CHAPTER X

Opposite our house there lived "Mr. Doncaster", the Editor of a famous Horticultural magazine, who cultivated many rare flowers, which probably took the place in his life of ordinary amusements, since, poor soul, he was stone-deaf.

Standing at my own front door during a terrific thunderstorm in the company of two coalmen I had called in for shelter, we saw lightning strike the house next door to Mr. Doncaster and flames burst from the tiled roof. Within a very few moments the torrential rain had extinguished them. Quite a different gift from the sky than the block of ice which a few years later fell into Swanage Road and broke into pieces. Rumour reports that a plane was passing at the moment, which makes it difficult to decide whether it or the heavens were the guilty party.

A few doors away lived a charming old couple who

might have walked straight out of a fashion plate of last century. She with her black satin frock and dainty white lace cap, he with his courtly grace and upright bearing. His progress down Earlsfield Road was always a slow one, as with his handsome walking-stick he meticulously removed into the gutter every piece of paper, shred of orange peel, or other foreign matter which he met.

A certain stretch of pavement round the corner in Heathfield Road always seemed to attract worms from the gardens. The poor creatures lay wriggling and dying, longing for their native earth, where, as they always give me the creeps, I prefer for them to be hidden. But I could not bear to see them in their misery, so with inward shudders I used to pick them up in my gloved fingers and dropped them back in the gardens, where I left them to look after themselves. The low walls which support the little wooden fences over which I threw them, have their own historic interest, for some of their rough grey stones came from the old residence, "Stone House" which formerly stood on the spot, built from the stones of Old London Bridge which stood more or less intact for six hundred and fifty years.

Another delightful old gentleman a few doors from us, spent many hours in the prison trying to interest the inmates in spiritual matters, until failing health prevented him. He used to walk up the road twirling his umbrella in a somewhat alarming manner and always had a fund of interesting stories. One morning after a night when bombs had been dropping hour after hour and guns roaring, popping, screaming, screeching, from dusk to dawn, he observed to me we had never been nearer heaven than during the previous hours of darkness. I dared not hurt his feelings by telling him that to my wicked mind it had been far more like the other place, usually unmentionable in polite society.

One night we were awakened in the very early hours by a prodigious noise on the front door made by someone banging on the panels with the flat of his hands. Heard in the dead of night it sounded like an old-fashioned battering-ram.

Father emerged on to the landing in his dressing-gown and in an interval enquired what was the matter. A very thick and shaky voice answered impatiently.

"Let me in! Let me in! I live here!"

"Indeed you don't," replied Father, "go to your own

home - this is mine."

The battering-ram started with renewed vigour, interspersed with, "Let me in! Let me in!"

Father took no notice and returned to his room, from whose window he eventually recognised a neighbour from lower down the road swaying uncertainly towards the gate. The gentleman, in his own social circle was usually known ~~as~~ by the nick name of "Tricky", for reasons which it would be indiscreet to mention.

Father Maurice Child, the instigator of the first Anglo-Catholic Congress, a priest of many gifts, published my first literary effort when he was one of the moving spirits of a Church Publishing Firm. It was an Anthology for the Sick, entitled, "In the Morning", a copy of which was graciously accepted by Queen Alexandra. This was followed by my first book on the ceremonial of the English Church, which involved several visits to Father Child's home in Ebury Street, where his valet popped his head round the door at discreet intervals as a chaperon, with even discreeter enquiries as to whether any of his services were needed. My recollections of Father Child's study are of brightly striped antimacassars, a coloured picture of a gay-looking St. Maurice, his patron saint, and a multitude of

beautiful objects gathered from the many corners of the world where his adventurous spirit had led him. At sixteen years of age he wrote Thomas Cook & Son, asking them to book him to Kerguelen, the farthest point he could find from any land. They took his request quite seriously and eventually he saw that solitary island.

