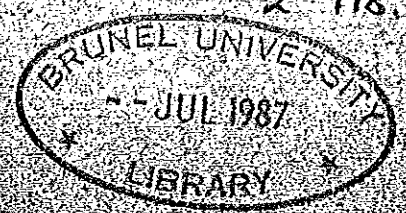


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Henrietta Burkin.

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This was to have been an account of my early youth, in the East End of London, but I think I had better commence with my Mother's early life as told to me.

My Mother was born in the East End of London, in the year 1868, and my Grandfather showed no interest in her whatsoever, as she was the ninth girl to arrive, and although one or two had died at birth, and one at three years, he very much wanted a son. During the next four years, my Grandmother gave birth to two sons, which delighted him.

Life was very hard, as my Grandfather was often out of work, (and not too eager to get back), so as soon as they were able, the elder children were sent to work to bring in a little money. Mother left school when she was twelve, and about this time, compulsory education was being talked of, and in fact, the school authorities asked Mother to go back, but Grandmother needed what money she could earn, however small, especially as the two older girls had married at eighteen, and had families of their own, (Mother was an Aunt at six years of age).

She found work in a boot factory, sewing buttons on boots; she hated this work, as the women were years older, and very coarse, and made ribald remarks about her figure, which greatly embarrassed her.

Sometimes, she obtained a little extra work on Saturdays or Sundays, helping the Vicar's wife, when she had visitors to lunch, to prepare the vegetables and lay the table. One Sunday, the Vicar's wife asked Mother to wash a lovely cut glass water jug, which was only used when guests were expected, and Mother, being very young and thoughtless, put it under the hot water tap, and the bottom fell out completely; of course, she was very scared, but the Vicar's wife was sweetness itself, and said, not to worry as it was very old!

Mother's eldest Sister, who was thirteen years older, lived next door; she was very often in debt, and food for Sunday's breakfast very often forgotten until late on Saturday night. A night Mother often talked about, was, one Saturday night, when her Sister gave her half a sovereign to go to the market with a list of the things she wanted. This was very exciting for Mother, as there was so much to see; it was all very noisy with plenty of stalls, lit by naphtha flares like huge torches. A man and his wife were selling song sheets and shouting, "All the latest songs of the day, price one halfpenny", and then they broke into song:-

"Go and leave me if you wish it,
Never let me crosse yer mind,
If you fink me so un unwervy,
Go and leave me, never mind.
Verse:- A short time 'e loved me sincerely,
'e said that 'e doted on me,
our 'oneymoon scarcely was over,
When a devil 'e turned art to be.
Chorus: Go and leave me, etc.,

Mother bought a song sheet, and then, a man came round selling umbrellas - "Lovely Umbrellas, only ninepence"; Mother thought, Hannah would love an umbrella when she goes out on Sundays, and only ninepence out of the half sovereign", so she bought a black one, and as the man gave it to her, he said, "I'd rather sell it to you than I would yer Mother", which delighted her, but when she gave it to her Sister, she said, "I've no doubt he would". When she opened it, it was full of holes'. (This has been a family joke handed down for years; when my daughter started business, she used to spend most of her lunch hour in the second-hand book shops in Charing Cross Road, and would come home with some very "tatty" volumes, which she thought beautiful, and I would always say, "What did the assistant say, "he would rather sell it to you than he would your Mother") ?.

Mother then obtained work, and her two Brothers, with the Wholesale Co-operative Society, which was in Leman Street, Aldgate, in the tea packing department, which was a great "step-up"; she was there fourteen years, and became forewoman over about thirty girls (two of them her nieces). It was very dusty work, caps and aprons were provided.

Mother hated to be late for work, as she said it was so embarrassing to arrive late with all the girls assembled, but, one morning she awoke late, and there was a scurrying around, as she had to call her two Brothers, and give Grandmother her breakfast, as she suffered from gallstones, and was often unwell; it was pandemonium this morning, with her Sister calling from the next door garden for something she wanted to borrow. Finally, Mother got so frustrated, that, just as she was about to put on her whalebone corset, she dashed into Brother Bob's bedroom, and gave him a clout round the ear with the corset, telling him to get a move on; he got a slight cut on the head, and when he saw the blood, he let out a yell saying, "She's killed me, she's killed me". Grandmother fainted in the kitchen, and had to be revived with a drop of brandy, and Hannah continued to call over the garden wall, and at last all three running down the street to catch the tram.

Sometimes, the tea planters would come home on leave from India, and Mother's Sister would provide accommodation - a great scurrying around then, as though Royalty were to be entertained!

Mother was very fond of music, although on Sundays, Grandfather would only allow hymns to be sung, not even whistling was allowed. She bought a banjo, and shut, herself in her bedroom to practice, but her Brothers used to stand outside catawauling. A young man opened a piano shop in the Commercial Road, Stepney, his first venture into business, and Mother was his first customer. It was a lovely rosewood piano, with candle holders on either side; she paid monthly instalments, and as she had never missed a payment, he

returned the last instalment. She now had lessons, and could really play quite well.

By now, her two Brothers were married, with families, which meant that she was the only one at home, so if Grandfather had, no work, all Mother's wages had to be given up to keep the house going.

Mother's youngest Brother suddenly decided to emigrate to Canada, to make his fortune! He expected to be gone a year, and would then send for his wife and family, but when he arrived in Canada, the Authorities had no work to offer him in the Towns, and sent him miles up country to a lumber camp; when the lumber jacks saw him they roared with laughter, as they were huge men, Russians and Germans, more than six feet tall, and my Uncle was a mere five feet! They didn't know what to do with him, so gave him the job of camp cook; he wrote home to Mother asking her to send out her cookery book, and he stayed there for two years, but didn't make his fortune! In the meantime, his wife and young children were in dire straits, and by Christmas, had burnt everything that was burnable to keep warm, and were very short of food and clothing, so the rest of the family had to come to their aid, with Mother making clothes, and the others providing food and fuel.

Mother loved dancing, but before she had any hope of going on Saturday nights, she had to clean the whole house through, so she used to do it very late on Friday night, having always to work on Saturday at the C.W.S.

The Co-operative Society was in a very rough area, and, one Friday evening, whilst walking home with her niece, an urchin crept up behind them, and snatched the string bag they had dangling between them, no doubt thinking it contained their wages, but it only had a pair of scissors and a ball of string, but it nearly broke their wrists.

Mother was a beautiful girl, with very dark hair, very fair skin, and lovely hazel eyes; she loved bright colours, and could wear cerise and purple to perfection. She made one mistake when she was seventeen! It was fashionable to have ones' hair cut very short; her sister Liza came home one day with her hair cut, and as it was naturally curly, it looked beautiful, so Mother went, without telling anyone, and when she came home, Grandmother almost had one of her "faints", as it was so straight, and looked terrible, and she kept it covered for weeks until it started to grow.

When she was about thirty, she met my Father, and, although her childhood had not been very rosy, her troubles now really began.

They were married at Limehouse Church, and Mother gave up her work at the CWS, as married women were not employed.

My Father was a lighterman on the Thames; he was a very gay man, and as he could play the piano quite well, he was in great demand for parties, and would often play until the early hours of the morning. In his young days he sometimes played in the Summer beach shows at the seaside.

Within a couple of years my Mother was expecting me, and this was when "fate" really struck; my Father died ten days before I was born of Enteric Fever (a form of Typhoid), probably caused through eating mussels, of which he was very fond; my Mother had prepared them, and perhaps there was a bad one amongst them. She would never have a mussel in the house again. My Cousin told me, that when she was fourteen years old, she was told to go with Mother to visit my Father just before he died; she said the fever hospital was a long journey from Stepney, and they had to climb a steep hill; she said, she never expected to make the journey there and back without Mother giving birth! When my Father died, there was no widows' pension, only what remained of the insurance money after the funeral had been paid for, but a fortnight or so before my Father was taken to hospital, he slipped and fell down a ship's hold, and a Cousin (by marriage), who fancied himself as a "poor mans lawyer" applied on behalf of Mother for compensation, pleading that the fall possibly caused his death, and pointing out that Mother was left with no means of support, and a baby a few weeks old. He was able to obtain twenty pounds.

Mother now went to live with her sister Liza, who was dying of cancer, to help nurse her, and look after her husband and four young children, and after she died, we stayed on for a time, but my Uncle was a very cruel and mean man, and my Mother rather hasty tempered, so we left, and for a few weeks we lived with her Brother and family whilst she looked for a room and work (very difficult for a woman with a small child). We found a small bed-sitting room (by now the few pounds compensation had run out), and work at the local workhouse (where old people and orphans were taken, with no means of support). Her wages were, fifteen shillings one week, and thirteen the next, due to stoppages, hours from seven a.m. until 5 p.m. Every morning at half past six, I was washed and dressed, and taken to my Mother's older Sister Lanna (as I always called her) who had a family of four or five still at home; I had to amuse myself on the bedroom floor until my Aunt and Uncle got up. I very often "amused" myself by unlacing my Uncle's boots, and lacing them up on one side, which was not at all appreciated, especially if he was late; he used to say "moggy's been here again"!

Mother collected me just after five o'clock, and if my Aunt said I'd been naughty, and wouldn't eat my dinner, (she always seemed to ^{put} parsley in everything), there was trouble, even though I was only about two years old, as we

were so dependent on my Aunt having me, for which Mother paid two shillings weekly, and with the rent of the room, there wasn't much spare cash. Mother's constant dread, was, that something would happen to her, and I should be put in the orphanage. One Sunday we were invited to tea by a middle-aged couple, who had no children, and they very much wanted to adopt me, and kept impressing it on Mother, how she couldn't afford to keep me, and what a good home they could give me, so much so, that we never went there again.

All my Cousins went to the same Church school, (boys and girls), called Green Coat School, in existence since the year 1700 and something, originally as a Charity school. On Friday afternoons, elder sisters or brothers could take the younger members of the family to school for the afternoon. My cousin took me when I was two and a half years; I expect we were very well behaved, we daren't be otherwise! Then at three, I went to school all day, a special concession due to Mother's circumstances. I went by myself, as my elder Cousin had now left, but she used to watch me until I got to the school door, but I was so independent that I used to wave to her to go back, so she used to hide in doorways until I got there. I remember one incident very vividly. The milkman used to deliver the milk in a little hand-cart, and there was a tap in front where he filled the small galvanized cans, and while he was delivering the milk, I turned the tap on, and was so scared because I couldn't turn it off, that I never stopped running until I reached school!

Every Thursday morning, the Curate, or sometimes the Vicar from St. Dunstan's in the East, to which our school belonged, came to give us a scripture lesson, and on one occasion, just before Lent, he asked some of us what we were going to give up during Lent; he was highly amused when my Cousin said she would go without black grapes and bananas! I doubt if she had ever tasted either!

I used to stammer quite a lot when I was very young, so my Cousin used to teach me poetry, one was called "Washing-Day", and before I started, I was told to take a deep breath, and speak very slowly.

Most of the children were very pale, and I was asked quite a few times if I would like to go home, but having a very fair skin, I looked far worse than I felt. One poor boy named Walter, who always looked so ill, died of Tuberculosis (or Consumption as it was then called); the class collected for a wreath, and I and two others were detailed to take it to the house. The "Departed", were always put in the parlour (or front room) until the funeral, and all neighbours and friends were expected to call in, so we three had to go in and see our playmate, as his Mother would have been most upset had we refused. Funerals were very solemn affairs; the whole street would draw their curtains or blinds, and on the day, the horses and carriages would arrive at the house, beautiful black horses they were,

with tall black plumes on their heads which shook whenever they tossed their heads; over their backs they had long black or purple velvet trappings, which almost reached the ground on either side. All the neighbours would stand silently to watch the cortege drive off. Usually there were masses of wreaths, sometimes artificial flowers under a glass dome which remained on the grave for years. All widows wore "widows weeds", which was a long black veil attached to the back of the hat, down to the waist, and which was worn for one or two years, sometimes longer, as also were the black coats, dresses and suits.

Most widows changed houses soon after the funeral, I don't know why, perhaps because they'd spent most of their married lives there, and brought up their families, or because they had been widowed very young, and the house held too many memories. It never seemed to be a problem to move; someone always knew of a house becoming vacant, and one would apply to the Company who owned the house, or, if the house you were living in was owned by the same Company, you made enquiries of the rent collector, when he came on Monday for the rent. Everybody rented their house, the whole house, (I never knew of two families living in the same house until years later), but they would often let the best bedroom to a lodger, usually a widower or batchelor, and he had his meals with the family, but a widow usually did her own cooking, very often on just a gas ring.

We now had another bed-sitting room in a house rented by a German widow with three teen-aged children; she had come to England when she was sixteen to marry a German, and she had never returned to Germany. She was kindness itself; she made me a feather bed, and would often ask Mother to let me come down to share the evening meal, which was usually soup, and I always wanted to know if it had "pipes" in it, which was macaroni, and which I loved.

When I had measles, they all nursed me, especially the two boys, so that Mother shouldn't come near me, and could continue to go to work at the orphanage, as measles was notifiable, and she would have had to stay at home without pay.

Monday, as well as being wash-day, was "Pawn-brokers" day! Early in the morning you would see a "stream" of women pushing prams containing a bundle, on their way to the pawn-broker; mostly, it was the husband's Sunday suit to pawn until Saturday, when they would get it out for Sunday. My Aunt pawned my Uncle's suit one Monday, and he having no idea of this, asked her on the Friday morning to put out his best suit as he was going to a meeting in the evening. Then it really was "panic stations", as no one received their wages until Saturday, so Mother helped out by pawning her wedding ring until Saturday.

