including two children, and a minute ration of butter or margarine were all that could be procured from the local dairy. At the same time meat was strictly rationed and fish almost unobtainable; I shall never forget my weary trudges through the snow to Godalming only to find the fishmongers' slabs bare, for since petrol was also rationed shopping had to be done on foot.

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[1] The *Princess Irene* in Sheerness Harbour in May, 1915, the *Audacious* blown up by a mine, *Vanguard*, *Bulwark* and *Natal* all mysteriously sunk.

[2] See the Debate on "The Status of Aliens Bill on July 26, 1918.

[3] *Evening News*, December 14, 1923.

In London, where we settled into 84 Cadogan Place which was to be our home for twenty-six years, we fared better. Certain foods were rationed there—meat, butter and sugar in particular—but not in the diminutive quantities doled out in the Second World War. It was still possible to live comfortably and for some people luxuriously, for then, as later, Government regulations were easily avoided by the unpatriotic. My first glimpse of the Black Market was when I descended to our kitchen and found our cook, about whom I had some doubts, surveying a row of succulent joints of meat spread out on the table—sirloins of beef, saddles of mutton, etc., each bearing a label with a name on it.

"What does this mean, Mrs. Smith?" I asked.

"Oh, just a butcher who happens to be a friend of mine," she answered. "He lets me have as much meat as I like. There is no need for you to go short; I can get it for you, too." And she showed me the bill from a butcher of alien extraction with whom she was evidently doing a thriving trade.

I need hardly say that I declined her offer. The incident has always remained in my mind as an instance of the way State distribution of the necessaries of life must operate—the friends of the distributors will always get the lion's share.

The air raids on London began in 1917. One of the first occurred when we were spending a week-end at our country cottage and had left a housemaid alone in Cadogan Place. On our return I said to her:

"I am so sorry you were all by yourself, I'm afraid you must have been frightened."

"Oh, I was, m'm," she replied, looking white and shaken, "terribly frightened!"

"The raid was a bad one?"

"Oh, it wasn't the raid, m'm, that upset me. *There's a mouse in the basement!*"

We adopted a black kitten and all was well after that.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

IN spite of alarms and privations, of alternating moments of hope and fear above all of that most wearing of all human emotions *suspense*, there was a grandeur about the First World War that brought a thrill into life on the Home Front which must still stir the hearts of those who can remember the England of those days. Everyone found work, in the country we had enough to do entertaining the Belgian refugees who, contrary to some people's experience, proved wonderfully appreciative. I have always kept the charming letters they wrote us after the first Christmas tree we had for them at Witley. In London my husband I were both busy at War Supply Depots making things for the wounded, and our children were happy for even air raid nights were largely robbed of their terrors by the fun of feasting in the basement on chocolates and biscuits which in those still spacious days had not been placed on rations.

At the same time I had gone on writing. The success of *The Chevalier de Boufflers* had led me on to a further line of research. For in re-constituting the background of the story during the French Revolution I began to realize how much we had been told about that amazing period was false.

In France the study of the subject had gone through various phases. At the end of the Revolution even the leaders themselves had recognized its failure. Madame Roland in her famous apostrophe from the scaffold: "*O, Liberté, comme on t'a joué!*" Danton crying out in his cell at the Conciergerie: "*Je laisse tout dans un gachis épouvantable: il n'y a pas un qui s'entende en gouvernement!*" reflected the disillusionment to which those who had worked for it were finally led. The revolutionary trilogy was later summed up in the words:

"*Liberté de mal faire*
Égalité de misère
Fraternité de Cain et frère!"

It was not until fresh upheavals were shaking the soil of France that the first Revolution came to be re-habilitated in the interests of contending political parties, the Orléaniste historians Thiers and Mignet paving the way for Louis Philippe, and the panegyrists of the Girondins and Robespierre, Lamartine and Louis Blanc, preparing their own succession to power in the Socialist Revolution of 1848.