I last saw him not long before the accident which caused his death at a comparatively early age. He was then Rector of the little church at Cranford which stands in the middle of lovely park lands. As he met me he laid a cucumber on the church wall, remarking it was for tea and then conducted me over the ancient church. The most interesting feature to my eyes, being the lady sacristan of St. Anne's, Wandsworth, was his amazing collection of vestments of every shade and colour, some of the most beautiful being of Spanish embroidery, a mass of trailing flowers.

A small room opened out from his study, "papered" entirely with cigarette wrappers from all over the universe, an amazing and extremely colourful form of decoration.

My public literary efforts began at the mature age of eleven with a harrowing short story on the Readers'

Own Page in "Sunshine", a popular children's Magazine. It concerned a lost child and the death and burial of the wicked nurse who had stolen her from her home. This was followed by an even more tragic story of a Vicar, whose only child died in his arms immediately after he had baptized her ... "the look of pain fled, and was replaced by one of angelic sweetness, which even parted her pale lips. She looked up smiling into her father's face, then closed her eyes and lay rigid and still in his arms. Verily she had become an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven." For this heartrending effusion I received three times as many votes as the second most popular contribution, together with a copy of "Home Influence".

In private life I was Editor at twelve years old of a Magazine entitled "Joy Bells", which contained stories, recipes, suggestions for handwork, archeology, competitions, "Moments with my Readers", puzzles and illustrations, the latter distinctly sketchy. One extract, apparently lifted from a more adult journal, ~~tells~~ told the lamentable story of a Fiji cannibal chief who for every human body he devoured all by himself, placed a stone on his estate. At his ultimate decease these

stones numbered eight hundred and twenty-two.

Whether he himself eventually formed the menu for a friend's dinner is not mentioned.

An interesting sidelight on the prices of the day is the announcement that a prize, amount conveniently not specified, would be given for the best-dressed halfpenny doll. A doll for a halfpenny! Could ever such things have existed.?

At sixteen I had written a novel entitled "Leonard Montaigne or the New Curate". I fear Leonard was rather smug, a romantic mixture of Galahad, Romeo and St. Paul.

Mother and I announced his existence to Miss Major, the Headmistress of Putney High School, later to become the Principal of Girton. That charming lady welcomed me as a pupil, but could offer no advice as to the future of Leonard. She had me thoroughly examined by the school doctor, who took an undue interest in my spine and kept me shivering in my chemise for a considerable time in a large and chilly room.

The school was then situated near East Putney Station and one of my form mates looked down with haughty pride upon the rest of us as her own home a few doors away entertained one of the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race crews.

Added to this great glory was the fact, announced to us with great unction, that she used a clean pair of stockings every day.

"Leonard" was not quite dead and buried when I left school. With much trepidation Mother and I took him to visit a firm of publishers, one of the most pathetic business ventures I have ever had the misfortune to behold. It was a one-room, one-man affair, of which the proprietor was stone-deaf. He was a person of great personal charm and good education, but the poor fellow had not a ghost of a chance. His tiny office was crowded from floor to ceiling with books and manuscripts. Being too poor to have any clerk and too deaf to hear a bell he had a weight on a piece of string facing him inside the door. Anyone knocking sent the weight up, leaving it suspended until he saw it had moved. He offered to publish Leonard if I would pay £40 towards the cost. Happily I refused and probably thereby saved my literary reputation, for I fear poor Leonard would have proved very much of an "also ran".

It was about this time I sent a nauseatingly pious report of an Ordination Service to the "Church Times", which must have immediately found its way into the

editorial waste-paper basket.

~~My first success was a Short Anthology of which a copy was graciously accepted by Queen Alexandra.~~

My first article appeared in the "Challenge", an excellent church paper destined to have but a short life. The article was an account of the Christmas Crib, which following the example of the churches, we set up each year in our own home. Composed of ivory coloured figures of the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, the Holy Child, the Ox and the Ass, it stands on a table just inside our hall door in a little thatched stable, surrounded with variegated holly and other evergreens. Two robins perch on the stable floor, close to a pair of tiny cats, all on friendly terms with one another in the Presence of their Baby King and Creator, who lies upon his bed of straw. A strange sense of peace, of awe, and of mystery surrounds this little model of the First Christmas, so that all who come to the front door step inside and stand in silence, gazing upon the Holy Mother and her blessed Babe, whether they be milkman, grocer, butcher, postman, friends, neighbours, or people selling brushes or stationery pads. Perhaps to some of them it is their only glimpse of the real meaning of the Christmastide

festivities, " ... And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

My article on our Christmas Crib gained me an interview with "Urbanus", that gifted writer who has written so many delightful articles in the "Church Times". He gave me much valuable advice with regard to a literary career, for which I shall always be grateful.