"Father Xmas" I really believed in; I remember

calling up the bedroom chimney that I wanted a doll, but not expecting one. However, it seems that very early on Christmas morning, a kind neighbour had brought me one, (bought on Christmas Eve), and when I awoke, I could hardly believe my eyes, there was a wax doll sitting on the hearth. Of course I had to keep her well away from the fire, or she would have melted!

Now, came a great change into our lives. My Mother met a batchelor of about forty, who fell hopelessly in love with her, and asked her to marry him; she said she would need time to think about it, and, although the thought of leaving me an orphan was a constant worry, she was not sure if she wanted to take on a man who had led a very gay life, drinking and gambling. He lodged with his Brother and Sister-in-law, who were very much against his marrying, as, although he drank and gambled, he always paid his rent promptly. He took us out sometimes, once to the White City Exhibition, and one Sunday evening we were invited to his Brother's for supper, and I remember it was cold lamb chops; I was not given one, being considered too young at three to have late supper, but, when I got home, I stood by the bedroom door and wouldn't get into bed for quite half an hour, saying continuously, "It wasn't fair, why wasn't I given a chop" so finally Mother got exasperated, and said, that if I didn't get into bed within a few minutes, there would be trouble, and that she was going to put the light out.

One Sunday. Mother said, "If you see the nice man when you go out to play, and he asks you what you've got for dinner today, don't say a tin of salmon", but of course I quite forgot, and that's exactly what I did say!

After very careful thought, and a lot of persuasion from her Sister, Mother decided to re-marry (one of her pet sayings was, "It is always better to have a husband who drinks, rather than a lazy man, as the man who drinks, will always work to provide the money for his drink, but nothing will make a man work if he is lazy").

So, early in December, when I was four, they were married; It was a very quiet affair, and I was a bit "put out" because I didn't go, but stayed at home with a Cousin. Although it was a very quiet wedding, the "celebrations" lasted more than a week, as friends and relatives kept calling, with a tray or a set of jugs, and one rather nice present from a cabinet maker, a tobacco casket in the shape of a castle, with drawers for cigars, and one rather nice fruit dish I am still using today! All this, of course meant drinking the "happy couple's" health, and which also meant that there was quite a bill to settle at the corner pub, when it was all over.

Things really began to change now. My Stepfather idealized me. He was a Mains Foreman with the Electricity Company at Charing Cross, with a steady wage of one pound a week, and we now rented the whole house (the German widow moving to another). We had a lodger to help with the rent,

a widower friend, who worked on the Great Eastern Railway. He always seemed to be bringing home eels, which Mother cooked, and left to "jell" in a tureen on the dresser; I hated the smell of them, and still do. The lodger wasn't with us, very long, only stayed a few months, and left to live with a married daughter. We now rented all the house, as Dad had a rise of ten shillings weekly, which was riches indeed. The house was in a terrace of houses, overlooking a small square, which was planted with flower-beds, and with seats, where we children were allowed to sit if we behaved, otherwise, we were soon turned out by the park-keeper. There are many of these "squares" all over London; those in the East End of London were owned by the Council, with a park-keeper employed by them, those in the West End, were owned privately, and the residents of the houses round the squares, given a key, so that they could sit there.

There were about twenty houses round our square, each with three bedrooms, a small parlour (only used on Sunday, Christmas, or for parties), an underground kitchen and scullery, which were below the pavement, and of course very dark, with the only light coming from a grating in the pavement. The coal cellar led off the kitchen, and the coal was delivered through a coal-hole in the pavement, so one had to be sure that the door was shut leading from the kitchen to the cellar, when the coal was delivered. The rooms were lit by gas, in the kitchen and parlour, there was a gas mantel (a kind of gauze cone), with a glass shade, but in the bedrooms, there was only a gas jet. There was an open dresser in the kitchen, where the best plates and tureens stood, a kitchen range with an oven on one side, and a tap for hot water, if one remembered to fill the little boiler, but mostly it seemed to leak! The stove had to be polished with black lead, and the steel round it polished bright, also the steel fender round the hearth, and the long steel fire-irons (poker and tongs); round the mantelpiece, there were some decorations, usually a pelmet of velvet, or, as we had, a deep lace, which Mother crocheted from macrame string, with ribbon threaded through the top. There was a long couch (or sofa) along one wall, leather or plush in the kitchen, horsehair in the parlour. The scullery, behind the kitchen, had a tiny window looking up into the garden, with white-washed walls (sometimes, a little red-achre would be put into the white-wash, to make the walls pale pink), a stone sink, and a stone copper in the corner, which was lit underneath with wood on wash-days, about six a.m. and you can imagine what the scullery was like at the end of a November wash-day, the walls saturated with steam. Everything was washed by hand, rubbed up and down on a "corrugated" galvanized wash-board, all whites boiled in the copper. Then there was a big iron mangle with two heavy wooden rollers to squeeze out as much water as possible from the clothes. We hated a rainy wash-day, as this meant lines of string across the kitchen to get the washing dry, and a continual "ducking" underneath.

We went up a flight of stairs from the kitchen to the tiny garden and the lavatory, which had a grape vine round it. I think, at one time, it must have been a private estate, as a few doors away, through a small gateway, there was a big imposing looking house, with a flight of stone steps and a portico; it had a huge hall with a beautiful staircase; there were two small cottages near, which were very old. Although our garden was small, it had two lilac trees, a weeping willow, and the grape vine, and a very old brick wall along one side of the garden. The parlour, which was at street level, had wooden shutters to the window, which were always closed at night. There was no bathroom; a big galvanized bath was put in the scullery, or, in the winter, in front of the kitchen fire, and all available kettles and saucepans heated on the kitchen range. One Saturday morning, I had just been bathed, my navy blue pleated skirt, navy tunic with the sailor collar, put on, I stepped back, and sat in the bath! Sometimes, on Friday night in the summer, Mother would take me to the public baths; I think we paid twopence. We took our own soap and towels. The baths were in cubicles, and the water could only be turned on from the corridor by an attendant, so there was a constant calling out of, "Some more cold in No. 9, or, a little hot in No. 5". My hair was difficult to wash as it was so long, almost to my waist (no one had very short hair, only the children at the workhouse, and their's was really cropped), so it took a long time to dry, and Mother, always having "brainwaves", decided one day to put it in a thick towel, and roll it in the mangle between the wooden rollers, and when the rollers touched my scalp, she unwound them!

Round the square in the other houses, lived quite "superior" families; a spinster, who was a cripple and lived with her parents, she gave piano lessons, two sisters who did dressmaking, a married cousin of mine, and my Mother's eldest Sister. At each corner of the square, there were four slightly larger houses, and in one of these lived my great friends, twin girls the same age as me: there were ten children in the family, so they needed a bigger house! Sometimes I was invited to tea on Saturday. Before we went to the "magic lantern" show (which was a halfpenny), and there would always be smoked haddock for tea, but only the elder children, who were working, had a piece of haddock, and I, as a visitor, but all the younger children had a slice of bread soaked in the water in which the haddock had been boiled.

Mother was very kind and thoughtful, and, although money was scarce, she was always helping others with large families; she made my little summer dresses, one pink and one blue (material 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ p a yard), and she would make one each for the twins. I was very often told to keep a "look-out" for one of Dad's Nephews, who had seven young children, to tell him there was a jug of soup waiting for him; sometimes it was so hot he could hardly carry it, but

saved him re-heating it. Then there was the time when, Mum and Dad hadn't been married very long, and Dad had a pair of brown boots he hardly ever wore, so one Saturday Mother gave them to an old man, in exchange for a plant. Dad went off the "deep end", and said he needed those boots, and when the old man called again to see if there were any more "pickings", Dad happened to open the door, and said, "Why b----- me you've already got my boots on!

I always looked forward to Friday nights, because, as soon as Dad arrived home with his wages, Mum and I would go shopping, after first returning the two shillings she had borrowed earlier in the week from my married Cousin. Sometimes we went to Sainsbury's (best Danish butter tenpence a pound), but mostly we went to the CO-op, so that we could get our dividends at Christmas; the butter was in a huge lump on a marble slab, and I can't tell you how many times the assistant dipped the wooden pats into water to get one's pound of butter the correct weight and shape, so that there was almost as much water as butter! On our way home, we would have a hot saveloy each for a penny; they were lovely, and as most of the pork butchers were German, they really knew how to make them. Practically all the bakers were German too; the bread, by law, had to be weighed, and we children, always hoped it wouldn't come up to the required weight, as then we could have a "make-weight", which would be a roll, a piece of stale cake, or a piece of "mince", which was a kind of bread pudding, no doubt made from the stale bread.

A week before Christmas, things really began to get exciting. We all had to help prepare the fruit for the Christmas pudding and cake, raisins to be stoned (a very sticky job), the lumps of peel to be chopped, and the almonds to blanch, with instructions not to have too many "tasters"! Then everyone had to stir and wish, and the puddings were then put in the copper to boil for hours. On Christmas Eve, Dad would come home later than usual, a little "merry", having had a drink with all his pals as it was Christmas; he always brought home a turkey, which was a "Christmas Box" from someone at work. Mum would give him his tea, and then it was "action stations"! Taper was spread on the kitchen table, and Mum got down to cleaning and drawing the bird (Dad had no stomach for this), and then the sinews had to be drawn (a man's job this). First, we hung the turkey over the kitchen door by its head, and shut the door as close as possible to hold it in position, with Mum and I pushing against the door as hard as we could, and then Dad would pull the feet with the sinews, and we all prayed they would come out clean in one operation, otherwise, if they broke off, it meant using the pliers and pincers, with Dad perspiring and swearing, and me moaning at having to still push against the door. Christmas Day meant all relatives calling, and in the afternoon "snapdragons", a dish of hot raisins brought in with brandy poured over and set alight, and

everyone grabbing them as hot as possible. No one had more than two days holiday, Christmas Day and Boxing Day, which was why couples marrying at this time of year, did so on one of these days. On Boxing Day we often visited a Cousin for the afternoon and evening; she and her husband kept a very old public house in Rotherhithe, which meant we had to walk to Wapping, down to the Creek, and then a man with a rowing boat would row us across to the other side for a penny, and then we would walk to my Cousin's. The pub was at the edge of the river, and when the tide was high, it used to flood the cellar, and lap against the sitting room windows. When we returned late at night, there was no rowing boat, so we had to walk a mile and half through Rotherhithe Tunnel, which was very eerie. It was all white tiling with a row of lights down the centre, and if you wanted to come up to street level before the end of the tunnel (perhaps at Shadwell), you climbed a spiral iron staircase. When we got to the part of the tunnel which went under the Thames, it had a peculiar echoing sound, and we always hurried through this part, for fear of the Thames breaking through!

Now that money was a little more plentiful, I had weekly piano lessons from Miss "C" in the Square, at sixpence a lesson, and Mother took out an endowment policy for ten years at sixpence weekly, so that when I left school, I could perhaps take a secretarial course, as she was determined I should have some sort of career.

A great boon to us, was the "Tally Man": we bought practically everything from him, Dad's suits, our boots and shoes, a new bedstead, or linoleum, and we paid a shilling or two weekly; Mother always paid so promptly, that, no sooner had she finished paying for one item, than he was asking her to buy something else: he had a room in his house where he had samples of the goods, where we used to make our choice.

Dad used to ^{go to} work at six a.m. so as to take advantage of the "workmans" cheap fares on the trams, which meant a tram from Stepney to Aldgate (two pence), and then the underground train to Charing Cross. As soon as Dad was up, I used to creep down (very cold on the bare lino), and get into bed with Mum, and when Dad came in to say goodbye, we'd enquire if it was raining or foggy, and sometimes I'd sing a little rhyme:-

We wake up every morning when the cock
begins to crow,
We say, "Good morning Father",
And off to sleep we go.

About this time my Uncle died, the husband of Mother's eldest Sister, who lived opposite in the Square. Like all the male members of our family, he was a lighterman, and he fell overboard, as most do at some time or other, and as he couldn't swim, his mates threw a boat hook over the side, which caught in his face and set up a cancer. After he

died, my Aunt was left with two girls still at home, one had never been to work, she always stayed at home to look after the younger members of the family, and the youngest daughter who had just left school. We always thought of my Uncle's relatives as being superior and rich, in fact, we always referred to his two Sisters as the "rich Aunts" (they were school teachers), not that we ever met them, as word was passed around that the "Aunts" were about to make a visit, which we knew was a hint for us to make ourselves scarce. The "Aunts" held a family conference, and decided to make my Aunt an allowance of one pound monthly, also to pay for my youngest Cousin to go to Fitmans College to take a secretarial course, and also to purchase a small shop for my Aunt, to enable my other Cousin to run a milliners business, as she was quite a good needle-woman. What good fortune for them all!

Our pleasures were simple; there were plenty of parties. Mum and Dad took any excuse to have one, all birthdays, etc., The little parlour would be filled to overflowing, with Mum and Dad often sitting in the passage looking in through the open door. I had to play a piece or two on the piano, and sometimes a German friend would play the violin (I only knew him as "Otto"). Everyone had their only special song to sing, usually three verses, and the chorus twice after each verse: even Dad, who had no voice to speak of, usually managed "Two little girls in blue", or, "To be a farmers boy".

