CHAPTER VIII

I regret to say that in spite of endless music lessons and much patience on the part of my teacher, Miss Wood, a dainty little lady who appeared one day gowned like a princess and the next as though she were clothed from a rag-bag, I was never musically inclined. I practised for many dismal hours in the drawing-room on the Broadwood piano with its fretwork front, through which peeped folds of rose-coloured silk, till in summer my fingers seemed to stick to the keys and in winter were just cold, aching stumps. I even entered a South London Musical Festival, playing a duet with a fellow sufferer, a tall, fair headed boy, who was as scared as I was myself.

Miss Wood used to count with her head and foot and voice, "One, two, three - one, two, three," but it never made any sense to me and however I managed to play classical pieces and apparently creditably, is one of

the major mysteries of my life.

Miss Wood inhabited two floors on a corner of Earlsfield Road, with a fascinating turret window. She was owned by a white terrier who did very much as he liked. One day while surveying the landscape from a window above the front door he overbalanced, falling in a direct hit on an unfortunate woman who happened to be passing. There was distinct unpleasantness all round.

Dear Miss Wood used to give an Annual Musical party to parents where everything was high thinking and very comme il faut. Successfully hiding her emotions beneath a very stylish silk frock she sat near the piano encouraging our musical efforts and endeavouring not to notice the ominous sounds from various corners of the room, these being caused by the falling of some treasured ornament. Unfortunately the room was crowded with china, photo frames and antiques, so that by the time the grand piano, the pupils and the guests were safely inside, the slightest movement caused alarming vibrations, if not worse, among her treasures.

Some of the names in our district are so familiar, they do not seem strange, but an outsider might think them curious. Among various families we have had a

Herring and a Haddock; a Cherry and an Orange; a Shilling, a Golds and a Penny; a Swallow, a Nightingale and a Swift; a Short and a Long; a Bird and a Catt; a Lamb and a Bear. A number of streets were named by the landowner from holiday resorts visited by himself and his wife - Killarney, Crieff, Swanage, Barmouth, Cader, and Pentland.

One house was named "Mynsawirski" - its next door neighbour being appropriately designated "Staggerholm"; they sound a distant relation of "Happylands", which appears in the long desert of Wandsworth Road between Battersea and Lambeth. "The Curett's Egg" ~~appeared~~ emerged as the title of a house in Swaffield Road after an air raid which undoubtedly had only left "parts of it good".

The people at a corner house in the next road to us kept a small private zoo and great was the excitement among the locals when one morning two of the snakes went for a walk in the neighbourhood all by themselves.

Our own Earlsfield Road is a mile long, with a deep railway cutting at the end of the gardens and banks lovely in early summer with white sweet-smelling may and golden gorse. As the wind sweeps through it from the blue Surrey hills a dozen miles away on the far horizon

the long grass bends and sways ~~before it~~ like an incoming tide of jade and emerald. But as the fruit blossom fades and falls in the gardens and the June roses come out to greet the sun, the grass gradually bleaches and becomes a source of very real danger. A stray spark from an engine and in a few minutes great volumes of smoke sweep upwards and the ominous crackling of swift-moving flame sends us to our telephones to dial "999. Fire". The wood of our ancient, but precious, garden fences is like tinder, so that it is with deep thankfulness we hear in an incredibly short time the deep "clang, clang, clang" of the fire engines' bells as they sweep up the road in all their scarlet splendour. The men leap from them, swiftly unrolling their great hoses, running them through our gardens, often just as a sinister flame touches one of the fences. This excitement is repeated several times during the summer and by a coincidence usually about lunch time; until at last the railway authorities send men with scythes to cut the banks and then carefully set it on fire themselves. They find a strange harvest in the deep grass at the other end of the road, where some of the residents use the banks as a dumping ground for old pots and pans,

unwanted iron bedsteads, broken china, bits of bicycles and other cast-offs of modern civilisation, all carefully thrown over so that they land outside their neighbour's fence instead of their own.

Seen from our gardens, or from the trains, the railway bank with its grass, its wild flowers and shrubs appears a delightful place to take a pleasant "country walk". This is strictly forbidden, but on one occasion with much difficulty I managed to clamber over our fence in search of a dearly-loved missing cat. It was terribly hard going and involved stumbling, falling, slipping, sliding upon the sloping bank with nowhere flat to place one's unhappy feet. Nor were the hidden blackberry briars and stinging nettles conducive to real enjoyment, to say nothing of the prospect of meeting any of the rats who enjoy its sanctuary and whom some of my cats have put out of action and then laid on the lawn for my shrinking inspection.