My biography of that heroic apostle to the lepers, Father Damien, "Damien the Leper Saint", brought me into contact with the publisher, J.G.Lockhart, himself the author of various famous biographies. It also gave me a large number of reviews, mostly extremely kind, the others being entirely contradictory, one saying I was obviously a Roman Catholic, another that it was quite certain I was not so. Among many letters I received one from President Roosevelt and an extremely abusive one from a Protestant organisation, together with a pile of tracts sent anonymously from a similar source. The cream of the latter presentation was a quotation concerning Purgatory:- "The fire that purges those souls, those both happy and unhappy souls,

surpasses all the torments that are to be found in this miserable life of man, or are possible to be invented. Out of which assertion it clearly follows that the furious fits of the stone, fever, or raging gout, the tormenting colic, with all the horrible convulsions of the worst diseases, nay, though you join racks, gridirons, boiling oil, wild beasts, and a hundred horses drawing several ways and tearing one limb from another, with all the hellish devices of the most barbarous and cruel tyrants, all this does not reach the least part of the mildest pains in purgatory."

Against this interesting description was drawn a long line with the words, "Your fate", written against it, which, to say the least, seemed rather unkind, besides being distinctly uncalled-for. And how different from the sumblime words of the Holy Redeemer to the dying penitent thief crucified in excruciating torture beside him. "Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise!"

"With me in Paradise!" What words of comfort to those who watch beside a deathbed, or stand in lonely desolation beside an open grave!

Another quite juicy tract was entitled "Secrets of a Mormon's Harem," although what that had to do with

Father Damien or me is beyond my understanding. A paragraph in a third one, marked with a red pencil, kindly informed me that the Secretary of the Association would be glad to help me. Nothing doing, thank you! I don't like their suggestions of my ultimate fate.

My long series of sacred plays began with the script for some Bethlehem Tableaux shown in the great chancel of St. Anne's. At the first performance, just before the curtain went up, the Archangel Gabriel unhappily trod on a flex which lit the whole of one side of the picture. We were unpopular for some time with the churchwardens, as we grabbed all their spare candles and fixed them on the chancel wall. Our popularity was not enhanced on the next occasion by the frolicsome choirboy who ran along the chancel wall and knocked a piece of the Bath-stone off the corner.

My first play, "The Mystic Tree", Legends of the Holy Cross, began with a scene outside the Garden of Eden, preceded by such realistic thunder and lightning on the organ that a lady in the congregation remarked afterwards that she was "took with just the same pains as during an ordinary storm" and had to say sternly to herself:

"Now just you hold tight to your seat and you won't

have no trouble." Apparently she held sufficiently tightly and all was well.

A London picture paper photographed the play, but unhappily became a little mixed between the scene with King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba and the one showing St. Helena, with her private chaplain, the Bishop Macarius, discovering the True Cross, so that in the picture marked "King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba", her Majesty wore a chain with a crucifix and Solomon appeared in a cope and mitre. The real King Solomon, a headmaster in private life, usually forgot his regal status, and stood with his thumbs tucked into his armholes as though addressing his schoolboys, an action which required a certain amount of manoeuvring to find the said armholes amid his gorgeous Eastern raiment.

But he made a magnificent king in the prime of his manhood. A few years later he mentioned he had never had a day's illness in his life and before the week was completed was stricken with a mortal illness.

I nearly ended my career when playing the Queen of Sheba at St. Paul's, Covent Garden, as in the semi-darkness behind the scenes I stepped from the lofty stage into space. Happily the strong arm of King Constantine,

acting with lightning resource, dragged me back into safety.