Sometimes, there would be a big ball at the Pinshouse Town Hall, to which all the family went; the children were allowed to sit in the gallery to look down on the dancers, until about nine or half past, when we would have to go home to be looked after and put to bed by older Cousins. Even to watch from the gallery was exciting, as we wore our Sunday dresses, and our hair in ringlets, which had been agony the night before; Aunt Lanna, having had six daughters, was an expert at putting hair into ringlets. I would go with my strips of rag, and she would wind each piece of hair in rag; very often, a piece of hair got caught at the back, and every time one turned during the night the hair pulled, but we were always assured we were making a fuss about nothing!

I remember Mother having a lovely dress, which had been made by the dressmaker in the Square; it was a beautiful "toffee" colour which exactly matched her hazel eyes, and it had buttons practically the whole length at the back, tiny pearl buttons, no bigger than the top of your little finger, exactly matching the colour of the material, and which Dad had to fasten!

Mum and Dad usually tried to take me away for a week in the Summer, but of course it had to be somewhere very cheap; twice we went by steamboat to Ramsgate, which

meant getting up very early on Sunday morning, and walking with our luggage from Stepney to Tower Bridge (too early for a tram). Everything seemed so exciting, a lovely sunny morning, City streets deserted, except for families like us making their way to Tower Bridge. We either caught the "Royal Sovereign", or the "Daffodil", and, I think it was ten shillings each for adults, and Ramsgate was the end of the journey: some passengers alighted at Southend, and some at Margate. We used to have one bedroom, and meals in the parlour. Mother used to go shopping directly after breakfast, and the landlady would have our meal ready at mid-day. Dad always went out before breakfast to buy a daily paper, and would come back with piping hot doughnuts full of jam from the baker's.

One Summer we went to Dad's home, a little village three miles from Billericay in Essex: there were only a few houses, and the people we stayed with belonged to a Faith called the "Peculiar People" (I don't think I've heard of them outside Essex). Mrs "M" met us at Billericay Station with the pony and trap, and she wore a long navy blue coat, and a bonnet tied under the chin with ribbons, not unlike the Salvation Army. She told Mother afterwards, that she was very apprehensive as to what she would meet at the station, and quite expected us to arrive in "Pearlies" with feathers in our hats, seeing we'd come from the East End of London. We had a lovely week there, plenty of children, and a field at the back of the house where we played all day. Mr. "P" worked on the land, and we used to meet him coming home and help lead the horses to the stables, huge gentle beasts. The one thing that amused me, was the lavatories - a huge barn with a long line of scrubbed wooden seats, with a hole in the top, and loads of straw underneath: I don't know how often they were emptied.

The Meeting House was in the garden at the side of the house, and on Saturday, everything was done that could be done, meals cooked, so that nothing was cooked on Sunday, just the kettle boiled for tea, shoes cleaned, baths taken in the big galvanized bath in turns, and Sunday clothes ready brushed. After breakfast on Sunday, children went to Sunday School, then stayed on for the "Grown-ups" service, the "Elders" sat behind a bench on a platform (five or six men); there was no piano or harmonium, only one of the "Elders" with a tuning fork to start the hymns. Anyone who felt "moved" could stand up and say a few words. Someone rose, and said how pleased he was to see Dad and his family, and how strange it was that he should be sitting in the very place in which his Mother used to sit, which was strange indeed, as Dad never went to the chapel when he was young, he always went to the local church. Then Mum felt she must say a few words, to thank them for a happy week, and their kindness. I was most embarrassed, and tugged at her dress. but Dad signalled to me to leave her alone. After the service, home to our mid-day meal. Many of the congregation came on bicycles, or walked

from villages miles around, and stayed all day: they brought their sandwiches, and sat and chatted in one of the rooms at the Meeting House, or in one of the barns.

The children went back to Sunday School in the afternoon, where the teacher was very surprised that I could answer most of the questions, as there again, he thought we must be heathen, coming from London, but going to a Church School, and to Sunday School, I'd had a good "grounding". Then, home to tea, and afterwards, the Evening service, with everyone saying what a lovely day they'd had. Some weeks later, Mr. "M" came to one of their chapels not far from us at Canning Town, to give a sermon, and Mother invited him to dinner, and he was delighted as she gave him a cold meal, and asked him to say "Grace"; he probably thought he'd got a convert!

Sometimes on Friday night I was taken to the Music Hall at the Poplar Hippodrome. I remember going one evening when I was very young; I don't recall what the "turns" were, but I vividly remember a sudden avalanche of vegetables coming down on the stage. The actors were showered with cabbages, carrots, tomatoes and eggs, evidently the audience didn't care for the acts. We left hurriedly, as it looked like being a riot.

I remember too, my very first Sunday School outing. It was on August Bank Holiday Saturday, and on the Friday afternoon, Mother had left my tea, whilst she went with Dad to visit my Aunt, and also a note to say "wash-up", and that they would be home at six o'clock. I was so afraid of not being up in time the next morning, that I left a note to say I'd gone to bed (about five o'clock, the sun still shining), and to be sure to call me early; needless to say, I awoke about mid-night (Mum and Dad hadn't been in bed very long), and came downstairs to start getting ready; I soon got sent back to bed, and we all overslept! The outing was to Southend; the twins and I had our sandwiches and spending money, three shillings each, and strict instructions to behave, and not put our heads out of the carriage windows. We went from Stepney Station, and before I got to Stratford East (about three stations), I'd lost my best blue hat out of the window. A catastrophe indeed, as no-one went without a hat, especially on a hot August day. It was a beautiful day, the sun glinting on the water. As soon as we arrived, I thought it would be as well to buy Mum and Dad's presents before I spent all my money, so I bought a little pair of china shoes, with red velvet pin cushions in the top, for ninepence; I was a bit stumped as to what to buy Dad, so settled for a bottle of "Sweet Pea" scent for a penny. We had a lovely time in the fair-ground on the boat-swings and roundabouts. One of the twins and I fell down a steep bank, cut our lips, and broke one of the china shoes, still we'd had a lovely day. Dad met me at the station, and before he even got to me, one of his nieces told him I'd lost my hat, cut my lip, and broken the present, but he said none of it mattered, he was so pleased to see me. Aunt Anna called to see how I'd got on on my first outing; Dad was so pleased that I'd remembered him, that he said, "You must have a drop of my

scent", and gave her a good sprinkling. We saw her next day, standing at the door of her shop, and asked her what the big green stain was on the front of her white blouse, and she said, "Your daughter's lovely sweet pea scent"!

Weddings in the family were great fun; sometimes, if they took place in the Summer, horse brakes would be hired, and after the ceremony, we would all pile into these, some inside, and some on the top, and drive down to Theydon Bois in Essex, which was really in the country then, and have great fun, with a meal at the village inn, and a drive home in the evening. When my Cousin May married (the one who was the milliner), we children had tremendous fun, as we played downstairs, in and out the shop, and through the room at the back, whilst the grown-ups had a song and dance in the room above, and at one time, when the dancing was at it's height, the ceiling over the shop literally sagged with the weight, and a couple of the men were standing holding up the tall bookcase, which was swaying backwards and forwards.

Our games were usually played in the streets, around the "Square", always with boys, as we went to school together, tops and skippings ropes, in their different seasons, five-stones (or gobs as we called them), hide and seek, cricket (somebody's coat, or the lamp-post for a wicket,) and diabolillo (which was two sticks with string between, and a reel, which had to be thrown into the air continually, and caught on the string, hopscotch, and the usual "penny for the guy" in November. Once a year, we built, what we called a "grotto"; (I've no idea what it was for, probably a Saint's day); it used to consist of coloured paper, which we fastened to the railings of the "square", with shells and pebbles placed round it. Saturday afternoons, we usually spent playing in the carts belonging to the railway, which were stacked for the week-end underneath the railway arches (the horses in the stables), and as they'd been used for delivering all kinds of things during the week, including coal, we got in a terrible state. I was never allowed out to play until I'd done at least an hour's practice on the piano, especially if I was sitting for an exam. These were rather exciting, as we travelled by 'bus to the West End of London, to the London College of Music (at the back of Regent Street), always in plenty of time, and me full of nerves; when it was over, Dad would meet us in the Strand, and ask how I'd got on, and see us on to the 'bus, before returning to work.

We hadn't a great many books; we always had a daily and Sunday newspaper. The "daily" was the "Daily Mirror", which in those days was a very "Conservative" paper. Dad used to have "Tit-Bits" or "Answers" weekly, Mum had "Christian Novels" weekly (I think she probably obtained some of her "remedies" here). I had my Comics, and a little book about fairies for a penny weekly, which I could read in

five minutes, and Mother used to say, "you haven't read it already", but there was always the little picture at the back, usually of fairies or elves, to be painted. On birthdays I was given Grimms Fairy Tales, Andersons, and Uncle Tom's Cabin. One prize-giving day at school, I had won a prize, and in the pile of books on the table, I saw a lovely little book called "Simple Susan", which I hoped and prayed was mine, and my joy knew no bounds when I found it was.

Our food was very frugal. Sometimes, I don't think Mother had a mid-day meal, because, very often when I arrived home from school at twelve fifteen, she said she'd already had her's. We always had a piece of topside of beef, or pork on Sunday (Dad didn't like lamb), cold on Monday, as it was wash-day, and usually, I had to go to the corner shop with a basin and buy twopennyworth of mustard pickle. The remainder of the week, it was an egg, boiled rice, or a stew; we had lots of suet pudding with golden syrup, currants, or my favourite, dates, which were chopped out from a huge block at the greengrocers, and had to be stoned. When I came home from school in the afternoon, I had to buy meat or fish for Dad's meal. Very often it was to the butcher's to buy four pennyworth of pieces, which were trimmings from the joints; there would be a small piece of steak, a piece of kidney or liver. If it was fish, I had to go to a stall in the market and buy a piece of smoked haddock, a fourpenny middle cut, not a piece by the ears or the tail; I used to enjoy choosing the fattest piece possible. Sometimes we had to wait for it to be brought from the big sheds where it was smoked, and the men would bring it to the stall on long canes.

For tea, we perhaps had a red herring, which was soaked in boiling water, and then cut up, or in the Winter we had smoked sprats (never fresh ones) they were always smoked), which were a halfpenny a bundle; if we had jam, it was usually two or three pennyworth in a basin from the corner shop, mostly plum. What I really enjoyed was "thin lunch" biscuits put in a dish and hot tea poured over.

Practically all the immigrants came to the East End (as it is today with Asians and West Indians), then it was Russian and Polish Jews, who were mostly tailors. From five to six o'clock in the evening, the buses would be full with them, with suits and coats over their arms, delivering to the big tailors in the West End. Most of the pork butchers were German, also the bakers, the fruiterers were Italian. There were many streets with nothing but Irish, and of course Limehouse, where there was a Chinese quarter. My Cousin always had to take her brother's best shirts to the Chinese laundry, and she was so scared (the chinese still wore their hair in a pigtail), that she used to leave the door wide open, run in and put the shirts on the counter, and run out as fast as she could; they were so passive too! On Saints' Days, the Irish had their processions round the streets, their houses all had crude, coloured statues of the Virgin, or a Crusifix

outside. They were very bigoted. I had two friends, whose Mother taught at the Catholic school; their Grandmother lived with them, and she used to sit in the kitchen smoking a short clay pipe, and very often we were sent to the tobacconists to buy her tobacco and snuff. I don't remember her ever speaking to me, and one Saturday, we were sent to a friend of their's to deliver a message, and as soon as we were invited in, the woman said, "Is she, (meaning me), one of us" (meaning Catholic), and when the girls said "No", she never offered me a cup of tea, or spoke to me again. Sometimes, when the girls and I had our usual childish squabbles, they always called me a "Prod-dog", and I think one of the biggest catastrophies for either Protestant or Catholic families, was inter-marriage - everyone dreaded it. Sometimes, on Saturday evening, my Cousin and I went with the Catholic girls, and sat at the back of their church whilst they went to "Confession"; they always went to Mass on Sunday morning, and afterwards "Father" always called on all the Catholics for the donation to the church.

Mother and I went to St. Matthews, which was a church "sandwiched" in between shops in the Commercial Road, so had no windows, except a stained glass one above the altar, so it was gas-lit, and always seemed so dark. On Sunday morning Dad went to the pub, and as "turning-out" time was three o'clock, no one ever had their dinner until the men arrived home, and as the children had to attend Sunday School, their dinner was put in the oven to keep warm, but oh, that lovely date suet pudding Mother used to make (with whole dates), it was worth waiting for. Around four o'clock, we used to keep a "look-out" for the man selling the Comics, as we could get a "cheap offer", five for twopence, "Puck", "Chips", "Merry and Bright" (my favourite was "Merry and Bright"). And then, if we'd missed the shrimps and winkle man, we had to walk to the shop to buy them for tea; the brown paper bag they were put in, usually had a printed verse on it, which we read on the way home.

A great thrill, was to be allowed to wear one's Sunday dress to school on Monday morning - just to "dirty it out" before washing. One Monday, I was allowed to wear mine, a white "broderie Anglais" dress with a pink ribbon threaded through the waist, but the boy who sat behind me, dipped my long plait into the ink-well, and it dabbed against my white dress, so Mother wasn't at all pleased.