One night when a very young girl I was awakened by groans in the wee small hours and while I was hesitating whether I should call my father, fell again comfortably asleep. It was an action I have deeply regretted, for in the morning we heard that a sailor, travelling

across the railway lines, a scramble up the opposite side, a short walk along the top, then through the cemetery where the dead told no tales, and all was well with the wicked!

This resort for light-fingered gentry is not so popular since the railway was electrified. Nice live rails require very careful manoeuvring on a dark night and no self-respecting burglar would work by moonlight. The tall wire fences which now run along the top of our gardens present another slight deterrent for an easy getaway.

Two gentry ~~who~~ years ago invaded our house, which was then a few doors away from my present home and packed up quite a nice number of our treasures in a sack while we slept the sleep of the just - we hope - upstairs. One of them, sitting on the stairs to take off his boots, dropped the jemmy out of his pocket on the blue and white tiles of the hall. Picking up the aforementioned sack, he and his companion fled, both being caught, the first by a night watchman, who suspicious of a bulging sack at 3 a.m. in the morning chased him for two miles with ultimate success; his companion being arrested later in the day in an extremely respectable public-house on

with two companions from Portsmouth, had had a few words, with the result they had pitched him out of the train window. When he was found both his legs were amputated. Poor agonised soul! I have often wondered whether, if I had given the alarm, he might have been found earlier.

Earlsfield Station has quite pleasant, but very airy platforms. The approach from the street to the thirty-seven steps which lead to the platform is dark, depressing and often distinctly smelly. Some years ago a box addressed to a house a little distance off arrived too late at the station for delivery and was placed overnight in the booking office. The first person to undo the door in the morning had a rare scare, for the box had broken open in the night and snakes of every age and length were slithering about the room, disappearing into holes in the walls, curling round one another and the furniture. This was a long, long time ago, but I always remember it whenever I climb that interminable flight of steps and sniff that most peculiar atmosphere.

Burglars used to find our side of the road a happy hunting-ground, with a fine way of escape through the long gardens leading on to the railway bank, a drive

across the railway lines, a scramble up the opposite side, a short walk along the top, then through the cemetery where the dead told no tales, and all was well with the wicked!

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Wandsworth Common. Most of our treasures, plus the sack, were found, cast away in a ditch. Among these beloved household gods was a wedding present to my parents, a reputed Sheffield plate cake basket. After this unhappy adventure when it had returned from Scotland Yard they regularly took the thing up to their bedroom every night, to discover twenty years later it was only electro plate after all. Its next public appearance was at the parish rummage sale.

On the appearance of the two thieves at the South Western Police Court, one of them sadly observed,

"Lor, lumme, if we had known it was a lawyer's house, we might have rumbled it would be unlucky, seeing as the profession is so much like our own!"

On his release from Wandsworth Prison a year or so later this gentleman immediately called on us asking for money to make a fresh start, a process to which he was evidently quite accustomed. Father gave him a shilling and a recommendation to the Salvation Army. He was very soon home again in the prison, charged with stealing his brother-in-law's bicycle.

Soon after moving to the top of Earlsfield Road, when I was rapidly growing upwards out of all my clothes,

I was promoted to the work of a Sunday School teacher at our Mission Church, and on the first day of every week for eight years faced a class of naughty little girls only a few years younger than myself, who knew perfectly well they scared the life out of me and acted accordingly. A favourite device was to share a large sweet which was passed from hand to hand and mouth to mouth, but which I was never quick enough to detect. On Festivals when we attended the Children's Service in church my shuddering eyes used to observe very large and extremely dirty handkerchiefs spread on the floor, An enquiry invariably brought the answer,

"Mother said I wasn't to scratch my new shoes."

The same handkerchiefs, perhaps a trifle smaller, were pinned to the children's frocks with safety pins when their owners attended the Annual Summer Outing.

One of these children's mother suffered from a "bad leg", a very bad leg indeed, for I knew when that small girl had arrived in class even if she had come in behind me. Ugh!!

Their comments on some of my lessons were entertaining, such as:-

"Teacher, did you know Nehemiah?"

"St. Francis was very seasick."