My first Passion play, based on the events of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, entitled "By Thy Cross and Passion", contained two sentences for a Roman soldier, "Until death, my lord" spoken to Pontius Pilate; the second to myself, Claudia Procula, that gentleman's wife, "It shall be done."

The tall, magnificent-looking sidesman who took the part in St. Anne's Church and many other parishes both sides of the River Thames, could never remember which was which of the two phrases, so that until his scene he was always found distractedly trying to learn his part. Sad indeed was the occasion when one of the Archangels, forgetting his celestial origin, hid the poor fellow's book of words.

One of the most interesting performances to ourselves as amateur actors was an evening in a church near Cambridge Circus. We were invited by Father Clarence May, who used to hold a procession one night each week with Crossbearer, surpliced choir and a faithful body of laymen through the London streets, gathering on their way any who cared to follow them.

On this night Father May collected sufficient people from the streets to fill the church, a motley audience of widely different status, from those in gala evening dress down to Bill and 'Alf with brightly coloured handkerchiefs knotted round their necks. Some of the women may even have followed the same profession as Mary Magdalene. But they were a wonderful audience, perfectly silent, in awe and reverence. Perhaps never before had they realised that the empty Cross, draped with the sinister white winding sheet, the sorrowing women and St. John, grouped around it, was a real thing, an historical event, not merely a picture in a book or an echo from some long forgotten Sunday School.

We gave several performances of "By Thy Cross and Passion" in the chancel of St. Peter's, Walworth, being regaled afterwards in the crypt with enormous ham sandwiches of a most succulent flavour. Little did we know that one night in the future that crypt would become a shambles of heartrending magnitude, where numbers of people sheltering in it would be torn literally ~~from~~ limb from limb when a high explosive bomb exploded beside it.

At Hampstead, our host, an Archdeacon, sprained his ankle in the churchyard just before the performance,

but heroically endured to the end, seated on a table with his legs stretched out straight before him. I fear he must have suffered greatly, not from us, it is to be hoped, but from his ankle.

Of all the theatricals in which I have taken part some of the most thrilling were the pageants in the Albert Hall arranged by the S.P.G. (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel) and produced by Mr. Henry Millar. We had many hundreds of players, who swarmed around the neighbouring streets in the garments and complexions of every nation under the sun. My most exciting part was that of St. Mary Salome with the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. John and St. Mary Magdalene heartbroken beneath the empty Cross, in a tableau staged in a frame like a giant picture in front of the great organ. St. Mary Magdalene, a charming figure in her Eastern robes with rows of silver coins round her forehead, was Miss Rosamund Essex, the author of the Pageant, later to become the Editor of the "Church Times".

One of St. Anne's clergy, the Reverend Arthur Body, son of the famous Canon Body of Durham, took the part of the High Priest of Israel and was an impressive figure with his robes edged with fringe, golden bells

and pomegranates, his nose enlarged by the professional maker-up to turn him into a true Israelite. The golden bells behaved quite nicely, adhering to him to the end, merely proving a little embarrassing, as they always betrayed his whereabouts. The pomegranates were not so faithful, leaving his person at the slightest excuse, so that they proved an almost minus quantity at the end of the performances.

One evening he forgot to remove his spectacles, for which lapse the producer could have quite happily assisted him from this planet, particularly as not only being an anachronism, the glasses caught the spot lights turning them into beams of dazzling magnificence. He had a nasty scare himself on the first night of the pageant, in the scene of the Presentation of the Holy Child in the Temple. Preparing to receive in his arms a heavy stone Bambino he discovered it was made of celluloid, light as thistledown, which practically bounced.

Dear old Father Body, with his round, rosy face like an elderly cherub, his beaming smile and his fund of stories was much Beloved. He used to walk up and down his study in a regular path like a contented caged lion. During the seventeen years he was at St. Anne's he wore out several strips of linoleum which he conscientiously laid on the floor to save the vicarage carpet. His room

was almost as austere as a monastic cell. There were some pictures on the walls but he took so little interest in them that he could ~~not~~ never tell what they represented.

