

CHAPTER II

I was not present at Grandfather's funeral, being thought at the age of seventeen to be much too young, but I am told the oration was both meaty and lengthy, chiefly eulogising the departed as a junior mixture of Croesus and the Rothschild family. I remained alone at Spencer Park, awaiting the return of the funeral party, swathed in black, which being pale made me look like a walking corpse.

My step-grandmother being of a cheese-paring disposition, had sent to a warehouse in the Midlands for the mourning for the maids, a customary practice of those good old days. Unfortunately when those choosy young ladies saw how far it differed from the Paris models of their dreams ^{they} refused to wear it. Step-grandma persuaded my too confiding Mother to send to the same firm for a grey cotton morning frock for "dear Irene". All was well until it was washed, when it returned home like a jester's parti-coloured hose, one side dark grey and the other light.

Grandfather was a great believer in tracts and used to have stacks of them sent to him, many of them dealing with "No Popery", complete with ~~many~~^{tasty} little pictures and descriptions of warm corners of hell, together with sob-stuff concerning children's death-beds and the lightning-like conversions of really wicked sinners like you and me.

Father on some of his half-holidays, poor lad, used to be sent out to distribute these literary gems to passers-by in the street. Father's technique in the matter was both studied and thorough. Well out of sight of the family residence's windows he would thrust the whole bundle into the arms of the first suitable pedestrian, saying politely, "There Sir, (or Madam,) that's for you". Taking to his heels he was lost to view round the nearest corner before the astonished receiver had time to collect his thoughts.

Allowing a suitable interval to expire, Father would return home to be questioned, "Well, Paul, have you distributed all those tracts?"

With the smile of a self-righteous cherub in his beautiful dark grey eyes, Paul would reply with perfect truth, "Yes, Father, Every one!"

In these days the boyhood of my father and his brothers would be thought incredible. Their only recreations were

to be taken to Chapel on Sundays and to work in the garden on holidays, with the consequence that Father developed such a loathing for gardens he would rarely ever even sit in one. On the few occasions he did any work in his own garden he usually fell into disgrace; for example when he proudly announced he had pulled up "all those ugly weeds at the bed next to the Hubbard's garden", which proved to be Mother's cherished row of spinach. Another disastrous occasion was the time when he invited an amateur tree-lopper to prune the pear tree, with the result that the topmost branches immediately went wild, growing taller and taller every year until now they threaten to touch the heavens, so that our visitors stand beneath it, struck dumb with amazement.

Once or twice in their school-days Grandpa took his three eldest boys to Ramsgate as a great treat, about as much a treat as going to the dentist, for the discipline was even more severe than at home and Grandpa perpetually on the spot. Moreover for all his wealth Grandpa was a born miser so that literally not an unnecessary farthing was spent. The midday meal on these occasions consisted possibly of an apple, certainly of bread, cheese and raw onion, eaten with the aid of a pocket knife in some

convenient spot. The search for this spot entailed walking for many weary miles so that the boys were at length so exhausted they did not care whether they ate bread, cheese and onions, or salmon mayonnaise.

Modern psychology may call it an inherited complex, but certainly uncooked cheese and raw onion give me nightmares of the most stupendous and virulent nature in which I witness murders, step on fields of snakes, or walk down Regent Street minus several of the upper garments usually worn in that aristocratic quarter.

At home, the boys lived under a discipline which was a cross between a monastery and a prison. Everything was considered wicked and prone to lead to eternal damnation. A game of cards was forbidden, they being designated the devil's playthings; dancing, the theatre and the music hall were on the direct route to hell; a glass of anything stronger than home-made lemonade was D.D., that is Drunkard's Drink and led direct to delirium tremens and an early, dishonoured grave. Smoking could not have been considered more evil if tobacco had been compounded of the sulphur and brimstone which it is reputed compose the air of the lower regions. To use a swear word was an enormity too grave even to be contemplated.

It is curious to note that in his younger days Grandpa had been an inveterate smoker and enjoyed his long clay Churchwarden, but with him everything went in extremes, so that it was either all smoke in his youth, or no smoke in riper years.

With regard to things that were wicked, one of the preachers at St. John's Hill expounded on an inauspicious day concerning sinfulness of possessing real silver, it being a luxury unbecoming to the followers of John Wesley, making them too much like the rich young man who was cumbered with great possessions.

Grandpa took the awful warning with lamb-like docility and to poor Grandma's life-long despair went straight home and sold every silver thing he possessed, substituting anything strictly necessary for use, with the hypocritical gleam of electro-plate, so that among the ultimate wedding presents to his family were tea sets of that deceptive metal instead of the solid silver with which they would have been fashioned if that garrulous Minister had preached on some other subject.