We lived quite near to the East India Docks, and I loved to hear the ships sirens, especially on foggy November nights, when the fog was so dense that "flares" were lit in the Commercial Road to guide the carmen and their horses. I was a bit scared of the Lascars who used to come off the ships, and I kept very close to the wall. They used to often take a walk on Sunday mornings along the Commercial Road, and they always looked so pathetic in their faded blue cotton smocks and trousers, which were so thin, and their open-toed sandals, with no socks, more suitable to India. My Uncle,

who worked in the docks, used to tease them when they called over the side of the big liners in their broken English; he would ask them where they were from, and one of them would say, "Me Calcutta, him Bombay", and Uncle would say, "Oh, Bom-Cutta", and they would get so confused.

Life was very precarious for the lightermen, especially on dark Winter mornings, as many were unable to swim. My Aunt always had a change of clothing airing in the kitchen, in case one of my Cousins fell over the side of the barge. and have to rush home for a change of clothing, and she was most concerned when one of them married, and his wife didn't have the change of clothes waiting. Two of my Cousins were drowned, both only sons; it is always said, that if you are born in a caul, and carry it with you, you will never drown, but one Cousin always carried his, all to no purpose.

The millinery shop proved to be quite a success in a very small way; my Cousin used to buy the shapes for the hats (they were made of buckram), from the wholesale firms in St. Pauls Churchyard, where there were three or four old established firms who dealt in materials, ribbons etc., In fact, when Dad first came to London from Billericay, he was apprenticed to one of these wholesale houses, matching ribbons and cottons to silks, which meant having a good eye for colour. (This apprenticeship was also the reason he disliked roast lamb so much; they were only allowed twenty minutes or so for their mid-day meal, and as they had to run up three flights of stairs, and were always served last, by the time they received their plate of lamb, the fat was congealing on the plate)

The buckram shapes were covered with silk, and then, with flowers or feathers round the crown, they looked quite fetching. Some of her customers were very funny, and often I would be banished to the little sitting-room at the back of the shop, because I had a fit of the giggles. Many of the poorer girls worked at Batgers sweet, jam and marmalade factory, and on Saturday, when they were paid, they would call at my Cousin's to buy a hat; their hair would be done up in steel curlers (they'd been to work like this), so that it ^{had to} be curly for going out in the evening, and they would perch the hat on top of the curlers, and say to my Cousin - "What do you think May, does it suit me"? My Cousin, with a perfectly straight face would reply, "Oh yes, it really looks very nice", and they would say, "Of course it will be alright when I git me 'air done"! Then they would pay a shilling down, and the remainder at a shilling a week, on a five bob hat!

Every Winter I suffered from acute tonsillitis, and was usually away from school for three weeks; most people did their own "doctoring"; I don't remember going to the surgery more than once or twice, which was lit by gas jets, and with wooden benches round the walls. I used to suck small white potash lozenges for my throat (I think Mother used to

find quite a few of them behind the sofa after I'd returned to school), and if I had a troublesome cough, she used to make a hot linseed-meal poultice and put on my chest, which was very soothing when warm, but the following morning, if it was still in place, it felt like a lump of very cold suet pudding! Sometimes, it would be camphorated oil rubbed on my chest, which had a revolting smell. I was very often sent to the chemist for two or three pennyworth of Pictoral Balsam for my cough from Mr. Thomas, who invented this, it was called "Thomas's Pectoral Balsam", and I think, years later he must have sold the "rights" to one of the large chemists, as I was always able to obtain it thirty or forty years later. After all the tonsillitis and coughing, and looking so pale, I needed a tonic, so I had "Parish's Food", which was a bright red liquid containing iron, so it had to be swallowed without it touching the teeth, as it might turn them black, a very tricky manoeuvre. In between, Mother had very often found a new remedy, some of them were vile, but she used to say, "Try it for Mum", once it was a cup of flour and water, like the paste used to stick wallpaper, I've no idea what this was supposed to do for me, but I got it down.

The big problem after these weeks of illness, was, the washing of my long hair. After one bad attack, Mother decided it must be washed; she'd read somewhere of using a raw egg. I don't know whether it was supposed to be mixed with water, but anyway, it was duly rubbed into my hair, and then the "fun" commenced. My hair, when damp always curled, and of course it just matted. I couldn't see Mother's face behind me, but I could "feel" things weren't too good, so I sat on a chair in the garden, whilst she tried to untangle it. Not feeling very robust after three weeks at home, and my head so tender, I let out a good many yells. Mother had to take every piece of hair separately, and somehow get the comb through, all the time saying, "It won't be long now"; it must have taken a couple of hours, but I never had another egg shampoo, and even today I wince when I see the modern egg shampoo in bottles.

As with doctors, so with dentists. Most men had their own teeth, perhaps a bit discoloured through smoking; when they got old, their teeth became loose, and they just "wiggled" a tooth about until they could get it out. I remember Mother saying one Winter's evening, "I want you to come with me", I didn't know where, and after walking some distance, we came to a chemists, and she said, "Now wait here, I won't be long". She was going to have a tooth out, and when I looked through the shop, it was so dark, only lit by gas, I wonder how the dentist could see to extract it, and even if she had an anaesthetic. She didn't say much when she came out, and I don't know what support I gave her.

Sometimes on Saturday, Dad would come home from work, having had a "little too much", and Mother would be

so mad, she'd just "plonk" his dinner on the table without a word. He was always happy-go-lucky (he was always called "Happy" at work), never in a bad mood, even when he'd had "too much". After his dinner he would sleep on the sofa, and Mother would think, "I'll teach him a lesson", and we'd go to the pictures, which was a great thrill. During the performance, an attendant would come round with a syringe and spray us all; it smelt very nice, but I suppose it was some sort of disinfectant, to keep the fleas at bay! When we arrived home, about six o'clock, Mother expected to find a very contrite husband sitting waiting for his tea, but very often he was only just waking up, so the "lesson" was wasted.

About once in four years, I would have a new winter coat, which meant a trip on the 'bus or tram to Aldgate to the big drapers shop - "Venables". (Very often in Aldgate on Saturday morning, there would be three or four hay-carts in the middle of the road, and a flock of sheep, which had come from the country that morning). The winter coat was usually saxe-blue, and very long, to allow for growing; the "funds" might also run to a new hat, with elastic under the chin. I was never allowed to wear green as Mother was very superstitious; I think she must have known every superstition that existed; we never walked under ladders, put new boots or shoes on the table, crossed knives on the table, crossed people on the stairs, brought May or Lilac into the house, married on Friday, or in May, started a journey on Friday, or if we'd forgotten anything, and had to return to the house, we sat down and counted twenty. We always wished on a new moon, piebald horses, and the first star we saw at dusk.

We were brought up to be very patriotic, and on Empire Day, we marched round the school playground, saluting a large Union Jack. My Uncle had a small house in Poplar, with a very tiny garden, but in the middle was a tall flagpole as high as the roof, and on every possible suitable occasion, my Uncle would "run up" the Union Jack.

One of the big events of the year, was the competition for the "Loggetts Coat and Badge", which was a rowing competition held annually since 1715 for professional watermen on the Thames. Anybody who wore the red coat and black velvet hat, was really "somebody".

We were all very interested in boxing. My two Uncles being keen amateurs, and in the Commercial Road, there was a boxing ring, which I think was called "Premier-land", where bouts were held, and when there was a big fight, we used to anxiously await the result, as quite often it was a local lad, and many of the famous fighters had started at "Premier-land".

Our school must have had a very go-ahead board of Governors, or perhaps, they thought the poor Cockney children needed encouragement! As we got older, we had mixed cricket

matches on Friday afternoons in the Summer (the boys playing left-handed), in Winter, we played hockey, and ball-room dancing on Friday afternoons. We also had a small library. A week before Christmas, a red pillar-box was set up in the Hall, where we posted cards, and these were delivered twice daily by one of the boys coming into each classroom. We had swimming lessons at the public baths, and went to another school for cookery lessons (we didn't much care for this in the Winter if there was snow on the ground, as we had to go past Ratger's factory to a very rough area, and the children there used to pelt us with lumps of hard snow, very often with horse dung in it). Sometimes, we went to a school to learn how to wash and iron, or to do housework. On "laundry" mornings, we had to take a shirt or a blouse, and Mother was highly amused to think I'd spent the whole morning washing and ironing one shirt, but the lesson went home, as I've never forgotten how to iron a shirt!

We all entered for the eleven-plus exam; I think Mother had hopes of my going to the Grammar School. I'll never forget looking at that exam paper, I hadn't a clue what it was about, I was hopeless; no good at sums, geography or drawing (so couldn't draw the maps), my writing was terrible, and as for biology, or anything scientific!; I could read well, so therefore could spell, take dictation, or write a composition, and I was interested in history. It goes without saying, I failed. Mother thought she might be able to send me to Grammar School by paying. She made enquiries, and went for an interview, but the fees were more than she could possibly afford. I always got on well with my teachers, although I was so dumb! One teacher said that as it was her young daughter's birthday, she would invite a few of the children to tea. I was one chosen, and one of the older boys took us by train to Leytonstone. It was a lovely party, but the best part of all, was having chocolates to take home, as they owned the sweet shop below!

The Commercial Road was a very long road running from Stepney Station to Aldgate. There were shops on either side, some owned by Jews who had been successful, the post office (I still have my original Post Office Savings Book, "Stepney, Commercial Road East No.540"), the doctor's surgery, the cinema, the boxing ring, a dairy with a cow in the little yard at the back, so we really could get milk straight from the cow, and in between the shops, the Catholic and Protestant Churches, but one building that really puzzled me, was the "The lying-in Home for East End Mothers", I always wondered what they were lying in for. There was also the "Peoples Penny Savings Bank", and one Saturday, on his way home from work, Dad, as usual "a bit merry", decided to open an account with sixpence. The cashier said, "You don't expect to get this out again, do you"? Either he thought Dad would never be able to write his signature the same way again, or he knew the bank was going broke; a week or so later it did, and there were queues of people for days trying to withdraw their savings. Whenever we passed the bank after, Dad always used to say,

"They've got sixpence of mine"!

In July 1914, I was taken to Dad's Brother's in Chelmsford for a fortnights' holiday; my Uncle and Aunt had a small cottage in the grounds of, the Quakers Meeting House. My Aunt insisted on my doing piano practice for an hour each day, having been given permission to use the piano in the Meeting House. I had only been there a week, when War was declared, so Mum and Dad came down to take me home. Everything seemed very quiet when we got back, but soon things altered. Most of the young men volunteered to fight (those who didn't, very often received a white feather through the post), and were soon sent to France with very little training. Dad was exempt as he knew where all the electric cables were laid in the West End (having helped to lay most of them), but was given a badge to wear in his lapel, to say he was exempt. All Germans were interned for the duration; many of them had lived in England most of their lives, and had their children here, but the people smashed the windows, and threw all their furniture and belongings into the street. The two boys, who nursed me when I had measles, and had been born in England, were hoping to fight for England, but were interned, and their Mother was to be sent back to Germany, even though she had left at sixteen, and had never returned. However, she obtained a form, which stated, that if, she could obtain the signatures to say she was of good character, she could stay. She obtained the Vicar's signature, and came to Mother in a very distressed state, to ask her to sign; Mother was afraid to do so, as she knew it would probably mean our house being wrecked if it was known, but when she thought of all the kindness she had received in the past, she felt she couldn't refuse, but made her promise not to tell anyone she'd done so. The woman was overwhelmed with gratitude, and insisted on giving me half-a-crown. Our friend "Otto" was also very distressed, and undecided whether to stay and be interned, or to return to Germany (they were given a time limit), but he went back.

We were always prepared on bright moonlight nights for the enemy to come; rumour usually got round that they had got as far as Southend; we always stayed in our underground kitchen after the warning maroon had sounded. We could hear all the prams rushing over the grating above, on their way to Rotherhithe Tunnel to shelter. One night, Mother called me to look through the landing window; there was a most beautiful sight. In the bright moonlight, there was a huge silver Zeppelin, just gliding along (one could even see the crew), following the Thames I suppose, and looking for the Docks. The first Zeppelin brought down was in Essex (Cuffley I think), and the crew were buried in the local churchyard. One evening, there was a terrific bang which shook the kitchen, which proved to be an explosion in the explosives factory at Silvertown; it was rumoured there was a German spy in the factory.

Later, the Germans sent aeroplanes instead of Zeppelins; One Saturday morning, I went to the baker's to buy a cream cake, a treat, as it was my first time out after my usual bout of tonsillitis, and on my way back, there were about twenty planes above. Mother was standing at the front door signalling frantically to me to hurry, which I didn't feel like doing, still being weak. This was the first day-light raid, and the first bomb was dropped in one of the "squares" in the West End (Golden Square I think), so the next day, we went by 'bus to see the big crater.

One of the dressmakers, who lived in the "square", called in one evening to ask Mother if she would like to take a "paying guest", he was a well-educated man, a Scot, taking up a new position as Superintendent of the Regents Canal, and needed lodgings near the Docks. Mother wasn't really keen, but after talking it over with Dad, they decided to take him, so he had the best bedroom, which had a gas-fire, all meals provided, washing and ironing included, all for twenty eight shillings per week. He settled in well, he was the same age as Mum and Dad; he'd been educated at Edinburgh University, so was very superior to us; I used to get annoyed, as he would keep correcting my grammar, very good for me I've no doubt! He received his salary monthly (which put him above the rest), and was very often short of cash towards the end of the month, so sometimes borrowed a pound from Mum, or owed the rent, but, on the day he received his pay, there was great spending; he was extremely generous, and would take me out, and buy all kinds of fruit and sweets, and something special for supper. When he was initiated into the Freemasons, Mother had to go with him to buy his regalia; she wasn't too keen, fearing the neighbours would gossip about her running around with the bachelor lodger, but Dad persuaded her to go, as he pointed out that Mr. "W" was all alone with no one to turn to. But, he often annoyed Dad; sometimes in the evening, he would go to the pub, and when he returned, he would say, German planes had arrived at Southend, and were almost overhead, at which Mother became agitated and Dad very annoyed, so one evening, he told our "paying guest", to take a week's notice, but when the time was up, he only laughed and said, "You see, I'm still here", and he stayed with us until we moved.