Another friend in the S.P.G.Pageant was Father Stopford of St. Andrew's, Earlsfield, who had a hobby for collecting walking sticks and queer birds. The latter were nothing whatever to do with his parishioners, although most parishes can produce several excellent specimens. Father Stopford had a particularly sinister creature to which he was devoted. It was armed with an awful beak, the terror of Father Stopford's charming young wife. It lived on the landing and every feminine passer-by kept her skirts tightly round her when she passed him, as his extremely outsize beak came through the bars of his cage like a flash of lightning.

During the long years I have spent at St. Anne's I have known ~~seven~~ eight Vicars and curates innumerable - curates tall and curates short, curates fat and curates thin, curates young and curates old, over three dozen of them and all of them friends of my family. "Lucky Luke" is now an Archdeacon, "Tom Tiddler" and several others Canons or Rural Deans. Some of them had celebrated ancestors - the Reverend F.W.Austen, descended from the

famous "Jane"; the Reverend F.A.Evelyn, whose relative was the John Evelyn of our history books and friend of King Charles; the Reverend C.Leigh-Hunt, a descendant of Leigh Hunt the author and poet.

Father Evelyn was an excellent amateur actor and was the first to introduce Bethlehem Tableaux in the parish, in which I appeared as the Angel of the Lord in flowing white robes and enormous wings to a group of rightly scared shepherds. Father figured as one of the Wise Men, in company with the churchwardens, all three the last men in the world one would expect to see in a tableau. Mother was a picture as the Angel of the Glory, robed in white with enormous wings, holding high the crown of victory above the empty Cross, her auburn hair a burning gold in the radiance of the spot light.

At one of the presentations the Wise Men's incense was missing. The lady playing "Anna" solved the mystery.

"I gave it to the doves," she said, "they seemed hungry and I thought it was their food, poor little things." "Harmless as doves" did not suit these two little creatures, who carried by St. Joseph, appeared in their wicker cage in the scene of the Presentation in the Temple as models of their tribe. But off stage

they were more like Kilkenny cats, quarrelling and swearing at one another in a manner alarming to see and hear.

Father Morton, a young Welshman, with coal-black hair, left us to act as a chaplain in Maymyo, Burma. He left the town at the "eleventh hour" before the entrance of the Japanese, snatching up a white silk stole, the only possession with which he started that long, agonising Via Dolorosa known as the "Burma Road". On his arrival in England after his escape, his thick dark hair had turned white as snow.

Father Schooling, one of our very few married clergy, brought with him a charming young wife. Their eldest child, Antony, was the first baby I ever held in my arms and felt like an enormous, squirming mass of jelly which petrified me with terror lest I should drop it, or rather him. Father Schooling himself suffered much for some weeks before Christmas by the money-extracting efforts of small children bawling through his letter-box, "No-ell No-ell", but he never carried out his threat of giving them a little practical demonstration that "'ell" really did exist.

One of our Vicars had a charming old father, a

Prebendary in the West Country, who looked exactly like Father Christmas and was locally known as "Punch." He presented a very nice clock to St. Anne's vestry which remained there quite happily until the day when the Vicar met a pleasant man in the churchyard with a brown paper parcel. Fortunately for the charming young man, but not so good for us, the Vicar did not hear his father's gift ticking inside the parcel.

One of our curates was an Australian, quite a nice young fellow, but with no ginger in his composition. Canon Craig told him he was no good here and had better return to his own country. He did so and soon became a violent convert to Rome, preaching outside his own old church, which certainly seems rather tactless.

My first recollections of World War I are of a solemn working party in our parochial hall where I was young and too gay, so that Mother reproved me privately, saying that war was a very serious thing. Her rebuke was rather spoilt by one of the clergy tearing sheets into bandages with one tremendous "zipppp" from top to bottom, shrieking with laughter at the same time.