But even Grandpa received a shock to his converted soul when calling unexpectedly a little later on the preacher he observed an interesting amount of silver quite

ostentatiously displayed - an example of the old slogan, "Don't do as I do, but do as I say."

Grandfather's severity to his sons was such that in their quite early childhood he decided they must no longer sit on chairs as it tempted them to loll about and be lazy, so he had ~~seven~~^{four} wooden stools made, with no backs, upon which those poor wretched boys always had to sit when at home, with their spines held straight up.

The slightest ~~backsliding~~^{misdeemeanor} was visited with severe punishment, of which the favourites were whippings, bread and water instead of ordinary food for a certain number of meals, or going without any pudding for a week.

My Father, being the eldest, was considered the scape-goat for all the others, as he should have set a better example. He was always required to get at least 75% marks at school each week before he went to boarding school. If he fell beneath that, off came the pudding for a week, a really wicked punishment for a growing child, particularly as Father was never fond of meat. Fat he loathed with a sick aversion. This was discovered when he was not much more than a toddler, with the result that his plate was always loaded with fat which he was forced to eat, or fast entirely.

It is strange that Grandma in all these things took the part of her husband rather than that of her children, which would seem more natural, unless it were to make life a little less miserable with that brilliant, eccentric, sometimes charming, sometimes terrible, man whom, when little more than a school-girl, she had taken for "better or for worse".

On one occasion when Father had been put off his pudding for a week, a visitor was expected to midday dinner. Father, with a small boy's feeling of overwhelming shame at such a procedure, asked Grandma beforehand if he might have his pudding on this occasion with nothing said, he being willing to go for a fortnight without any so that he should not be disgraced in the visitor's eyes. Grandma promised faithfully he should have it, but when the pudding duly appeared and was set before her to serve, she looked round the table announcing, "Paul has been a naughty boy, so he is not to have any pudding".

It would be interesting to know what modern psychology would make of that.

Grandpa retired early on the recommendation of a doctor who warned him he soon would be in another sphere if he continued to work. He lived for a trifling fifty

or sixty years after this warning and indulged in his favourite recreation of tree-logging until almost the end.

Father was still a small boy when Grandpa withdrew from his office in the Strand and settled down as a gentleman of leisure, making himself a general nuisance to most of those with whom he came in contact, particularly to his wife and her maids, whom he accused of extravagant habits, which he strove to improve by continual examinations of the dustbin.

Before Grandfather's retirement my Father was so young that he was generally in bed and asleep before Grandpa returned from the City. In the course of the evening, as he sat in conjugal bliss before the fire, Grandfather would enquire whether Paul had been a good boy during his absence. Grandma would at times declare sternly in the negative, when up would go the pair of them to Father's room, haul the poor drowsy Paul out of his bed, to stand shivering in his little night-shirt while Grandpa applied the cane with considerable force and what one cannot help suspecting was a certain sadistic delight, this being sometimes even as late as twelve o'clock at night.

In after years Father and his brothers used to say they were surrounded by so many rules and inhibitions

that it was almost impossible not to err in some way or another, the politics of Spencer Park being like the Mother of Parliaments, at times beyond understanding.

Uncle Eber, Father's second brother, was possessed of a vivid personality which stood him in excellent stead as a popular ~~singer~~ ^{surgeon} in later years. As a boy he was afraid of nothing and on one occasion when walking with his nursemaid outside the Plough Inn on St. John's Hill near Clapham Junction, he petrified an important little man who was strutting along with his nose in the air by taking the pipe out of his mouth with the remark, "You filthy fellow, you are smoking". The astonished victim opened his mouth to remonstrate, whereupon Eber replaced the offending pipe and taking to his youthful heels could not be seen for dust.

*See
note
p. 10*
The Plough Inn was reputed to have been a favourite haunt of Dick Turpin, a suitable piéd-à-terre when he was pursuing his highwayman activities on Putney Heath. In the second World War a bomb completely destroyed the Inn, directed by a man whose villainies exceeded those of the redoubtable Dick as the sun's heat eclipses that of the earth.

The youngest brother, Ben, who arrived eight years

after my Father, was truly the Benjamin of the family and could do nothing wrong.

"My poor little Ben", Grandpa would unctuously remark at Sunday dinner, "with all these big unkind brothers who make his life a misery. There, dear, there's something nice for you to make up for it."