But towards the end of the century, and particularly after the Commune of 1871, a new school of historians arose, working on more scientific lines by the publication of contemporary evidence on the Revolution, the records kept at the time and the official documents of the succeeding revolutionary factions. By Taine, Wallon, Campardon, Mortimer-Ternaux, finally by Lenotre, Louis Madelin and that brilliant young writer Augustin Cochin, a searchlight was turned on to the period which left no room for illusions. It was not until the masonic influence of the Sorbonne, and the growing power of Marxian Socialism in the last years of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth revived the revolutionary spirit, that fresh attempts were made to glorify its earliest manifestation as the dawn of liberty for France.

All this passed almost unnoticed by British writers who, in their references to the French Revolution, seemed to have drawn indiscriminately on the earlier French historians without pausing to enquire into the value of their evidence. Thus Carlyle, who early in the century had presented a turgid picture of the movement, drawn largely from his own imagination, was left in almost undisputed possession of the field. His work came to be accepted as the one source of information on the subject, and his view of the Revolution was popularized by Dickens in an equally imaginative work of fiction, *The Tale of Two Cities.*

I had pilloried Carlyle in the Appendix to *The Chevalier de Boufflers* and this appeared to have interested Lord Cromer, for in his aforesaid letter to me he observed:

> "As to a real history of the French Revolution no such thing exists in the English language, for Carlyle, besides being often very inaccurate and prejudiced, produced merely a philosophical rhapsody. It is well worth reading, but it is not history."

Well, if no true history of the Revolution existed in our language why should I not write one? It was this letter of Lord Cromer's that fired me in 1916 to set about a gigantic task. For I was resolved not to follow the lead of other British writers by consulting French historians, but to go to the original sources of information for my facts. This, it seemed to me, would make all the difference that exists between a portrait and a photograph; I would see the Revolution, not through either the black or the rose-coloured spectacles of the party writer but through the naked eye of the contemporary. A saying attributed to Napoleon but of which I cannot trace the origin epitomizes this idea: "*La vérité historique ce n'est qu'une fable convenue. L'histoire? les mémoires, les bons mots, les anecdotes, voila l'histoire!*"

So it was on the records of the time that I set to work, letters, *mémoires,* published documents of the Revolution and here in this last category a vast untilled field lay close at hand. For in the British Museum were to be found the marvellous collections of pamphlets discovered immediately after the Revolution by John Wilson Croker at Marat's lodgings in Paris and sold by him to the Museum where they have never been properly collated. It was this material that served for Croker's own book *Essays on the early period of the*

French Revolution published in 1859, the best documented work on the subject in English, though all too fragmentary, for his project of writing a complete history of the subject was unfortunately never realized.

A number of unpublished contemporary documents were also to be found in the Foreign Office where again no expert hand appeared to have been at work.

It was the study of first-hand sources of information, the evidence of contemporaries, which led me to contest the accepted view of British writers set forth in books of history, manuals for schools and colleges, representing the French Revolution as the spontaneous rising of an oppressed people against tyranny; terrible, perhaps, but necessary for the regeneration of France. I remembered how one summer evening some years earlier, sitting on the terrace of the House of Commons after dinner with my friend Alice Butler and her cousin Owen Wister, that distinguished American author had said to me: "Remember, revolutions always come from above, not from below!" Gustave le Bon in his *Psychologie des Revolutions* had expressed the same opinion: "The people may make riots, but never revolutions."

What then was the rôle of the people? In the main quiescent, only on the great days of tumult did they take part in the movement, so if the Revolution was to be seen through their eyes it was only with these days that I must concern myself. My book could thus not be a complete history of the Revolution but only one aspect of it and one that had been hitherto ignored. For not only Carlyle but every British writer, with the exception of Croker, had viewed it largely from the standpoint of the revolutionary leaders, whilst the people for whom it was ostensibly made remained in the background.

If, then, the Revolution was not made by the people by whom was it made? What was the motive power behind it? St. Just himself provided the key to the whole movement in the words: "The popular revolution was the surface of a volcano of extraneous conspiracies."

What were these conspiracies? That was the line I set myself to follow—the Orléaniste intrigue for a change of dynasty, the Prussian scheme for breaking the Franco-Austrian Alliance, the gradually evolved conception of a Republic, finally of a Socialist State and behind them all the dark design of "illuminized Freemasonry" working for world revolution and the destruction of Christian civilization.