All pot—flowers die on Mother and me in an incredibly short space of time, however much we try to make household pets of them. Once, only once, did we ever shine in this line of horticulture, when my geranium won a prize at the Sunday School Flower Show. The picture I won I keep to this day in a box with a card showing a cat which squeaks just like a kitten when it is pressed in the midriff. Many of my good honest cats have been deceived by it and diligently searched the room to see what beastly little kitten is poaching on their preserves.

My work with the Sunday School ended somewhat abruptly when one of my little dears came up to see me suffering from measles which I caught in a most virulent form. It developed on holiday at Bournemouth with my Father, with the result he had to have my hotel bedroom disinfected, while I languished alone in a nursing home for six dreary weeks.

Previously, at the age of eighteen, when I ought to have known better, I caught chickenpox. Two things about this illness I specially remember, the first, crawling out of bed and tottering to the looking glass to see my face. I saw it, or rather a pair of horrified

dark eyes in the midst of a mass of frightful sores. The second memory is of one night, delirious with the frightful irritation, I bounced up and down between the sheets, saying aloud, "I must break this bed - I must - I must!" And I did!

In my very early days, like many children of the period, I slept on a "chair bedstead", a wonderful piece of furniture composed of an iron frame and legs, which piled with black cushions ornamented by large red and yellow flowers could form what was known as an "easy chair". Extended with two more legs which had been tucked under the cushions it made quite a comfortable bed for a small person, its only drawback being an unpleasant tendency to fold up and return to a chair about 3 a.m. on a cold morning.

It always reminded me of the story of the patent bedstead which acted as an alarm clock of a particularly efficient character. No reaching out of bed and shutting off the alarm with this contrivance for on reaching the appointed hour it suddenly shut up, landing the occupant on the floor and at the same time playing a few bars of music to cheer him up. There were two tunes, "We won't go home till morning" for the convivial, and "Awake, my

soul and with the sun the daily course of duty run", for the more sober-minded. The story ends sadly, for one night a bishop was staying in the household and some officious person set the alarm, so that in the early hours his astonished lordship was suddenly pitched out of bed to the tune of "We won't go home till morning". We are not told what the reverend gentleman remarked.

In the days when I was still a child, makers of patent medicines used to circulate horrid little booklets through the letter-box, describing the symptoms of loathsome complaints with letters from Mrs. Hadsome of Too-too-in-the-Marsh or Mr. Going-Strong of Healthborough. These letters gave details, dreadful in the extreme, of their ailments, and their miraculous recovery, owing to this special medicine, which was now being taken regularly by the whole family, including Baby Bill, aged three weeks. These booklets I read in the privacy of my bedroom, shivering with terror as I felt in myself the beginning of every symptom, ~~terrified~~.

Canon Oswald Craig, the second Vicar of St. Anne's that I remember, had an embarrassing experience one evening when the Bishop of the diocese dined at the Vicarage, for the chicken provided for the occasion

had long since reached the age of retirement, with the consequence it was very, very tough and so defied the Vicarage carving knife that it eventually landed on the floor, after bringing up blisters on the agitated Canon's hands. "Chicken" was certainly not the right name for that antique bird.

It was Canon Craig who had the bright idea of having classes to teach the girls of the parish a little home nursing, for which I often have had cause to bless his name. The charming lady doctor who taught us was anxious that one of us should act as "mannequin" for the rest of the class, to learn how to give an invalid a blanket bath in bed, but we all went on strike, so that she substituted a large doll.

In the bandaging class I nearly lost a friend, as I bandaged her pretty plump arm so tightly that it began to swell to quite an alarming degree, bulging out in fleshy tucks.

I was a dismal failure in Canon Craig's Folk Dancing class - it was about as easy for the instructress as teaching ballet to a Polar bear.

In those days the White Slave Traffic did quite an amount of business in this island, shipping unfortunate

girls to South America, so that Canon Craig summoned the girls of the parish and their mothers to attend a meeting to be addressed by a lady from the Vigilance Society whose work saved many young women from this dreadful fate. She was an eloquent speaker, who warned us from going anywhere with a stranger, or accepting any article of food or drink from anyone we did not know, however plausible or fashionably attired.

A girl I knew, came up from the suburbs one day alone in a train with a beautifully dressed lady who suddenly became faint and ill. The girl was exceedingly sympathetic, helped her out of the train at Victoria and at the lady's request, called a taxi. The lady, still very faint, asked the girl if she could possibly see her home, as she felt so ill. The girl willingly responded and was stepping into the taxi, when she found a hand on her arm and looked round into the stern eyes of a policeman, who enquired:-

"Do you know this lady?"