And Ben's plate would be heaped with delicacies while the other three boys had none.

As it was more than their place was worth to touch the infant, Ben throve like a green olive tree, improving his status by many a little tale out of school about his naughty cruel brothers.

Only on those rare occasions when Grandpa and Grandma were away did those young gentlemen come into their own and young Ben shown his proper place in the scheme of things. I regret to say that my Father, when carving, used to fill succulent morsels in which the soul of Ben delighted, with a generous supply of mustard, so that the poor child's tongue hung out of his ^{mouth} afterwards for a considerable period. Ben also loved jam tarts and used to eat the pastry all round first, reserving the centre until last. In Grandfather's presence all went according to plan, but in his absence, a brotherly hand descended just as the pastry

circle was eaten and brotherly fingers seized the luscious jammy portion ^{which was} ~~being~~ quickly lost to view within the fraternal jaws.

Psychologists might again be surprised to know that Ben - that youthful sneak - grew up to be a man possessed of real charm, kindness and sympathy so that he was always my favourite among Father's three brothers and more like my gifted and much-loved Father himself.

The severe arm of parental authority reached out to Father and his brothers even when they were sent to boarding school, for to the intense delight of their fellows they were provided with Inverness capes instead of overcoats. The three brothers quickly discarded them, suffering the winter days with a stoical heroism even easier to endure than being the laughing stock of the school. But it is to be feared that the lack of an overcoat laid the foundation of my Father's bronchial weakness. He, poor lad, longed to be a Priest of the Church of England but was never allowed to carry out his desire, Grandpa's wish being that he should become a Wesleyan Minister. With this aim in mind, Father was sent to school with a double-breasted frockcoat at the age of sixteen to make him look as much like a Minister as possible. But Father, like the

proverbial worm, turned very considerably so that eventually there was effected a compromise ^{and} ~~so that~~ he became a lawyer, beginning in Chancery Lane.

In some respects his vocation was not unlike that of the Priesthood he had been denied, for a lawyer is ⁱⁿ some ways a Father Confessor in that he hears and keeps inviolate the secrets of many hearts, administering comfort, advice and consolation.

At school he was made to toe the Wesleyan line and on Sundays this sixteen year old schoolboy was sent ~~out~~ to drive a horse trap out into the villages to preach in tiny chapels to audiences of which individual members had the disconcerting habit of calling out "Alleluia!" or "Praise be to God!" at intervals during the discourse. The return journey across the lonely Somerset moors in the darkness of the wintry night must have been nerve-racking; the only light, the lamp upon the gig, the only sound the clip-clop of the horse's feet upon the hard road.

Grandfather never seemed to have tormented his younger sons with the idea of the Wesleyan Ministry, although they had their own troubles of a different nature. One was the wearing of queer clothes, often inherited from a former owner, a fact which the cruel schoolboy eyes of their

fellows soon detected.

David, Father's next brother, was provided one term with a pair of "how-do-ye-do's" of an exceptionally vivid check, which caused great hilarity, until it was discovered that the wearer's large feet were shod with boots of a decidedly heavy character, when it was found wisest to leave the owner alone, a procedure which was also found suitable when the poor lad arrived another term with a waistcoat contrived from one of Grandfather's own more intimate garments, a form of martyrdom which only those who remember their own schooldays can realise.

Meanwhile Grandpa had evolved for his own wear a garment which can only be likened to a Priests chasuble, a comparison which (he had) known would almost have made him pass out. Composed of a square Scotch plaid, he had a hole cut in the middle to enable it to slip over his head. Wearing this, with the four points ~~and~~ the fringe flapping gracefully round his knees, topped by a round clerical hat, he quite happily and unconcernedly took his walks abroad. He had no imitators in this unique sartorial achievement.

It was extremely strange that anyone so wealthy could be so miserly. Among other property he owned the ground rents of several roads behind Clapham Junction, one row of

houses being named "Caudwell Terrace" in his honour. In later years his second son, David, used to remark that if ever the "Governor" arrived in Heaven he would be found in a corner still counting his ground rents.

Away from home he was the life and soul of the party, so much so that he even baffled a celebrated thought-reader, who enquired whether he were always on the top of the world or whether he had ever in his life suffered from depression.

Depression was not the word for it - sometimes for days at the time he would lie in utter silence, refusing almost all sustenance, on the slippery leather-covered sofa in the dining-room with his face to the wall, indulging in a super orgy of sulks, for no reason that anyone was ever able to fathom.

Meanwhile the household moved round on its tiptoes with hushed voices as though death hovered over it.