We had a lovely dog, the only one I ever knew like it, whether it was a mongrel or not, I don't know; Dad used to ask everyone what breed it was, one said a Russian terrier. It was larger than a wire-haired terrier, with long hair, and a beautiful golden colour. Mr. "W" thought the world of "Floss", and would vie with Dad for it's affection; it always went with them to the pub, and sometimes, it was very embarrassing, as Dad would see men take a drink from their glasses, put it under the seat, and when they picked it up again, there would be a look of utter amazement on their faces, to see it almost empty; "Floss" had sampled it!

One Good Friday, when the two men were on their way to the pub, they both called to "Floss" to follow, from either side of the Commercial Road, when she dashed across, and was killed. We were all terribly upset, and ate no dinner that day. Some weeks later, Dad brought home a little Fox Terrier, a shivery little thing, but a marvellous "ratter". Our "paying guest" didn't take to it at all, so there was no rivalry for it's affection. One evening, Mr. "W" came home, and there was a little "gathering" in the parlour, so Mother called out to ask if he would like to join us; he said he would, and put his bowler hat on the bottom stair, to take up when he went to bed; some time later, he said good-night, and when he got into the passage, there was a tremendous "oath" - "Spot" had evidently taken the bowler hat for a rat, and had shaken it so well, that the crown and brim were completely separate. "Spot" was less popular than ever! We were all highly amused, and quite convinced that "Spot" knew Mr. "W" didn't like him, and had taken his revenge.

Dad was very fond of animals, especially birds; at one time, there were seven or eight cages on the scullery walls with canaries, which he bred, and he would get up at three o'clock in the morning to boil hard-boiled eggs to feed them, when they were breeding. He would buy "day-old" chicks for the hen we had, and he would often sit in our tiny garden with fifteen or twenty chicks running over him.

About 1917, Dad came home, and told us we were going to move to the West End of London, as the Electricity Board wanted him to live nearer to his work, so now commenced a totally different life, a new school, a Flat high above a shop with no garden, with "theatricals", prostitutes and "pimps" for neighbours, all very exciting, and which I might write about one day.

-----oOo-----

THE LONDON OF MY YOUTH.

I see again the London of my youth,
 And hear again ships' sirens in the docks,
 I see again wrinkled Chinese, silent and aloof,
 And shuffling Lascars in faded cotton smocks.

I see again Father Casey going to early Mass,
 And bearded Rabbi Cohen talking to his flock.
 I see again the English Church ill-lit with yellow gas,
 With gallery round three sides, where no one ever sat.

I feel again the fog on a dark November eve,
 And hear the market vendors brash and loud,
 I see again the flowered square, on which my bedroom looked,
 And hear the rag and bone man shouting at his mare.

I see again the dirty river lazily washing broken steps,
 And the beautiful tall white steeple of Limehouse Parish Church;
 I see again the two old lilac trees in the corner of the yard,
 And smell again their perfume in the purple April night.

I see again the Polish Jews chatting on Summer eves,
 And smell again the saveloys in the German Butcher's shop,
 I stand again on the old iron bridge, the barges drifting by,
 And smell again the spices sweet and hot;
 I hear again the clatter of the trams,
 The raucous cries of news-boys on the street,
 And all these smells, and all these sounds, come flooding back to me,
 As tho' twere but yesterday, and not sixty years ago.

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When it was known that we were giving up the house in York Square, Stepney, Dad's niece (who had the seven children), said they would like to take over, and would Mum put in a good word for them with the landlord, when he collected the rent, which she did, and there were still two of the family living there until last year (1978), when the houses were to be demolished, which meant that "family" were living there from 1906 (when Mum and I first went there) until 1978.

The morning we moved to Charing Cross, meant a very early start, as the street we were moving to, was a very narrow one, leading from Covent Garden to St. Martin's Lane (New Street), which meant it had to be closed for at least two hours whilst the removal van was unloaded; there were quite a few spectators, as the piano wouldn't go through the narrow doorway and up the stairs, so the sitting-room window on the first floor had to be removed, and the piano hoisted up through this. The Flat was smaller than our three-bedroomed house in Stepney. There was a flight of stairs leading from the passage to the sitting-room, which was quite big, as it went over the shop below; the room had a beautiful door (I have never seen one like it since), which was curved like a bay window. Next, another flight of stairs leading to the kitchen and a tiny scullery, with just a sink and a gas cooker, then another flight of stairs to the one bedroom, bathroom (no hot water), and the lavatory, the bathroom was to be my bedroom. There were forty eight stairs altogether, and you can imagine Mum's annoyance when she was at the top of the house, and the bell rang, only to find it was someone leaning against the bell, looking in the shop below! "Wireless" was in it's infancy, and the shop sold parts and odd tools etc., so there were always crowds of men looking in during the lunch hour. The Flat was owned by Dad's Company, so we lived rent free; it backed on to the Company's property in St. Martin's Lane, where all the huge electric generators were, which supplied electricity to all the theatres, shops etc., in the West End, and, from about seven to eleven p.m. when the really big generators started up to cope with the theatres, the kitchen floor vibrated, so we heaved a sigh of relief when eleven o'clock arrived.

The whole of New Street consisted of shops, with flats above, so we hadn't far to go to do our shopping. The dairy was opposite, and it took us a little while to get used to the churns of milk being rolled down the street very early in the morning. Mum used to get a little annoyed, as the owners of the dairy were Welsh, and as soon as one entered the shop, they would start jabbering away in Welsh, so you didn't know whether they were talking about you. There was a fishmongers, grocers, wine merchants, a draper next door to us, who were Austrian Jews and had three shops, an oil shop, where they sold everything from paraffin to paint and ladders, a greengrocer, two bakers, two pubs (one at either end), The Mitre, and the one that Dad frequented (The

Angel and Crown), and Moss Bros., original mens outfitters shop. From the bathroom window at the top of the house, one could see the "ball" on the top of the Coliseum in St. Martin's Lane, which in peace time revolved with coloured lights.

I soon started school at St. Martin's in the Fields, which was opposite the Church, in St. Martin's Place; it was completely different to my old school "Green Coat" in Stepney. The boys and girls were separate, the boys on the ground floor, and the girls on the first floor. Our playtime was separate too, and was in the churchyard surrounding the church. There was no sport, no swimming or cookery lessons; we had "drill" once a week, which was held in the Crypt under the church; usually, two of the girls were detailed to go over and light the gas, before the rest of the class arrived. It was very dark and very cold, with tomb-stones in the floor saying, "Here lyeth"- but there were plenty of pillars to hide behind while the teacher was calling out "knees bend" etc., as she couldn't see very far down the line. One thing that didn't change was, that on Mondays, I still had to buy two pennyworth of mustard pickle in a basin for the teacher's dinner; There was a little shop opposite in Chandos Street; I don't know what the men coming out from the offices thought, seeing me with a basin!

For our "War effort", we had to help camouflage large nets for the army, by threading and, tying on string.

Once or twice daily the boat trains arrived at Charing Cross Station from France with the wounded soldiers; these were a sad sight, and Dad would come home with tears in his eyes.

I made friends at school; most of them lived in Peabody Buildings (opposite the stage door of the Coliseum), or in Sandringham Buildings in Charing Cross Road. Peabody Buildings were instituted by a Mr. Peabody, an American, for the poorer people of London, and were in different parts of the West End; two of my friends had lovely large Flats over a jeweller's in Garrick Street (opposite the Garrick Club, frequented by actors). I used to enjoy going there to tea, and, one Saturday, four of us went to Tottenham Court Road to see the first silent film of "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm" with Mary Pickford.

The air-raids continued; most people sheltered in the Leicester Square Tube Station, and as we were high up, with no underground kitchen as we had at Stepney, we sheltered in the generating station at Dad's works in St. Martin's Lane, and so, what with being underground, and the noise of the generators, we couldn't hear a thing; we used to come up after the raid looking very dirty and greasy. Dad's men usually put sacks on the floor for me, so that I could sleep. We always told relatives not to bother to look for us if a bomb dropped on the station, as they'd never find us amongst the machinery! It used to get so hot down there, that one night we decided to shelter in the store-room; we were playing cards, when there was a terrible crash, and for a moment we were so frightened that we all ran round the table. A bomb had been dropped on "Odhams Press" in Long Acre, which was directly in line with

the corner of the store-room. Many people sheltered in "Odhams", and some were killed, including the parson who was visiting them.

When we arrived home after the raid, there was a broken window on the landing, and a piece of shrapnel on the stairs. A dress shop a few doors away, had been burgled during the raid, whilst the owners were sheltering in the Tube Station, and the dress-stands were left in our doorway. When they returned, the wife (being Jewish) went nearly "berserk", and practically accused us of taking the dresses! Her husband calmed her down, and she apologised the next day. After the dropping of the bomb, we decided in future raids, to return to our old shelter in the sub-station.

There were many Australian and Canadian soldiers around, they drank heavily, and were often quarrelsome, and no doubt very home-sick.

I was no better at school lessons, just spelling, history, dictation and composition, and to add to my misery, I now had needlework; we seemed always to be making white calico knickers, with a band round the top about two inches wide, into which we had to work the main part with tiny gathers; I can't recall how many times I was told to "undo it, and do it g again". By the time I'd finished, it was terribly grubby, and with the rest of the class progressing towards gingham blouses! We used sometimes to have "Spelling-bees", when you were eliminated if you spelt a word wrongly - I won a box of paints once. Our teacher was the nicest one I'd ever had, all the girls loved her, and when I left school, I still called to see her, and she was just as charming; years later, when the new rule was brought in that only teachers with the specified qualifications could be employed, I heard she had to leave, but when I think of her "sweetness", it was better than all the so-called qualifications.

Food was difficult to obtain, and we found it far better to stick to one grocer, as at least one had a share of what he was able to obtain; sometimes, Dad would call in to say a shop in Soho were expecting a delivery of bacon, and we would rush there and queue for a couple of hours, hoping to be lucky.

Dad's Brother, with whom I was staying when War broke out, had only one child, a son in the Navy, and during the early years of the War, he was reported "missing"; Dad's Brother came up from Chelmsford and asked Dad to go with him to the Admiralty, where all the lists were posted, and his fears were only too true - H.M.S. Hibernia sunk, and his son "Missing, believed drowned".

Mother still liked me to have a holiday during the Summer, so one August, I had a week in Hendon with one of my Cousins (a Sister to May, the milliner). Cousin Mercy had four children, and a husband in the Navy, so I and another Cousin, Rob (a son of another Sister who kept the White Horse in Rotherhithe), were invited for a week; he was the eldest of the six, being about fifteen, so was detailed to look after us all,

as Cousin Mercy was away all day working as a waitress at Grahame White's Aerodrome. (Grahame White was one of the pioneers of aircraft). Rob didn't look after us much (except to see that we had a mid-day meal) as he was at the age when he had his eyes on the girls, and he was meeting one of the test pilot's daughters. One day, he was supposed to meet her at two o'clock, and after dinner, we locked him in the lavatory; when he finally got out, he was furious, as he was so late, and threatened to tell Cousin Mercy when she came home. We had great fun, playing games, and turning the little garden shed into a house; sometimes, we went down to the river (a kind of backwater), and paddled. I saw my first dragon-fly there, and thought how beautiful it was. Some of the houses had gardens running down to the water, and this was the first time I'd ever smelt growing mint, and I thought the scent so lovely, that a boy in one of the gardens asked me if I would like a bunch! (Two of the loveliest perfumes I still recall, are fresh mint and wallflowers, which Mother sometimes had in the little parlour at Stepney, and as the room was mostly kept closed, the perfume was wonderful). Being left to our own devices, I doubt if we washed much that week, but Cousin Mercy gave me a bath on Friday night, so I was clean when Mother came for me on Saturday, except for my hair, which had a few "things" in it, but Mother soon got going with the "small tooth comb"!

Mum and Dad's best friends at Stepney, Clara and George, used to come round most Saturday evenings to play cards, sadly wanted to get back to the country after we left, to be with Clara's Mother, but as George worked for Dad, and was exempt from the War, it was difficult to obtain permission to move, so Dad saw his boss, and made the excuse that "George" wasn't all that good and wouldn't be missed, so they allowed him to leave, and back they went to a little hamlet called Sheet, which was three miles from Petersfield in Hampshire. They invited us for a week's holiday, which we enjoyed, although there was nothing to do, except walk. Sheet was very pretty, with just a village green, a very old church, a pub, and thirty or forty houses. Clara and George lived opposite the village green, and her Mother lived at the end of the only street, which went through the village. Her Mother, a widow, was a real hard-working country woman; she could wring a chicken's neck before you could hardly turn round; I suppose they had to be hard to live. Their men-folk seemed to be under their thumbs, and were never treated as Dad was. George liked one teaspoonful of sugar in his tea, but by the time Clara had tapped it two or three times on the side of the sugar-basin, he only had half a spoonful. We stayed with her Mother, and one morning, Mum and I were given bacon and egg for breakfast, and poor Dad was given warmed-up bacon pudding, left over from the previous day's dinner; I can tell you, he didn't think much of this at all, he'd never had such treatment! If we wanted anything, sweets or books, we had to walk the three miles into Petersfield and back, but we enjoyed it, as the country was so beautiful. One day, most of the women in

the village were going bilberry picking, and I went with Clara: it was a lovely day; the bilberries were in a clearing, with pine trees all round, which provided shade when we had our lunch. They were called bilberries in Hampshire, but I think they are called whortleberries in some counties. They are like very small blackcurrants, and stain just as much; jam was made, or they were bottled.