Soon afterwards I became private secretary to the Red Cross Commandant at the Patriotic, then converted

into the Third London Hospital, its beautiful old buildings surrounded with lines of huts, where wounded by their hundreds were brought from the Somme and many other battlefields. Miracles of healing took place in those long wards, but often a gun carriage came through the gates with its escort, their solemn burden borne beneath the Union Jack. ~~Often~~ Usually the interment took place in Wandsworth Cemetery ~~and~~ so that we heard the plaintive cry of the bugles in the "Last Post" and the quick firing of the rifles, paying the last earthly tribute of honour.

My Commandant's work was to run the six hostels in the neighbourhood for the Red Cross personnel at the hospital. She was a charming person and nominally I was her secretary, but this covered a multitude of duties. I quickly discovered that when confronted with some odd job which I did not understand I was merely told to "find out".

I immediately fell into the deadly sin of pride in my uniform, but was often in trouble concerning my hat which would never sit straight on my head, but always slid into an angle. Commandant gave me up as hopeless in the end, easing her own official conscience by saying I must have an extra bump on my head. I politely agreed,

with a sidelong glance at the Commandant's own daughter, whose hat was at an even more precarious and becoming angle than my own.

The Quartermaster, "Quartie", was delightful and might have taken a prize in a show for the world's thinnest lady. My chief remembrance of her is fishing out her face flannel from half way down the bath drain.

Our head cook always liked her bed under a window so that she could feel the rain on her face at night. What happened to her pillow is a mystery! Her assistant objected strongly to be called "Ass-Cook" on Commandant's time sheets, so that I always typed "Asst.-Cook" and all went well.

Queen Amelie of Portugal was working as a nurse in the hospital, but she did not come under our jurisdiction.

One little problem awaited me each Sunday. The Vicar tried to instil into our minds that the National Anthem was a prayer, insisting that during war-time we should all kneel at each service when it was played. Commandant heard of this departure from orthodox custom and sternly reminded me that as I was wearing the King's uniform I must stand. But, alas, I was not brave enough to stand alone in the front seat in a church as

large as a small cathedral, filled with many people who had known me from childhood, so that I slithered guiltily to my knees, happily conscious that Commandant was safely tucked up in her own church at Kensington.

After a year at the Third London General Hospital different arrangements were made for the Red Cross personnel, and we gradually closed our hostels. We girls, including our senior officers, moved all the furniture from one hostel to another, with the exception of carpets and wardrobes. I must confess I hated carrying washstands and their china accessories along West Side beneath the shade of the great chestnut trees, and meeting the Vicar and sundry other friends and acquaintances. My comrades were spared many of my blushes, as ours was the Kensington Division of the Red Cross, London 42, and their homes were in that aristocratic suburb.

At the end of the year in Wandsworth we moved to Grosvenor Gardens, where the Stars and Stripes of the American Embassy next door floated gracefully on its pole. Here I had an office of my own, shared on alternate days by a colleague. During my hours of duty no swearing or smoking was allowed therein. We were responsible

for all the Red Cross girls, other than nurses, passing through London, whether for a night or a week. They used to bring luggage, evidently composed of lead, which my girl orderlies were expected to drag to the dormitories up countless stairs. They usually seemed to arrive when the said orderlies were off duty or missing, so that to my disgust it was I who had to carry their weighty possessions to the top of the house. I usually requested that they should hang on to the other end of the handle themselves, to which they usually responded very ungraciously, enquiring for the non-existent porter. I have had a queer feeling round my middle ever since.

Typhoid was raging in Serbia at the moment and great excitement was roused in my office when one of the girl laboratists on her way to that afflicted country arrived with her hair bobbed. To us it was an entirely new fashion, as the only ones at that time with shorn heads were "little ladies" in Belgium whom their compatriots discovered fraternising with German soldiers, and to whom they applied the scissors with uncompromising force.

But for Serbia, teaming with typhoid germs, long hair was a menace. Many of the germs were supposed to lie on the ground waiting for the unwary so that our girls

going to that country were provided with long, somewhat baggy trousers, tightly fastened round the ankles.