"No," answered the girl, "she was very faint in the train and I am seeing her home."

"I think not," said the policeman, grimly. "That is if you want to see your home and friends again."

The lady made a swift recovery and a rapid retreat.

Thanks to the speaker from the Vigilance Society I had a lucky escape myself a few years later. During the First World War I was acting as private secretary to the Commandant of the Kensington branch of the Red Cross. On one of the numerous Flag Days for our Allies we were short of workers, so that my Commandant sent me into the Brompton Road, in the full glory of my uniform, to do my utmost with a detestable tray of flags. It was a bitterly cold day, but business was quite good. A well-dressed lady, with an ingratiating smile like a Cheshire cat, bought a flag and commiserated with me concerning the weather.

"You must be perished with cold standing about in the street. I have such a cosy little flat round the corner. Do come and have a nice hot cup of coffee."

I answered with extreme politeness.

"Thank you very much, but I am not allowed to leave my post, while on duty."

"Well, then, let me bring you some coffee in a thermos flask."

I again thanked her, but with increasing suspicion.

"It is most kind of you, but I should not be allowed

to take it in uniform."

The lady was most persistent and positively badgered me, but in the end she very unwillingly faded out of the picture.

I reported the incident to my Commandant on my return, to which that kind and far-seeing lady replied grimly.

"It is a mercy you didn't go with her, Caudwell, or we should certainly never have seen you again."

My education before these events and after I left Putney High School consisted of French lessons at the Convent of the Presentation on West Hill, Continental tours, and six months at a Literary Salon.

The nuns at the Convent wore huge white starched head-dresses which stuck out on either side of their faces like wings in the wrong place. They spoke no English and were really charming creatures, who often took me round the garden to admire the "salade". They had been turned out of France in one of the religious persecutions. To their credit they never attempted the slightest amount of proselytizing, although they questioned me very often about the Church of England and were greatly astonished to find our Creeds and our

Sacraments were the same as their own.

The Litery Salon, just off Piccadilly, was quite a different proposition, run very efficiently by an ex-Girton girl, distinctly gone to seed. She was really rather a dear, although her felt hat had collected the dust of many years upon its surface. She prescribed an amazing collection of books for our "homework", but when it came to Balzac, my Father said he would be ashamed to ask for that gentleman's works at the local Public Library. Which made things rather awkward!

The ecclesiastical line of thought and reading which most interested me was looked upon by the rest of the class as extremely peculiar and the only time I came into my own was a day when our tutor was ill and her place suddenly taken by her brother, a very delightful Anglican Priest.

The class was quite mixed. One very pretty girl, with dark waving hair, natural, not permed in those days, who often wore a scarlet silk blouse, was invited out to lunch one day by our tutor. As they approached the restaurant the girl asked to be excused for a few minutes. On reappearing a short while later, she was dressed in quite different clothes, airily explaining:

"Oh, I have just pawned my other things round the corner. I thought I should like a change."

It was rather earlier than this that my innocent Mother came in touch with a celebrated murderer. Having been troubled with deafness ever since scarlet fever as a child she was always ready to try any new remedy and on one occasion spent some honest money on a wonderful contraption she bought from a firm in town, which like so many articles foisted on the suffering deaf proved worthless. Great was her astonishment later to find the plausible gentleman who had sold it proved to be the notorious "Dr." Crippen, who cut his wife into neat little slices which he put into the kitchen range, then absconded with a girl, Ethel le Neve, the latter dressed as a boy. The pair were recognised on a trans-Atlantic liner, it being the first time in human history that a ship was kept in touch with Scotland Yard by means of wireless. the case proved to be the début of that famous scientific detective. Sir Bernard Spilsbury.

Mother has been extremely shy of all so-called deaf aids from that very hour.

Various maids with neat black frocks, white aprons and daintily starched caps served us in those days. As they generally left us for wedded bliss we gained

quite a reputation as a stepping-stone to matrimony.

One or two of them could have gained the front row among the world's best liars, especially a young widow, who wore combs set with brilliants beneath her cap, apparently bought in the days when good old Woolworths was in reality a "sixpenny" store. Her story of their acquisition was that her late lamented husband had done a good turn to the town of Poitiers, whereupon the Mayor gave them a grand reception, treated them like royalty and presented her with the said combs. One could only feel that the gift was scarcely worthy of so celebrated a town, or else that the funds at the disposal of his Worship the Mayor ran unexpectedly short.