On the day we were returning home, we were loaded up with "goodies" as it was war-time, cabbages, potatoes, bilberry jam, and a "hobbing-foot" to help Dad mend our shoes! This is a piece of wood about three feet, like a small tree trunk, with an iron foot to put the boots on, so that the nails could be hammered home. All this, with our luggage had to be carried the three miles to Petersfield Station. Clara came with us, and when she wasn't looking, Dad dumped the cabbages (I bet he wished he could have done the same with the "hobbing foot"). When we were quite a distance from the station, the train ran in, so Clara ran on in advance, over the bridge, and insisted on the driver waiting until we got there. When we arrived at Charing Cross, Dad said he wasn't carrying anything any further, and although we were only five minutes walk from home, he put everything in the "left luggage" office, and arranged for one of his men to call for it later. When we opened our case, there was bilberry jam everywhere!

One of the nicest things about living in the West End, was the access to the beautiful parks. Sometimes we got up very early on Sunday mornings, and walked to St. James's Park before breakfast, and there were the museums and the National Gallery. Very often on wet Sundays, when we came out of Sunday School at St. Martin's, we would cross over to the National Gallery, and as we went in, we received strict instructions from the attendant to be very quiet and behave ourselves, this before we'd hardly stepped inside! I loved the Dutch interior paintings, with their wonderful calm domestic scenes. Then there was the London Museum overlooking Green Park, where there was some beautiful china.

Of course we didn't have the parties we used to have at Stepney, but we had plenty of visitors; our relatives would have a 'bus ride to the West End, and always called in, some even rode their bikes. Mum and I were amazed how many people knew Dad; the electricians at the theatres, his equivalent in the Gas Company, Telephone Company and Post Office (who very often wanted favours when he had the road open for an electricity fault, for the chance to deal with their cables), the pubs of course, and the Piccadilly "Flower Girls", who had known him for years. Also, there was the Commissionaire outside "Romano's" Restaurant in the Strand (which High Society frequented in Edwardian days), who always called him "Fred", and when I asked why, he said, that at one time in his early days with

the Electricity Supply Company, he was "loaned" to Romano's for two years as electrical engineer, and as the previous man was called "Fred", so Dad was; he lived in, and this was when he did his drinking and gambling, very often, being paid on Friday, and completely "broke" by Monday.

Sometimes, Dad's Sister-in-law (with whom he lodged when he was single) would come from Stepney to spend the day with Mother, and when I came home from school, I was told to go with her and see her safely on the 'bus at St. Martin's Church. I didn't much care for this, as she was very tall and gaunt (nearly six feet tall), and she still wore button boots, and a bonnet, which was a very tall affair, so that she looked like a walking lamp-post, and I was afraid of meeting my school friends. Bonnets were right out of fashion, and the only woman I knew who still wore one, and lived near us, was old Mrs. Flannagan, and as she had six daughters, they finally persuaded her to give it up. Dad's Sister-in-law had one son, who worked for Dad, and he happened to say to his Mother that he rather liked bloaters, so every night without fail for years she gave him a penny bloaters for his tea!

Now and again, Dad's only Sister would come for a few days; we hadn't a spare room, but we used to fit her in somehow; she and her husband kept a pub at Brighton, and after he died, her daughter and son-in-law took over. I remember a brother of the Son-in-law once asking if we could put him up for a night, as he had a greengrocer's business, and wanted to get to Covent Garden very early in the morning. Dad asked what time he wanted calling, he said about 3 a.m. We knew he had a wooden leg, but when Dad called him, with a cup of tea, he nearly dropped it, as it hadn't entered his head that he took the leg off at night, and there it was, standing up in the corner!

Our next holiday, was a week in a small village in Kent; the husband of my Cousin May (the milliner), had an Aunt and Cousins in Knockholt, and he suggested we went there for a holiday, which wouldn't be too expensive (I should think that every Cousin in the family must have gone there at some time or other for a holiday)! We had a lovely week; there were two boys in the family, and the elder one was my constant companion, and taught me to ride a bike (some years later I married him). I fell off quite a few times, and once ran into a builder's hand-cart. His Mother made lovely coconut buns, which we ate straight from the oven. After our holiday, she very often came to the Charing Cross Hotel for Conservative meetings, being Chairman of the village branch, and she would always call into Mother for tea, and once, she and her husband stayed with us for a week-end.

One day, word was sent across from the Church to the school, to ask if any of the older girls would like to attend Confirmation class, which quite a few of us did, and the Sunday of Confirmation was a great thrill, with our white dresses and veils, and the Bishop of Stepney confirmed us.

Dick Sheppard, the Vicar, gave us a little Communion book. Sometimes when we went to Holy Communion afterwards, at eight o'clock on Sunday morning, Queen Mary would be there, as Dick Sheppard was one of the Canons to Buckingham Palace.

Then in November 1918, the Armistice was signed; we were sent home from school for the rest of the day, and in the evening there were great celebrations in Trafalgar Square, which lasted all night - many relatives called that evening!

Mother, as always, was kindness itself to every one. One "old dear", who lived in Goodwins Court (off St. Martin's Lane), used to call sometimes on Saturday morning with a plant she'd had given her, and as she felt she couldn't look after it properly, she thought Mother might like it - she knew this meant she could expect half-a-crown, which she promptly went to the pub to spend, and probably an extra drink if Dad happened to be there. Then there was the Irish couple who lived in the Flat opposite; no one seemed to speak to them, but Mother always passed the time of day, and when the husband died, Mother sent a few flowers, and of course she had to go and see the deceased, with the lighted candles round the coffin, and his widow very much wanted Mother to go to the "Wake", being held in the evening. I don't think there are many held today, except perhaps in Ireland. A vigil is held round the coffin all night, on the night before the funeral (hoping they would come to life, I think), but by the time they'd sampled the Irish whisky profusely, I don't think they really knew or cared!

Once or twice a week, we used to have a coster-monger with his donkey and barrow come down the street selling fish, and one day he was pushing his barrow with no donkey, so Mother asked him what had happened, and he said the donkey had died; Mother asked him how much it would cost for another, and he said, about ten pounds, so Mother went straight upstairs and got ten pounds for him (she told us it was a loan, but we knew she'd given it to him). After that, whenever he came in the street, I would call to Mother, and say, "Here's your donkey Mum, do you want any fish"? and when he wanted to give her extra weight, she wouldn't hear of it.

Then there was the little Jewish woman who lived a few doors away, who had a family of sons, who used to get into fights with race-course gangs, and one of the sons stabbed one of the gang, and he died. "Becky" was in a terrible state, not knowing whether he would be hung, as they still were, so Mother went along most afternoons until the trial to comfort her, and sometimes they would go for a walk, and I would tease Mother and say, that from the back they looked just like Sisters, as they were both so short, barely five feet, and Mother would be most indignant, and swear she was much taller. The Son got off with a three year sentence, having engaged the best Counsel possible.

At fifteen, I left school, and started at Pitman's College in Southampton Row, Bloomsbury, to take a secretarial

course (the fruits of Mother taking out an endowment when I was very young). The College was within walking distance from home, through Covent Garden and Holborn. On the first day, there were two girls and myself who went up in the lift, and we remained firm friends for the rest of our stay there, having our lunch together, and sitting together in class. We had a good deal of fun, as the master who taught us Shorthand had just come out of the Navy after War service, and was rather handsome, and three giggling school girls led him a dance; we all asked him to draw a ship in our autograph books, and when we became bored, we used to curl the side pieces of our hair in hair-pins, and suddenly we would take them out, and our hair would be sticking out like a golliwog's, and he would say, "You three are getting wound up", which we knew meant trouble. I think Mother realized I wasn't concentrating, so she warned me that the twenty pounds or so she'd paid, was all there was, so I had to begin work in earnest. We always made a point of getting to the typewriting room as early as possible, so that we could have a choice of machine, no one wanted the Oliver, and for the whole nine months, I never used it once. The College sent me after my first job, and it happened to be in Soho, so Dad said he'd go round first to see what the office was like, as there were some very "shady" places in the district, and he soon came back, and said I wasn't going there. I had to report back with some excuse to say it wasn't suitable, and then I was sent to the City, to East India Avenue, Leadenhall Street, (a very old block of offices), with strict instructions from the College, that I musn't accept less than thirty shillings weekly. There were three elderly men there, with an office to match, very "Dickensian", with high stools and sloping desks, just two rooms, with a lavatory outside on the landing. I was asked to take a few notes in Shorthand, and then type them back, and when I saw the machine, my heart sank - an "Oliver", and I'd never used one! Anyway, I managed, and when I said I wanted thirty shillings a week, the "boss" said, "What a lot of money", and he didn't know whether he could afford that amount, but a few days later I received a letter asking me to go for a month's trial, and I stayed eleven years, my only situation! I was happy there, my hours were good, 9.30 a.m. - 5 p.m. and 12 noon on Saturdays. I found the work interesting, dealing in Scrap Iron, Steel and Metal (copper, brass, zinc, aluminium, etc.). We had all sorts of scrap iron dealers in and out the office, great burly cockneys from the East End, who went round the streets collecting with horse and cart, gypsies, who lived in caravans. - It was mostly inspected on the site, and then sent by train to the big steel foundries, mostly in South Wales. Sometimes, to save inspecting, they brought samples, pieces of copper piping, a length of steel rail, or cast iron "chairs" from the rails; very often we submitted a "tender" to the railway to make a bid for rails, to army depots for shell cases, or to wharves, where a ship was being broken up.

Most of the girls took jobs in shops, filing clerks in Government offices (which needed no training), or were apprenticed to Court dressmakers; the boys went as telegraph boys or messengers (very smart in their blue uniforms, with little pill-box hats), or call-boys in theatres. One boy got a job as a messenger in the Admiralty, blue blazer and peaked cap provided, and he got a bit "uppity", so ever after he was called "Admiral", which made him strut more than ever!

Dad was now on his way to promotion, and was called into the office, and told he was to be Mains Engineer, but that it would be as well, if he could tell his men to stop calling him "Happy", and to call him Mr. Hart, which they did to his face, but behind his back, he was still "Happy"; in fact, one man applied for a job, and asked if he could speak to Mr. Happy. Dad got on well with his superiors (no doubt because they knew he wasn't after their jobs), and having worked with the men, they would do anything for him; if there was a fault, and the electricity failed, Dad would work all night to find it, and he only had to send telegrams to the men, and they would work with him. (I remember one funny incident; there was a fire in one of the electrical boxes underground, so the Fire Brigade was called out from Shaftesbury Avenue, and as the horses came galloping along St. Martin's Lane, the big brass bell being rung like mad for the road to clear, they just halted for a brief moment outside the Company's offices, picked Dad up, gave him a brass helmet, and there he was, clinging on the side for dear life, and the horses racing down the road again). Another day, the road was up, and he was standing looking into the trench, and a "posh" gentleman asked him what it was all about, and after he'd gone, a reporter said, "Do you know who that was", and Dad said he'd no idea, and he said the Duke of Connaught.

Dad was the country boy who made good. When he first came to London from Billericay in Essex, he was apprenticed to Pawsons and Leafs in St. Paul's Churchyard, matching silks, then he was a train driver on the Chatham and Dover Line, going from Charing Cross to Dover three or four times daily (he said he knew every hedgerow and field) and found it a bit boring, after which, he was out of work for a time, and as there was no pay or assistance, he decided to return home for a time, so early one Saturday morning, he started out to walk from London to Ramsden Heath (three miles from Billericay), about twenty miles, and arrived late in the afternoon; he stayed a week with his Mother, and then heard of an electrician's job at Crystal Palace, which he obtained (he said, the organist practicing most of the day on the huge organ there, nearly drove him mad). The Charing Cross and City Electric Supply Company then started up, and Dad went there almost at the beginning, helping to lay the cables, which was why years later he could still remember where they were laid, and never had need of a map. He was there for forty years, except for the two years he spent at Romano's Restaurant in the Strand, on loan from the Company.

He was now receiving a monthly wage of forty pounds, no rent or heating expenses, and with my thirty shillings, we were really in the money! We now had a fortnight's holiday each year; we went to Folkestone, Hastings, Eastbourne, the Isle of Wight, Torquay, the Lake District, etc., and even spent four days in Holland, going over from Folkestone to the Island of Walcheren, which was very brave of Mum, as she was a terrible sailor. The hotel was only a few yards from the sea, and one evening, when it was very rough, Mother said, "Look at the white horses on the sea", and the Proprietor said, "Where, where", he really thought there were some!