Matches were very scarce in that first World War and for a whole year Mother did not strike one at all, a wonderful effort considering that all our lighting, cooking and heating, with the exception of the kitchen range and one coal fire, were by gas. She used to go about the house with long paper spills, lighting them from by-passes or the fire, then run like a hare to the room where she wanted a light, freely scattering black paper ash en route, which she followed up with the dining-room shovel and hearthbrush.

Air Raids in those days were announced by maroons, star-like cyclamen-coloured gunfire, assisted by Special Constables on bicycles, with whistles, and a loud monotonous cry, "Take Cover! Take Cover!", the procedure being reversed when danger was over, with the Special Constables joyously shouting, "All Clear".

Zeppelins sailed majestically over the sky like huge silver sausages illuminated in the search-lights and were an awful sight indeed when our gunners caught them and they sank to earth a flaming hell of death and destruction. Twice from our tall windows in the

Earlsfield Road we saw this happen, ~~when~~ our awe and pity struggled with feelings of thankfulness that another danger was past.

The first daylight raid was one lovely summer morning when Mother and I were at the top of the garden and hearing gunfire saw airmen fighting immediately over our heads. Never have we run so fast, as collecting the cat and our maid, we hurried into the cellar for the first and only time in two World Wars. Arrived in the compartment known in better times as the wine cellar, our maid's heart attack was so alarming that we forgot all about any air raid.

It was the daylight attack which surprised everyone, as hitherto our enemies had only visited us on very dark nights, which accounts for a notice in St. Anne's parish magazine for 1917, announcing,

"A Meeting of parishioners to discuss the Memorial to the late Norman Campbell on Monday, February 5th at 8.30p.m. (There will be a good moon that night)."

The eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, 1918, found me very unromantically making a steamed pudding of sausage meat, a small amount of fat and some war-time flour. I rushed into the garden,

standing beneath the green and yellow of the variegated holly, to hear that last maroon sound its "All Clear", the end of the war that was to prevent all future warfare. For twenty-one years!! Twenty-one anxious uneasy years!

St. Anne's Church, rumoured to hold 2.000 people, was packed to capacity that night, shouting its Te Deum in frenzied, over-wrought thanksgiving, and the twenty-one crazy, fantastic years between two wars began upon the morrow.

Three hundred and thirteen names were later engraved on St. Anne's War Memorial, inscribed in gold lettering on panels at the west end of the church, incorporating a new doorway, surmounted by the words, "Make them to be numbered with thy saints in glory everlasting." Unfortunately the spacing being longer than the quotation, a very inappropriate dagger was placed after the word "everlasting." Names of several of my contemporaries, brothers of my friends, appear in that long, noble list, young Captains and Lieutenants barely out of their teens, mown down with myriads of their comrades in that long battle line from the Channel to the Alps.

But life went on, the dead past had buried its dead. The survivors began to return, grown strangely older.

London staged a wonderful Victory March for the Allied Troops, which I watched from an extremely unsafe balcony in the Vauxhall Bridge Road.

General Pershing with his Americans led the procession, many of them with mauve and pink sweet peas stuck upon their bayonets. Marshal Foch, Generalissimo of the Allied Armies, that man of such small stature, yet gigantic personality, received an ovation which nearly shook us off our hazardous perch on to the top of him. Douglas Haig, also Beatty, walking at the head of the Naval section, his hat at its well-known jaunty angle, received rapturous cheers, together with all the Allied contingents. I trust it was not British pride alone, which throughout the two-hour procession, decided that in all that superb marching, it was our own soldiers who won the greatest admiration. It is said that a French lady observing their handsome faces and superb physique remarked ecstatically, "What lovers they would make!" To which her companion replied, "Not they! They are as cold as ice!"

That night, General Pershing, addressing the U.S.A. troops at the Palace Theatre, remarked,

"The people of London and Great Britain are trying

to kill us with kindness. As far as I am concerned I do not think I shall last much longer!"

Many gay picnics were held on the steps and porches of Belgrave Square. On one door an envelope was pinned with the polite message, "Many thanks for the loan of your steps." The evening on the whole was very noisy, but it was a "sober" crowd, which had evidently imbibed the contents of the tea pot or soft drinks rather than stronger refreshment.