Another amazing adventure related by the lady concerned the time of the terrible Silvertown explosion at Woolwich, where she was engaged on clerical work - or so she said! News was brought to her and several others that the place would blow up in half an hour, whereupon she very wisely beat a hasty retreat. The explosion occurred when she was in the train homeward-bound. The train lay down flat on its side on the line, then stood up again and quite nonchalantly continued on its journey. The next morning, on entering her office,

which apparently bore a charmed life, she found a fireman's helmet on her ledger, complete with the fireman's head inside, the remainder of the unfortunate gentleman having apparently dissolved into the air. I fear she was a descendant of Ananias and Sapphira.

"Bessie" only laughed once all the years she was with us. It was so alarming a spectacle that we lived in constant terror as to whether it would happen again. On her days off, when she went to meet her young man, she wore her abundant black hair piled in roll upon roll upon the top of her head likes shelves in a pantry. One winter's night when she came in the snow had settled in layers on each shelf.

One young person, a bit dim in the intellect, came to my Mother one day looking extremely scared.

"Please, 'm, there's a man in the 'all. I can't get 'im out."

"But why did you let him come in?" said Mother.

"Please, 'm! 'E would come in, I couldn't keep 'im out. Will you put 'im out! 'E's gone in the drawing-room, so you just look an see 'e ain't put any of them bits of china in 'is pockets. Just watch out, they don't look bulgy."

Distinctly apprehensive, my Mother hurried into the drawing-room, to find, comfortably seated in a chair and smiling beatifically, our very delightful old friend, the second curate, known in the parish surreptitiously as "Baby Bolton", owing to a song with which he had obliged at a parish function, with the unfortunate finale, "He sat upon the baby on the shore."

Mother entertained her visitor to tea, crushing down her giggles every time her eyes lit upon the pockets in his perfectly tailored suit.

The same maid was responsible for another alarm, as one morning she startled us at breakfast:

"Please 'm, there's a parcel in the shed. I'm sure there's a dead baby in it. Will the Master please come and see!"

Without any undue enthusiasm the Master went to make an inspection. All was well - for although I have forgotten the contents of the parcel, it was certainly something quite innocent.

A similar alarm disturbed the decorum of the Church Army Hostel next to St. Anne's Vicarage where a parcel exuding a distinctly gory substance was discovered just inside the gate. A policeman having been summoned, he

prodded the object with much distaste, producing more gore, then deciding to open it, disclosed the form of a very dead and neatly skinned rabbit.

Not long afterwards a story went the rounds, of a lady living in a flat whose beloved pussy having died she decided the only way to dispose of him was in a parcel over Putney Bridge. She took a tram at twilight and hung about the bridge awaiting the opportunity when no one would be looking, but alas that opportunity never came, so she took pussy home again, where she thought she would take one more last farewell. With much grief she opened the parcel, to find inside it a particularly succulent leg of mutton. Someone who found poor pussy must have had a still bigger surprise.

Slightly reminiscent of this story is the adventure of a friend of mine, of most exemplary character, who returned home after a bus ride to find two crook-handled umbrellas hanging on her arm, without the slightest idea how they arrived there.

Another of our maids, who was blessed with luxuriant, though somewhat coarse, black hair had enjoyed the distinction of sitting in a shop window in town, her tresses like a magnificent shawl spread over her shoulders,

advertising a well-known hair restorer. It must have been a deadly dull way of earning a living, as she had to sit with her back to the window gazers, neither seeing nor hearing their admiration.

"Hilda" was a delightful personality, endued with all the quick wit, the humour and the kindness of the true Cockney. She was a finely built girl who complained that her very comfortably cushioned posterior always seemed to be in somebody's way. Her home was close to the Northcote Road, that colourful market where the buses edge carefully behind the rows of stalls and in Hilda's day a shrill-voiced woman armed with a fragrant basket, used to scream,

"Here you are! All that lot of mint for a penny! Make your mutton taste like lamb, dear!"

Close to her was an ancient personage, suitable for the part of Methuselah on the stage, who also carried a basket of greenery and announced in a voice of deepest anguish and despair,

"Chickweed for singing birds! Chickweed for singing birds."