Grandma was intensely houseproud and wept real tears of anguish if she found any mark on the white edges of the stairs. During her frequent illnesses, when she often had to lie in bed, the unfortunate housemaid who tidied up her room was made to place every possible piece of furniture on to Grandma's bed while that tiresome lady beneath a mountain of chairs, occasional tables and other oddments

superintended operations.

My father was devoted to his parents, although they do not seem to have shown much love for him. An instance in Father's early childhood is typical. Grandma and a sister-in-law were enjoying afternoon tea with a succulent supply of hot buttered toast. Father, very young and hungry, watched the disappearance of this well-buttered delicacy with eager eyes, so that Great-Aunt Martha said kindly, "May I give Paul a bit of toast?" To which Grandma replied hastily, "Certainly not, he is looking at it as though he wants some."

Even in maturer years poor Paul as the eldest always seemed to have the thinnest time. During one of his Mother's illnesses he spent every possible moment when not in Chancery Lane at her bedside, long hours which to a young man must have been intensely boring, to say the least. One afternoon Eber, a gay young medical student from Westminster Hospital, arrived and took over for half-an-hour while Paul went out for a short walk across the Common, which in those days was wild and untamed, lovely with golden gorse bushes and in the early summer scented with the soft pink and white of wild roses.

Meanwhile Grandfather discovered Eber, smug and self-

righteous, keeping watch in Grandma's room. Nearly to the end of the chapter all and sundry heard of dear good Eber sitting beside his poor suffering Mother's bed, while lazy Paul was out enjoying himself.

Enjoying himself! There was not much of that for young Paul. Working hard for his articles as a budding lawyer he was only allowed enough money for stern necessities, that is a piece of bread and an orange with a glass of water for his midday meal and the fare to and from Chancery Lane. Very often even this was restricted and he had to walk both ways.

Grandfather at this time was a fierce and bigoted vegetarian, so that the tired and hungry Paul's supper consisted of a dish of lentils and haricot beans, helped down with a dissertation from Grandpa on the iniquitous habits of those who at the same moment were sitting down to savory meals of abhorrent butcher's meat - juicy beef-steaks, royal sirloins or succulent legs of mutton.

Things became a little better when having obtained his articles Father had a small salary he could call his very own. It must have seemed like heaven.

And then one auspicious time, at a cousin's wedding in the north of London, he saw coming down a staircase,

a young girl with masses of rich auburn hair, a pale creamy complexion and merry laughing brown eyes, her beautiful figure graceful and erect in a gown of deep plum colour. It was his cousin Ada, whom now he saw for the first time. And it was love at first sight. But Grandfather, who at the slightest sign of any disobedience in the family immediately threatened to cut off the erring sheep from his will, disapproved of the marriage of first cousins, so that it was another four and a half years before Paul and Ada became man and wife. The wedding took place in the lovely old village church of Mother's home where she herself had been baptised, confirmed and made her first Communion. These two who had waited so long for one another were wedded quietly in the mellow sunshine of an early September morning. On their return from the honeymoon a fortnight later the glorious bells in the old Norman tower rang out in their honour far across the fields where the rich corn had but lately been harvested, through the luscious cherry orchards and down the little village street with its thatched and half-timbered houses.

Occasionally in the preceding years Grandpa had taken

Grandma away to the sea or to various Hydros to endeavour to restore her fast-failing health. Here, conveniently forgetting his ban on dancing, Grandpa joined in all the fun and games, while his long-suffering wife lay upstairs in bed, enduring that sublime misery, of illness away from home. In one gay Hydro he asked her to knit him some red socks that he might be more fittingly attired to dance with the ladies. Grandma's reply was that at his age he ought to be thinking of another world.

Meanwhile, back in Spencer Park, Father and his brothers let themselves go with various Stag Parties at which the guests were Father's young lawyer comrades, who had previously been warned by him that the Caudwell family was a very old one, with various ancient privileges and ceremonies, so that if anything occurred which might seem unusual they must not be surprised. On arrival, the guests were admitted by the page, an efficient youth much devoted to father, and ushered into a room where in the total darkness Father uttered grace in a tone of pontifical gravity.

They were then escorted to the dining-room, where having taken their seats, the page arrived with a tray containing a large assortment of hats of various

descriptions tastefully displayed - silk toppers, straw hats and tweed caps. Approaching Father, as deputy head of the family, with the solemnity of an archdeacon he offered his tray from which Father selected and put on the specimen he fancied - his example being followed by his brothers in strict order of seniority.