There was much unemployment after the War, and many people worried Dad for work, but all he could offer was road work, digging trenches for new cables; he gave work to one or two at Stepney, who could cope; my Cousin May's husband was suddenly made redundant, after having worked in the office of an export wool merchant in the docks, since he left school. They used to come practically every week, begging Dad to give him work, but he said, how could he offer a clerk work, digging up roads, he hadn't the strength, but he finally found him a job as a meter reader, which was a God-send, and he stayed with the firm long after Dad retired, and until he himself retired. He had the most beautiful hand-writing I've ever seen, and was in great demand for writing Wills, etc., and even until a year or so ago, he still sent a Christmas card, the envelope addressed in beautiful writing, and, he was nearly ninety! It was a great "eye-opener" to him to work in the West End, he saw things he hardly knew existed, when he called to read the meters; most of the dress shops in Shaftesbury Avenue were just a sham, and where prostitutes abounded.

I continued with my piano lessons at the London College of Music in Marlborough Street (a turning off Regent Street), where I had earlier taken my exams when I lived in Stepney. When I used to practice in the evenings, the proprietor of the cafe opposite, used to stand outside listening, entranced, and would say to Mother next day, how much he'd enjoyed it.

I joined the Girls Friendly Society at St. Martin's; we met weekly in the "New Rooms" under the Church, where we played games, and performed little plays (I was Britannia once), with sometimes a dance or a concert on Saturday evening. One helper, who had worked in St. Martin's Church for years, had been left a widow with three very young children, the eldest was only four, and Dick Sheppard had helped her to get the elder girl into a home at Reigate, one boy with foster parents, and the other boy, she brought up at home. One evening, she said her daughter May was leaving school and coming home to live, and she was sure we would get on well together (we were sixteen), which we did, and were friends for more than fifty years.

When new people moved into the district, usually in domestic service in the big Service clubs, or as caretakers in

offices, the children would join the St. Martin's Club, or the Girls Friendly Society, and we, as members, would be asked to make them welcome. One family came as caretakers to the Foreign Office in Downing Street, and I was often invited to tea by the daughter; I used to enjoy this, as their rooms overlooked Horse Guards Parade, and when in the evening her Mother or Father went to see that all was secure in the Foreign Office, I went too; it was rather overwhelming with the portraits and imposing staircase, one felt one had to walk on tiptoe and speak in whispers.

I now decided I would like to take up singing, which Mother thought a huge joke, as I had no voice to speak of, but at the London College, I was fortunate to get a marvellous teacher, who trained my voice, so that Mum and Dad, and friends were amazed. I used to sing at concerts at St. Martin's, and enter competitions at Central Hall, Westminster, and when we had one of our concerts for the pupils at the College, I sang with the orchestra, in Italian! Mum and Dad were there, and how delighted they were, and when I went the following week for my lesson, the teacher said, "Have you seen the notice on the door"? I said I hadn't, so he sent me down to read it, and it was a "cutting" from the "Times", written by the music critic, who'd been at the concert, and saying, I showed great promise, which of course was a feather in the teacher's cap! He wanted me to take up singing professionally, and asked if I could afford to give up my job, I said I couldn't, but I was never short of requests to sing - free!

At one time, when I went to the Sunday Evening service at St. Mary's le Strand, a few of us used to meet in a room afterwards for coffee and a chat, and someone had the bright idea of forming a Concert Party. We went every Sunday for rehearsals; we thought up a few sketches, had a "comic", a pianist, and me singing. Oh the confidence of youth! We decided, would you believe, to hire the Croydon Town Hall no less, for a show. We could only hope to sell tickets to friends or colleagues at the office. When I think of that night, I squirm. There was this huge hall, with not more than twenty people in the audience, one "old dear" in the front row knitting throughout, and we all giving of our best, which was truly terrible. Never again! One of the boys, who had some of his office pals there, asked them next day what they thought of it, and they said diabolical, except for the girl who played the piano (the Boy's girl friend), and the girl who sang!

I now decided to learn to play the violin, so again to the London College, but this didn't turn out like the singing, I was no good at all, I just didn't have any feeling for it, so it didn't last long.

My friend May and I had some wonderful times; we went to theatres, for which we often had "complimentary" tickets, especially for the Adelphi or Vaudeville Theatres

in the Strand, as these were owned by Dad's Company, cinemas, (we never missed a film with Ren Lyon, or the cowboy Wm.S.Hart); we played tennis and hockey, and went to dances at Caxton Hall, Covent Garden, or the Lyceum Theatre, when we wore our long dresses. Every Easter we went to Eastbourne or Hastings, and one thing that never changed, was an Easter Card each on Good Friday morning from Mother, and a chocolate Easter egg in our luggage from May's Mother. How packed those trains were to the coast on the Thursday evening before Good Friday, and many times we stood the whole way. We always went to the office together each morning, as May was a shorthand typist in an import and export business. We always had to be home by ten o'clock, unless we were going somewhere special with a crowd, and sometimes, if we were short of cash mid-week, we just went to Hyde Park and listened to the band. Often, just as we were leaving, "Big Ben" would start striking ten, and we would run like mad, down Piccadilly, through Leicester Square, through the little Courts into St. Martin's Lane, hoping Mother wouldn't notice it was past ten. Very often we went to the Music Hall at the Holborn Empire, which was wonderful entertainment; we always booked our seats, and sometimes, just as we were going in, we would see Mum's Brother, Uncle Bob, queueing for the gallery, having taken a 'bus from Poplar. Sometimes, May would say, "We won't be able to go out next Saturday, as Mother is having one of her family parties", which meant all the relatives being invited, and I was needed to accompany all the singing, (the usual three verses and six choruses). I can't tell you how many times I've played "Where my caravan has rested", "Because" and "Comrades". Sometime during the day, someone would have to go down to the Flat below to tell them we would be having a party, as otherwise there would be a complaint that the gas mantle was broken, due to all the movement overhead.

Another enjoyment, was to go to the "Mall" on a Summer evening to see the Debutantes going to Buckingham Palace to be presented to the Queen (not just a garden party as it is today). It was wonderful to see the girls in their chauffeur driven cars, in their beautiful dresses and tiaras, and Prince of Wales feathers; there was such a procession of them, that they would be held up for ages in the Mall, to get into the Palace, and we would gaze into the cars with many "Oohs and Aahs".

Sometimes, when May and I went to Green Park in the evening, we always took a short cut through St. James' Palace Yard, and two or three times we saw Queen Mary walking over to visit someone in the houses, and she always gave us a sweet smile, and we would give a half-hearted, curtsy.

Once, four of us queued all right from about seven p.m. until seven p.m. the following evening, to see the first performance of a musical comedy at the Palace Theatre, and as we all lived near, we took it in turns to pop home for a wash and something to eat. When we finally got in, we had front row seats in the gallery, but we were so tired, I doubt if we knew what it was all about!

One Winter, we went each Sunday evening to a

different church in the City; as there was no-one in the City at week-ends, except a few caretakers, sometimes there were only a dozen or so in the congregation, and some of them were "out of this world". One evening we went to St. Bride's in Fleet Street, and in front of us, sat a little old lady with tight ringlets down to her shoulders-she looked like "Sarey Gamp", out of Dickens.

May and I always had plenty of boy-friends, and I would often say to her, "It's the real thing this time"; she took no notice, and only said, "I've heard it all before". Poor May was most unfortunate, as practically every boy she had, turned out to be married, and she would be terribly disappointed when he told her after a few weeks. Thursday evenings, we always kept free to play cards with Mum and Dad, to which they looked forward; we played for a halfpenny a time, and May's new boy-friends were always invited, and sometimes, after they'd gone, Mother would say, "He's married", and I would say, "I'm sure he isn't", and Mother would come out with her usual saying, "Always beware of the chap who says he can never meet you at week-ends; excuses can be made for the man, who perhaps is unable to see you during the week, he may have to work late, or have commitments with his football club etc., but if he's unable to see you at week-ends, depend upon it, he's married".

Dad still came home a "little merry" on Saturdays, and very often I would be waiting to have my dinner before going to play hockey or tennis, and, would be looking out of the kitchen window to give Mum warning that he was on his way, as I could see when he left the pub, and as I looked down one Saturday, I could see his bowler hat was well dented in at the crown, either he, or someone else had sat on it, and I said, "Here he comes with his hat bashed in". Always afterwards, Mum would say, "Has he got his had bashed in?". I would moan and say, "He shows me up", and Mum would say, "Now you keep quiet, I'll do the talking". Of course, no-one knew whether he'd had too much or not, as he was his usual happy self, and he only had a few steps to walk home. He very often said, "I'd just got to the door to come home, when a man came in (and here we used to say it for him), that I hadn't seen for seventeen years", which was usually true, as he knew so many people, and it was really just being in company that made him drink. He never went to the pub in the evening or on Sundays, and if Uncle Bob came to tea sometimes on Sunday, and asked him to go for a drink, he was never very keen to go, as we'd always got beer in the house, which he never drank, unless we had visitors. When he arrived home on Saturdays, he always came with a bunch of flowers (a standing order at a stall in "Seven Dials"), and a bag of fruit - grapes, melons, peaches etc., He brought a melon one Saturday, and we'd never tasted it before, but neither Dad or I liked it; Mum, rather than waste it, cut herself a slice every evening until it was finished, trying all the time to persuade us to help her out, and telling us, we didn't know what we were missing, and all we

said was, "Get on with it Mum, you're enjoying it". But, talk about "history repeating itself", years later, my daughter had a melon given her, when she worked in Covent Garden, and neither she or my husband would eat it, so to save wasting it, I had to force myself to eat it, and would you believe, I suddenly got the taste, and now I love melons, and always start a meal with a slice, if they are on the menu.

Dick Sheppard needed to have St. Martin's Church renovated, so he appealed for thousands of pounds, and it was decided to have a Pageant of "Religion through the Ages"; it was a huge undertaking, with everyone taking part, and with performances every evening for a week. He knew so many influential people, that he had no difficulty in obtaining the best to help. Laurence Housman to write the play, Ben Webster to produce it, and Gustav Holtz to arrange the music. It was all tremendous fun; I was one of the peasants of the Middle Ages.

One day, coming home from playing tennis, on the 'bus from Dulwich, someone called my name, and one of the boys in the company said, "Are you the girl, I used to know at school, who used to have auburn hair"?. After that, we went about quite a lot together, but Mum and Dad were most unhappy about it, as they thought it might become serious, and Mother, with all her knowledge of life, could see we were most unsuited, (how right she was), and to add to her forebodings, he was a Roman Catholic, and when it finally petered out, I can imagine the first thing she did - go on her knees and thank the Almighty!

We were invited to my Cousin's wedding, the youngest of my Mother's eldest Sister, but what consternation, he was a Catholic! My Aunt was terribly upset about it, and refused to go to the marriage service, but would perhaps attend the wedding breakfast afterwards! My Cousin had changed her religion, so this meant the full service (Nuptial Mass included). The service seemed endless to all us Protestants, and I could hear one Cousin behind me saying, "How much longer is this going on, I'm dying for a drink". When we arrived at the hall for the meal, things weren't very happy; my Aunt arrived late, and I heard the Bridegroom's Mother say, "All this is no wish of mine", and my Aunt saying, "And, I can assure you, it is no wish of mine either", and it didn't improve matters, to see an Aunt of the Bridegroom's from Ireland, come sailing past with the coloured sash of the Sinn Fein Movement across her chest. After lunch, things were getting a bit "touchy", so Mother, ever the peacemaker, persuaded me to sing "Mother Mc Cree" of all things, to ease the tension.

We had one big party - on my twenty-first birthday; all the relatives came from Stepney and Poplar, and all sang the usual songs. There was plenty to eat and drink, and I heard Mother's youngest Brother say to her as he carved the joint, I see you haven't lost the "family tradition", no shortage of food. I think this was the last time I saw his Son (my Cousin Henry), who, as I said earlier was drowned in the Thames. He went out early one foggy November morning,
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and most probably jumped from barge to barge, and fell between them, and with his heavy Winter overcoat, hadn't much chance. It was a very harrowing time, as they didn't know what had happened, when he failed to return, although my Uncle guessed he had fallen in (being a lighterman himself), but my Aunt wouldn't be convinced, and followed up clues for weeks, that he'd been seen in different places, but weeks later, his body was washed up by the tide some miles away.

Sometimes on Saturday, if I left the office a little earlier, I would catch the 'bus to Stepney, and visit Dad's eldest Brother, who was getting old (with whom Dad lodged when he was single). He was a very gentle soul, and always pleased to see me, and one Saturday on my way home, who should get on the 'bus, but Mr. W. our Scottish boarder of early days. He was delighted to see me, and with his usual generosity, would insist on taking me out to lunch, so we got off the 'bus in the City, and had a very nice meal, and found plenty to talk about. He was now married to someone he'd known for years, and often talked of, when he lived with us.

Now came a rather unhappy period; Mother developed a lump in the breast, no doubt caused through a fall she had when we were on holiday in the Isle of Wight; we had the usual jokes about "taking more water with it next time", but the lump gradually got bigger, so she went to a Harley Street specialist, who said she needed an operation. She decided to have it done privately, so she went one Saturday evening to a nursing home in Harley Street, and the surgeon wanted Dad and I to wait until he'd finished operating. Even this had its lighter side; we were shown into a large drawing room, with big leather armchairs, and in came two cats a little older than kittens (I don't think Dad was too fond of cats, he much preferred dogs). Suddenly, they went completely mad, they chased each other up and down the velvet curtains, round the backs of our chairs, over the table, and Dad becoming quite scared, so he stood up, with a rolled-up newspaper in his hand, threatening to give them a clout; he didn't fancy sitting there for two or three hours with them jumping over his head. The surgeon came down about eight o'clock to say he'd finished, and that he'd had to remove her breast, and we could see her next day. Mother was there for three weeks. Dad and I were kept very busy, as we both had our jobs, and when I got home, there was a meal to prepare, housework to do, and Mum to visit, and it was a bitterly cold February. When she came home, one place hadn't healed, so the doctor showed me how to bandage, which I did all the Summer, but by Christmas, she was back in hospital (Charing Cross), receiving treatment, and then she seemed to improve.