The Royal Borough of Kensington held a Victory Procession of its own on a later day, in which the Red Cross marched valiantly and wearily behind the regiments. We lined up in a side road leading on to the High Street and I was in trouble from the very first. Putting my foot into a paper bag, which the devil or man had placed on the pavement, I stumbled, throwing the whole line off its balance. It was not the first or last time I have wished to vanish completely from the sight of all men.

It looks so easy as the troops march along behind their band with every limb and muscle in rhythmic accord. But to me it was a nightmare. As the Commandant's secretary I had had very little time for drill, the bands

seemed far away; the roads as hard as iron and the effort to keep in step, superhuman. Exhausted, with every scrap of self-esteem lost, even before we reached Barkers, my heart sank to unprecedented depths at the gardens which ended our journey, where the order was given for the troops to fall out and take their ease, while the Red Cross remained on duty to regale them with endless cups of tea and mountains of provender. I somehow staggered home hours later.

Soon afterwards Commandant gave her staff a Victory party at her own beautiful home in Kensington, which as she rightly said, was so fully furnished that there was no room even for an extra chair. After wartime austerities it was marvellous, for the whole programme consisted of nothing but non-stop refreshments, so that for the second time I staggered home from Kensington in a state of exhaustion.

Kensington Division of the Red Cross gave us a Fancy Dress Victory Ball at which I appeared as Belgium, arrayed in black, yellow and red and a genuine Belgian soldier's cap with its gay swinging tassel. It was an evening of intense misery, for after one or two gentlemen, whose knowledge of dancing was not much more brilliant

than my own, had trodden my toes nearly out of permanent shape, I retired to a corner, a most unhappy wallflower, longing for the time to go home.

Much the same experience befell me at a banquet of the Authors' Society where I remember Dr. Cronin as one of the principal guests, having just set the dovecots of Harley Street a flutter with his novel, "The Citadel". The banquet was excellent and the company at my table delightful, but alas for me, they all lived at a distance and departed before the ball which followed. I was left alone in a vivid flame-coloured frock, watching all the friendly groups enjoying themselves while I sat desolate and self-conscious longing for my taxi. At length, in sheer desparation I went to the cloakroom and passed the time talking to the attendant. It was a degree better than acting like a forsaken Cinderella.

On August 4th 1919 I saw the Royal River Pageant from am enclosure in Battersea Park on the water's edge, reserved for officials of the Borough and their female belongings. Our dear official, the Solicitor to the Council, took the day off to enjoy his studio and paint-brushes; Mother and I went to see the show. And a wonderful sight it was! The King and Queen, Princess

Mary, the Prince of Wales and Prince Albert in the royal barge with its vividly clothed oarsmen, the Admiralty barge, the five miles of boats of every description, the tugs hiding their squat tough exteriors with garlands.

Not the least among that long procession were the small open boats filled with Merchant Seamen and festooned not with Victory garlands, but with ropes to which men drowning in the cruel relentless sea might cling for safety. Simple, everyday things, just lengths of rope, yet in their very simplicity symbolising the central meaning of all that victory pageantry, for it was in just such boats as these that men, women and children had suffered unspeakable sufferings after their ships had been torpedoed, wandering for days and nights at the mercy of wind and wave and it was to ropes such as these that exhausted men clung when the boats were overfull.

Inside our enclosure all was calm, dignified and in keeping with the pageantry, until suddenly a horde of Battersea's proletariat gate-crashed, saying they had as much right there as ourselves. Perhaps they had! Mother and I quickly left them to enjoy it. It is always wise to realise when you are not wanted.

The River Pageant was staged exactly five years

to the day when War had been declared - August Bank Holiday, 1914. All that morning crowded trains of khaki-clad Territorials hurried along the railway line at the bottom of our garden, bound for summer manoeuvres on Salisbury Plain. By nightfall they were returning, ready for the first stage of those bloodstained "Manoeuvres" in Flanders' water-logged trenches, in Gallipoli, and in other far-distant battlefields. The first "War to end War" had sounded its sinister bugles.