Fun and games for all followed the meal. On one occasion the room was thick with tobacco smoke and heavily perfumed with "drunkard's drink", cards circulating merrily, when there came a nerve-shattering peal at the front door bell. The sons of the house gave a concerted gasp of horror, "The Governor". But if guardian angels can be presumed to watch over such a scene of conviviality they certainly did that night, for the heavy-handed bellringer was not the dreaded master of the house.

Exactly where Father came in on this party is rather difficult to ascertain, as he was always a non-smoker, practically a teetotaler and if possible an even greater duffer at card games than his daughter.

My Grandmother's suffering life ended about a year before my Father's marriage. The last journey she had taken to a Hydro in Yorkshire had proved an exceedingly expensive one, for she became so desperately ill that

Grandfather hired a special train complete with engine-driver and guard all to themselves to bring her home, the doctor from the Hydro being also in attendance.

Grandpa acted the disconsolate widower for fourteen years. At great expense he erected a monument, composed of reddish brown granite brought specially from Aberdeen and set up in Wandsworth Cemetery beside the little chapel. A most heathenish erection, Grandfather always maintained it was the tallest in the cemetery. It consisted of a Cleopatra's needle set upon so substantial a base that the mere sight of it gives one indigestion. Somewhere beneath it in the heart of the earth is the family vault conveniently fitted out with enough shelves for Grandma herself, Grandpa and the remaining four sons and daughter. No room was provided for any wife of the former or husband of the latter. It is simply a strictly cosy family affair.

Its amenities were further enhanced by a hefty iron railing and the addition on one side of the wedding-cake tiers on which the "needle" is erected, ^{of} the names of Grandpa's ten children living and dead - those departed and buried in the cemetery on Battersea Rise being distinguished by the dates of their arrival and departure, the five still living having their names, but the dates

politely left blank. Father being the eldest headed the list and succeeding Vicars of St. Anne's, Wandsworth, declared it positively gave them the creeps when they came out of the cemetery chapel after a funeral, to see the name of their friend, Paul Caudwell, on a tombstone, when possibly they were having tea or supper with him the ~~next~~^{following} day.

Alas for those conveniently arranged shelves in the vault, all four sons and the daughter were buried elsewhere in different corners of England. So was the second wife, to whom Aunt Afra had kindly bequeathed her own special shelf.

Perhaps it was as well that none of them claimed their rights, as to open the tomb is a major operation, requiring the removal of a substantial piece of the cemetery.

On the other side of the church stands the tomb of Mr. Hind, an exceedingly generous benefactor to many of the Wandsworth parishes, whose finances receive a pleasant share of "Hind's Trust". His monument contains two wedding cake tiers to Grandpa's three, but the shaft consists of a really beautiful cross, set round with the circle of eternity.

No cross appears on Grandpa's monument, as in his day no Wesleyan would dream of using any form of the sacred emblem, even in the Chapel, it being considered Popery of an extreme degree, leading direct to the Seven Hills.

Grandfather's idea of Cleopatra's Needle was copied in a lesser form on the opposite side of the pathway and twins appeared a few yards away on the same side. One or two Wandsworthians even so closely followed his example as to record the names of their dead and living offspring on neighbouring tombs.

Old Mr. Nind, whose monument vies with Grandfather's in height, was another wealthy eccentric who went about looking like the world's worst tramp. On one occasion when he was walking up West Hill a generous lady, thinking he did not possess enough money for his next meal, slipped a shilling into his hand. He accepted it without demur.

In later years a Requiem ^{has been} ~~was~~ said annually at All Souls' Tide in the little church which stands between Grandfather's and Mr. Nind's tomb, and the Holy Eucharist offered for the repose of those, many of them now unknown to men, but known to God, whose bodies lie in that vast burial ground.

It is a solemn and poignant service, the worshippers approaching in the early morning, often through a soft November mist, behind which those beyond the Veil seem very close. On the great forest of tombstones the chrysanthemums, last flowers of autumn, glow in rich tints of orange and gold, crimson and brown, white and rose, the leaves from the overshadowing trees falling softly, silently to the ground. Only the trains rattling down the railway cutting at the far side of the cemetery, or perhaps the quick flight of an aeroplane, speak of the hurried bustling life beyond the gates.

Inside the church the congregation, many of them but recent mourners, with flowers in their hands to place on new-made graves, sing softly.

"One family, we dwell in him,
One Church, above beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death."

And at the altar the Priest pleads the One Eternal Sacrifice, the precious Body and Blood of the Redeemer, for the departed souls that they may rest in eternal light, joy and peace.