Hilda's two chief gifts were making my nightdresses and breaking crockery. The latter she always blamed

to her posterior which apparently bumped into things unknown to its owner. She became engaged to a bright little ex-Bombardier, to whom she usually referred as "pore Billy", and who had been the prize boxer of his regiment. The wedding feast took place at her brother-in-law's establishment and it was not till all the numerous guests had departed it was discovered that those who had been the life and soul of the party and consumed quantities of food and drink were known to neither bride nor groom, each thinking they were the friends of the other.

The honeymoon lasted for the weekend only, no more of that blissful time being desired and the bride returned to daily work with us on the Monday, announcing that pore Billy had been round the world and knew a thing or two, so that she would remain with us for "keeps", as there would be no family. Unfortunately something went wrong and within a year Mother was summoned to see Hilda with a tiny black head lying beside hers on the pillow. Unlucky Hilda! She would have made such a kind and loving mother; Pore Billy a devoted father, but none of their several children ever survived.

One of her cousins came to an untimely end, she

being one of the unfortunate "Brides in the Bath", married to the unpleasant gentleman, who having managed to divert his newly wed wives' savings to himself, neatly drowned them in their bath. He was also one of Sir Bernard Spilsbury's successful cases.

One of our housekeepers, a nice widow whose children felt she was too superior to wash our plates and clean our doorstep, gave me a rare fright one night when my parents were away. I was awakened at midnight by a knocking at my door and a terrified sepulchral voice:-

"Let me in, Miss Irene, let me in!"

Jumping out of bed and unlocking the door I found our widow shaking with terror. Pushing me on one side, she rushed into the room and locked the door.

"There's a burglar downstairs, Miss Irene. I have heard him."

Even an amateur, at his very first house-breaking, would by this time have been far distant, considering the frightful noise our widow had made. In the moonlight I could see her eyes glittering like a madwoman and as she stood between the door and myself the situation was not too good. Happily all ended well, with the discovery that the "burglar" was our next door neighbour going to bed very late, putting up his shutters at the drawing-

room window.

~~Another policeman's daughter had a large cosy-looking Mamma in Battersea, who occasionally came to "oblige us". Her daughter used to speak of the time when she bought a bloater from one of the fish stalls in the Northcote Road market.~~

~~"She saw the biggest one of the lot, pulled 'im out by 'is tail and when she cooked 'im, 'e was that salty she couldn't eat 'im. Served 'er right for being greedy."~~

Another widow who came to us just before Father went to hospital for one of his operations might have been photographed as the world's model housekeeper - hair parted neatly in the middle, a motherly expression, combined with that of a seraph, a spotless frock and apron, hands that were equally skilful at cooking or housework. Truly man only looketh on the outward appearance and we should have done better to have remembered Sam Weller's father's advice, "Beware of Widders", for we heard from our opposite neighbours that one night she was escorted all down the road with a delighted rowdy company of men and boys who propped her against our gatepost, from which position she fell

head first into our hitherto respectable garden.

A little later she picked herself up and rang the front door bell. Innocent and unsuspecting I opened it, to find her standing on the doorstep smiling inanely. Somewhat scared I helped her into the kitchen where she leant against the dresser still smiling. Mother and I, fearing she was going to have a fit, telephoned the doctor, our young friend, Dr. Jimmie Thyne. On his arrival a few minutes later he had no illusions about any fits, but sternly commanded her to walk across the kitchen, to which she responded by a very zig-zag progress towards the ideal boiler. Jimmie then said sternly:-

"Say 'Constantinople'", to which she replied thickly:-

"I ain't going to say 'Conshshtanshinople'."

Whereupon Jimmie grasped her arm with all his six foot, broad-shouldered force,

"Up you go to bed."

And somehow he pushed her up to her second floor room, leaving Mother and me to finish the job. We dragged off her frock, her boots and her pearl necklace, but by that time she was snoring on the bed, so we left her to get on with it.

Jimmie, our kind and devoted doctor and friend, once said to me he thought his would only be a short life. Whether this fancy were due to the second sight possessed by many Scotchmen one cannot tell, but it was a true prophecy, for only a few years later, at the beginning of the Second World War he volunteered for active service and in less than a month went down in a torpedoed battleship, tending the wounded until the very end. Yet another instance of that greater love which gives its own life for a friend.