This was, of course, to reverse all accepted theories current in this country and I wished most ardently at the outset that I could find some expert to help and advise me, but on enquiry at the British Museum and the London Library I was told that no-one then living had specialized on the period.

So I was left entirely to my own resources. Throughout the last two years of the First World War and the year that followed, in the intervals of spy-hunting, boot-making for the wounded and seeking food for the family, I worked continuously, striving to weld the vast mass of material I had collected into a consecutive whole. It was fascinating work, for all the time I was conscious of some impelling force, as if a message was being sent through me which I was bound to deliver, I had no choice in the matter. And in some uncanny way I seemed at every turn to be led to the right book or document I needed to elucidate a point.

Honesty in the writing of history moreover simplifies the writer's task. For if one is out for "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth" what need has one for the tortuous reasoning, the skilful evasions and suppressions of contrary evidence the unscrupulous party writer has to employ so as to prove his case? I had no wish to minimize the real grievances of the people or to gloss over the shortcomings of the Old Régime, these must be categorically set forth, but that the Revolution *as it took place* was not the remedy became to me more and more evident as my work proceeded.

So after three years the book was finished under the title of *The French Revolution: a Study in Democracy*. What would the critics say? Once more I wished I had had expert advice, but it went to Press without having even been submitted to a qualified publisher's reader and I had no-one to help me to correct the proofs. Surely in dealing with so large a mass of material unaided I must be caught tripping somewhere? And sure enough a few minor slips had occurred which I detected too late and corrected in further editions.

When the book appeared on July 17, 1919, I waited anxiously for the reviews. Immensely long ones came out in all the leading organs of the Press, many appreciative, even eulogistic, whilst those that were hostile confined themselves merely to flatly contradicting or misrepresenting what I had said without bringing forward a word of contrary evidence. Once again I was surprised to meet with so little reasoned criticism.

The attitude of the Universities was most amusing. At Oxford, I was told, the book could not be brought to the notice of students as it was calculated "to upset the curriculum". I happened to mention this to the wife of a Cambridge don who came to see me when she had held forth at some length on the intolerance of the Roman Catholic Church in preventing people thinking for themselves. In reply to my enquiry as to whether Cambridge adopted the same line as Oxford with regard to my work on the French Revolution, she replied loftily:

"Of course it would not be noticed there. If Cambridge wishes to know anything about the French Revolution it appoints one of its own experts to investigate."

So in the matter of historical truth it appeared that Cambridge showed no more latitude towards independent thought than was ascribed to the Roman Catholic Church. Aloud I said:

"And has it appointed anyone?"

"Yes, of course, Lord Acton. Have you not read his *Lectures on the French Revolution*?"

"Certainly I have. And what would you say if I were to point out, say, eight mistakes he made in them?"

My visitor looked at me in shocked amazement. "Oh, you could not do that!" she said incredulously and then added: "But of course if you *could* and were to write them out for me I would place them before our historical lecturers and they would certainly consider them."

I typed out eight mistakes made by Lord Acton, not matters of opinion but of facts, and posted them to her. But I heard no more of the matter.

It was thus apparently on Lord Acton that the mantle of Carlyle had now descended, for *The Times Literary Supplement* in a patronizing review of my book on August 21, 1919, satirically observed: "The most impartial book on the Revolution is probably that of Acton, to whom, among her inefficient predecessors, Mrs. Webster allows a faint glimmer of the light."

As a matter of fact I had quoted in the Preface the passage from Lord Acton where he said:

> "The appalling thing in the French Revolution is not the tumult but the design. Through all the fire and smoke we perceive the evidence of calculating organization. The managers remain studiously concealed and masked; but there is no doubt about their presence from the first. They had been active in the riots of Paris and they were again active in the provincial risings."

This was precisely my own view, the one that gives the clue to all the workings of the Revolution, and in quoting it I did indeed wish to show that Lord Acton had perceived a glimmer of the truth, which, however, he did not follow up, for nowhere in his book does he attempt to unmask the managers or to throw any light on the calculating organization behind the scenes. What value attached to his work I have never been able to discover for it shows no evidence of original thought or research amongst contemporary documents, but to be almost entirely drawn from that of the early French political historians referred to at the beginning of this chapter. Amongst these was evidently Louis Blanc on whose authority he made the astounding mistake of quoting a bogus edition of Cléry's *Memoires* in evidence against Louis XVI which had been publicly disowned by Cléry a hundred years earlier.

Lord Cromer's dictum still remains true, no complete history of the French Revolution exists in the English language. I wrote to tell him of my attempt to present one aspect of the movement in my book but alas! he died before it could appear. Another scholarly review from his pen would have delighted me even if it had entailed criticism of my views.

For every honest historian must welcome contrary opinion if it leads to a revision of his own conclusions in the interests of truth, and controversy should act as a spur to further effort. I had hoped for controversy, even for heated but well reasoned attacks upon my main thesis of the Revolution as an engineered movement, and I was prepared to prove it by fresh evidence showing that the latest French historians had arrived at the same conclusion. But nothing of the kind took place. To this day no serious attempt has been made to refute any portion of the book.

What, however, I was not prepared for was the dishonest method of attempting to stifle the evidence I had brought forward. Thus a whole book was written to show that German intrigue played no part in the Revolution without once mentioning my book where the proofs of the Prussian conspiracy were clearly set forth, the idea being evidently not to give any publicity to my work.

Another book bore on its jacket the publisher's announcement that it was a refutation of Mrs. Webster's book on the French Revolution, but contained only a few references to it in footnotes refuting nothing. The author challenged by Lord Sydenham in the Press to show what attempts he had made "to meet Mrs. Webster's exhaustive researches" made the significant admission: "My book is not an examination of Mrs. Webster's volumes; indeed I have been reproved elsewhere for making any reference to them at all."

Reproved by whom? and where? Somewhere then it had been decreed that my books, both *The Chevalier de Boufflers* and *The French Revolution* were to be killed by silence. "*Bruler n'est pas répondre*," said Camille Desmoulins. And to boycott is not to refute.

That this was indeed the plan in certain quarters was shown by a letter I received from a critic immediately after *The French Revolution* appeared:

> "There is something of a Boycott against your book for the Editor of the newspaper for which I write reviews tells me that he does not intend to notice your Revolution otherwise than by a line or two. The letter being headed 'Private' I cannot give you further particulars."

What was the reason for these secret instructions? In embarking on the book in 1916 I little dreamt that I was touching on a live mine; at that date the French Revolution was a matter merely for historical research, having no bearing on our present problem of war with Germany, and when in the following year the Russian Revolution took place it was regarded generally with favour in our country as signifying an intensification of Russia's war effort in view of the pro-German influences supposed—and as we now know, falsely supposed—to emanate from the Empress. It was not until the Bolsheviks had betrayed the cause of the Allies by the separate peace the Emperor had refused to sign and had established their ascendancy over the helpless Russian people that the true significance of the revolution in that country dawned on the Western world.

When this climax was reached my book on the French Revolution was nearly finished, and since, as a work of history, no "topical" allusions could be made in the main text, it had been arranged with the publisher that any references to current events should be confined to an Epilogue to be added at the last moment when the rest of the book was through the Press. The French Revolution, I then pointed out in an amendment to the Preface, was seen to be no dead event, and in the Epilogue I showed how the fire of that first conflagration had smouldered for 150 years beneath the soil of Europe and had now burst into flame in Russia. For Bolshevism was only Jacobinism under another name, the same aims, the same methods had been pursued, and the gigantic conspiracy of the same dark directorate against the whole structure of Christian civilization was in active operation.

Hence the attempt to boycott my books in those quarters where the plan of world revolution was secretly entertained and where it was realized that any disclosures on its *modus operandi* and its ultimate purpose might lead to its defeat. The myth of the French Revolution as the dawn of liberty for France must at all costs be maintained. In revealing the truth about that tragic epoch in what I imagined to be merely an academic work of history I had entered the lists against terrific living forces of which I had not guessed the existence. My own life was now to become a prolonged contest with these unseen powers. But that is another story which would require a whole volume to itself.

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