He came to see us the day before he joined up and as he said Goodbye and rode away, a cold stab seemed to touch my heart, so that I felt that in this world I should never see him again.

Our second house in Earlsfield Road, No.19, was a charming home with honeysuckle and jessamine outside the French windows leading into the garden and a great tub of tiny bluebells beneath the shade of the pear trees. A summerhouse at the top of the garden was the scene of some of my early literary efforts.

"Braemar" was the name on the front gate leading along the neat gravel path to the porch over-shadowed by a rosy japonica, and it was at Braemar that I

accomplished the difficult process of growing up. My hair, which until I was eighteen had hung down my back, tied with a huge black silk bow at the nape of my neck, was now piled on the top of my head, with fashionable pads inserted at the sides to make it stick out. "Perms" were yet to be invented, but there was the torturing process of back-combing to give a fluffy appearance; strands of the hair being taken and combed underneath towards the head. Removing the tangles at night was real torture. Hats were as large as cart-wheels and skewered on the head by pins a foot or more in length with enormous heavy tops.

A fashion of the day was to cover these tops with vari-coloured sealing wax, often formed into flower-like shapes. Some people were very clever at this "arty-crafty" work, but my efforts only looked a mess.

Dresses with inner lace slips at the neck were the mode, with horrible bits of whalebone inserted at intervals to make them stand up. Skirts modestly reached the ankles and collected mud and dust galore upon the hems, which were reinforced with a brushlike edging, in which one's heels caught on any and every occasion. It was almost an impossibility to carry

anything upstairs with both hands, as one hand was needed to hold up the skirt to prevent stepping on it. Full well do I remember one rose-pink frock with countless rows of tiny frills, bestowed on me when my skirts were first "let down" after I left school. On countless occasions I forgot to hold it up when running upstairs, until I heard one of the frills give an ominous "zippp..."

Hot water bottles were little known and only used for the very aged or those in extremis. An occasional concession on a very cold night was a specially prepared glazed brick heated in the oven, then wrapped in a flannel bag and placed in the bed, where it soon became literally stone cold.

Flannel petticoats were still in use and dreadful knitted woollen vests which like the black woollen stockings tickled like a hair shirt and were reduced to the consistency of a board when washed. Other under-clothes and nightgowns were made of best calico, which struck a chill through to the marrow in one's bones, especially on Sundays when they were first put on with other "clean clothes".

It was about this time that Father and Mother attended the Lord Mayor's Banquet. Mother, with her

auburn hair piled high, was dressed in a close fitting black velvet frock with a train. A fancy black silk loop was attached, through which she could slip her finger and raise the train out of harm's way when too many men's clumsy feet surrounded her. Over the black velvet was cunningly draped a shawl-like scarf of English handmade needle-run lace, patterned with tiny roses. She and Grandmother Elizabeth had worn it at their respective weddings. Happily Father did not share the unhappy fate of so many men, who in their evening clothes look like waiters who have temporarily mislaid the napkins over their arms.

It was also about this time that my Grandfather died at the age of eighty-seven and a half, game to the last, even to chopping down trees. During the last two or three years I learnt to love him, for with my adolescence his dislike of children vanished, so that I was occasionally smuggled into his house for tea, which consisted of highly coloured iced cake, price sixpence a pound and bread, topped with very inexpensive butter. "Smuggled" was the right word, for I had strict instructions not to tell anyone but Father and Mother of my visit, for fear that any other member of the family might not

like it.

Grandfather used to ask many questions about St. Anne's, shivering with interested horror at the High Church practices. In vain he endeavoured to win me over to one of his pet theories - that the Resurrection did not take place on Easter Sunday. By this time we grandchildren, eight in number, received a ten shilling postal order at Christmas, with the same instructions as formerly, that it was to be put straight into the Post Office Savings Bank. The same letter of deep gratitude also had to be written. Mother, who possessed the gift of making things rhyme, produced a poem on several occasions which acknowledged the gift as though it had set me up for life.

Those were the days when a death in a family necessitated mourning of the deepest dye, presumably as a slight hint that even the best of folks might not have followed the strait and narrow way, a denial of the glory of the Christian faith which over the open grave can utter the Saviour's triumphant words, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in me though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

For my Grandfather's funeral Mother's mourning garments were trimmed with deep bands of crape and Father's silk hat bore a black band of incredible width. A frock of dense black, unrelieved with white was considered correct for seventeen-year old "me".