Some of the girls from the Hockey Club, saw an advertisement, asking for someone to share a farmhouse in Hertfordshire, so they thought it might be fun to have a look at it, and perhaps we could go down at week-ends, or

spend a holiday there. It proved to be a great success, as we had a sitting-room, a very large bedroom, and use of the kitchen. It was a very old farmhouse, with oak beams, surrounded by fields, and near a river; it was owned by a lady (a well-connected gentlewoman) and a son and daughter, both single, about forty. At one time they'd had a farm in New Zealand. They ~~were~~ weren't very good farmers, and were glad of the rent, also of our company, as there was plenty of laughter. They had a few cows (all with names), and some chickens, so we were allright for milk and eggs. There were eight or nine of us sharing the rent, and we made arrangements with each other when we wanted to go down, although we could manage all the eight at once, or we could spend a week there if we wanted. We all had the jobs we were best at, cooking, washing-up etc., and we made a list of all the things we needed, as it was unfurnished. We took down whatever we could manage to scrounge from home, and went into the nearest towns, Broxbourne or Hoddeston, for the rest; it was such a large bedroom, that we easily got in six or seven camp beds. Most of the girls had different backgrounds and education to mine, but we all got on wonderfully well together. There was a doctor's daughter, a vicar's daughter (who worked in a stockbrokers office), three school teachers, and a secretary to Duveen's the Bond Street antique dealers. (There was only one real snag, we had to pump the cold water from a pump in the yard, which we took in turns, no joke on a Winter's morning).

Mother now became very ill, and very much wanted to move from Charing Cross, and get into the country, so we arranged for her to go to Chelmsford to stay with Dad's Brother and Sister-in-law, whilst we looked for a house. Life became very hectic, as Dad and I had our work, and there was the shopping, washing, and household chores; on Saturday afternoons we went house-hunting, and on Sundays we went to Chelmsford to see Mother. Mum's eldest sister (Hannah), with her daughter May, and Son-in-law (the one who worked at Dad's Company), had moved from Stepney to Hornchurch in Essex, so we hunted all round there for a house to rent, which was now becoming practically impossible, so finally we decided to buy; there was a new three bedroomed house opposite the back gate of my Aunt's for six hundred and fifty pounds, (twenty five pounds deposit), so then commenced the upheaval of moving, which we wanted to be as soon as possible, as Mother was getting restless, (piano again out of the window)! We moved just after Easter, and brought Mum from Chelmsford, but she was so ill that she was confined to bed; she did just have a look round the house, to see how I'd arranged it, but I could see I wouldn't be able to leave her to go to the office, so gave in my notice, and stayed at home to look after her. She died in November; the last month was terribly exhausting, as Dad and I took it in turns to spend the night with her, but on our night off, when we hoped to sleep, she always wanted that one. I quite expected her to go on the same day as my Father, 8th November, but it was the tenth, a week before my birthday. I was kept very busy until after the funeral, but then commenced the lonliest time of my life; my birthday was a disaster, I saw no-one at all that day; Dad had gone to the office, and my Aunt made excuses next day, saying

she'd meant to come over. With hind-sight, I can see I should have found a job, but it was a time of great unemployment (1930), not, as it had been after the Great War, returning Service men, but practically everybody, in all trades, office workers included. My Cousin, who was four months younger than me, was a tremendous help; she used to stay for week-ends, and we would walk for miles round the country. She was a retoucher of negatives, very skilled, having been trained at the Bloomsbury Art School, after winning a scholarship, but even she was out of work, and had to work in a restaurant (doling out plates of salad), which she disliked intensely.

After a year or so my unhappiness eased a little, but I still didn't like living in Hornchurch, but made friends by joining the Badminton Club, and Church Affairs, and taking up elocution, which meant more competitions, orⁿ two in Essex, and one at the Central Hall, Westminster. I even had a go at Grecian dancing! Being at home all day, I was in great demand to sing in the afternoons at garden parties, and I could even do monologues now, by way of a change. I still kept in touch with friends in London (I played hockey on Saturday afternoons), and I was persuaded to join the St. Martin's Players; we did many plays, which were great fun. I also had Cousins living near. One Cousin (my Aunt's Granddaughter), was also to marry a Roman Catholic, which didn't please my Aunt at all (her own daughter, and now her Granddaughter). The bridegroom to be, lodged with my Aunt for a time before his marriage, and sometimes on Sunday morning before going to Mass, he would ask my Aunt which service he should go to (to fit in with her preparing breakfast), and she would say crossly, "Oh, I should go to the first "house", and poor Fred would say, "Oh Gran, how could you". I think the funniest thing I saw, and which was gossip in the village, was, after my Cousin married. It appears, that when Monks have to receive hospital treatment of any kind, they are allowed to stay with Catholic friends, whilst being treated. One morning, all the relatives could hardly believe their eyes, there was this very tall thin Monk, in his long black habit, and his round hat., like the French curès wear, with thick "pebble" glasses (he was having eye treatment), and my Cousin trotting along beside him, trying to keep up with his long strides, not more than five feet tall, carrying a shopping basket, and expecting her first baby shortly! A sight indeed for the shocked neighbours.

I decided to go for a holiday in Switzerland, so booked with the Polytechnic; I went to Basle, which was a great thrill, as flying was more or less in it's infancy; we went from Croydon Aerodrome in a "Hercules", landed at Le Bourget for a brief rest, and then on to Basle. It was a lovely holiday, but on the return journey, we landed at Le Bourget in the middle of a terrific thunderstorm; we didn't expect to take off, but evidently the weather ahead was clear, so we went, but some of the passengers weren't at all happy to see the lightning playing round the wings. When I arrived

home, I found Dad had decided to put up a shelf in the kitchen for the saucepans, and "Do-it-yourself" jobs not being his strong point, the whole lot collapsed, saucepans as well, and even my Aunt in the house opposite, heard the terrible clatter.

I had many friends to write to, to let them know of Mother's death, as she was loved by everyone, so I wrote to the friends at Knockholt, where we stayed for a holiday, and received a letter saying how sorry they were, and inviting me for a week-end; her eldest Son from Bexhill was there, and we had a happy time together. Later, Dad and I went for a week-end, and it wasn't very long before Harry and I became engaged, which would have delighted Mother. Dad was now due for retirement, and he was to live with us in Bexhill. We decided to sell the house in Hornchurch, which proved to be very difficult, as there was so much unemployment; all we were asking, was, our twenty-five pounds we'd paid as a deposit four years earlier, and to take over our existing mortgage; finally, we found someone willing to pay ten pounds, the remainder to follow, which it never did. We found a new bungalow in Bexhill, which Harry more or less designed, which cost six hundred pounds (deposit twenty-five pounds), but we paid one hundred pounds (Dad's wedding present); it was arranged that Dad and I lived there for a few weeks, until I married, so early in October, we said goodbye to all friends and relatives in Hornchurch, and I for one, was not sorry to leave.

Then commenced another totally new life - marriage, new friends, and a life by the sea, all very exciting.

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The Wedding Day was fixed for the 26th October (1935). Dad and I moved into the new bungalow about a week before; there was mud everywhere, as the road wasn't completed, so the removal men had to pull up at some distance, and wooden planks put down for the men to walk on. The walls in the bungalow were still wet, and of course being October, and no heating, one felt it would never dry out. However, by the time the Day arrived, we'd got things sorted out, the cake ordered, etc., My clothes, I had bought in London before leaving; it was to be a very quiet affair, only a dozen guests. I had a "two-piece", skirt, silk blouse, and long jacket, in beige, with a lovely brown fur collar, very smart brown hat, and brown real crocodile shoes, which were a bit tight. Looking back, I can't think what made me choose so much brown, because I don't like brown! I had a nice spray of orchids, which Harry had ordered from an orchid grower. A neighbour at Hornchurch had a Summer bungalow at Littlestone, near Dungeness, which I asked if we could have for a week, which she was only too willing to do, as her Summer "letting" was finished. The wedding was at noon; it was a really beautiful day, like late Summer. Dad and I were a bit early, so we had to ask the chauffeur to drive round for a time. When we arrived at the church (St. Stephen's,) on the Downs, we walked down the aisle, Harry stepped out, and there we waited, and waited, no vicar, Harry and I trying to stifle our giggles, and finally someone leaving to try and find him; it appears, he had forgotten he had a wedding, and was busy gardening. He hastily washed his hands, donned his surplice, and started the ceremony. Actually, he was a new vicar, and had only just come to the district, and our's the second wedding he'd conducted. We had a very simple wedding breakfast (thirteen in all, as Harry's Brother had someone to drive him and his fiance down). As Littlestone was not very far, we hired a taxi to take us there, no one knew where we were going, except Dad; my Aunt Maud was highly amused, when I gathered up the flowers to take with us! When we arrived at Littlestone, it was simply pouring with rain, and no one about as it was mostly streets of holiday bungalows, now closed for the Winter. The taxi driver, who knew Harry well, grinned, and wished us "all the best", and it was pelting down so much, that Harry didn't stop to carry me over the threshold! We enjoyed ourselves, but it hardly stopped raining the whole week, and I could only venture out between showers, as I'd forgotten my tweed coat, and all I had, was a fur coat, and no umbrella. Never will I forget the mournful noise of the warning "boom" from the Dungeness light-ship; with all the rain and fog, it was giving it's warning to ships at sea every few minutes. Marrying Harry was the very best thing that could have happened to me; even today, more than forty years later, he still assures me there is nothing in life to worry about; he's absolutely fearless and dependable, and above all, he still makes me laugh, and I love him.

When we returned from our honeymoon, I had to send off the pieces of wedding cake, to the friends and relatives who had sent presents. It was a beautiful cake, the best I'd ever tasted,

and I'd always promised myself, that when I married, I'd have huge slices to eat, but where I made the mistake, was assuming that everyone else liked it too, so instead of sending the usual meagre pieces, I crammed nice thick slices into the boxes, and most of the recipients had to pay excess postage on something they weren't keen on in the first place! One Aunt was very annoyed.

It was a terrible wet Winter, thick mud everywhere, the garden couldn't be tackled as it was so wet. Dad made a friend of "Charlie" next door, and of course had his dog, (a cairn terrier). He never got "merry" now, just a couple of beers at mid-day. Harry had plenty of friends, as he'd lived in Bexhill since he was sixteen, so once or twice a week we spent the evening with them. We were always very late leaving (around Mid-night), and our friend John used to put the clock on about half an hour to get us to leave early, and just as we were about to leave, tell us not to hurry as he'd put the clock on! After Christmas the weather improved, and Harry was able to make a start on the garden. He built a rockery and pool, and a lovely iris bed with some really beautiful irises, lovely dark velvety colours, and of course, a bed of my favourite wallflowers.

About April I became pregnant, but didn't tell Dad for the time being, in case it was a false alarm. Living by the sea, we had plenty of visitors during the Summer. Every week we visited a friend who was housekeeper to an elderly couple; she used to do beautiful embroidery, and showed me how to do drawn-thread work. She used to save all the remainders of the wine bottles and liqueurs, and mix it all together, which made a very potent cocktail; Harry wouldn't even taste it, but I did. Harry's birthday was at the end of September, on Michaelmas Day, so I ordered a goose in good time, and invited our friend to come and share it with us, but, one morning, about ten days before, just as Harry had left for work, I started a miscarriage (five months), and hadn't a clue what to do, so got Dad to take a note to the doctor; during the morning he called, and informed me I'd lost a son, and must stay in bed for at least ten days, so the first time I was allowed up, was on Harry's birthday to eat the goose, which our kind housekeeper friend had cooked. Christmas came and my Cousin came to stay. In March, (with the wallflowers in bloom again) Dad became ill, so I nursed him, and sat up at night, but finally he went into hospital, and died within a week. Before he went into hospital, his Brother from Chelmsford came to see him, but Dad wasn't very happy with the visit, as his Brother kept worrying him as to whether he'd made a Will, knowing that if he hadn't, I could make no claim, not being a blood relation, not that there was much to leave, one hundred pounds at the most; he kept telling Dad how much it had cost in railway fares for the day, so that finally, Dad called me in, and whispered to me to give him his fare and get rid of him. On the day of the funeral, Dad's foreman from the office came with a floral tribute, and soon after, Dad's

Brother and his wife arrived, and, having time to spare, invited Dad's foreman to go for a drink. When they returned, Mr. "W" called me on one side, to tell me that Dad's Brother had been asking him all kinds of questions about Dad's affairs, and when he could get no satisfaction, had informed him he would talk to me after the funeral, which he did, and was at great pains to tell me that unless there was a Will, I would be unable to claim anything; I assured him there was one, which greatly disappointed him, and he then proceeded to inform me how much it had cost him to hire the car to come to the funeral! Can you imagine anyone wanting to deprive you of a meagre hundred pounds, when Dad and I had been as Father and Daughter since I was four years of age? What mercenary people there are in the world!

Harry and I decided to pay the hundred pounds off the mortgage on the bungalow, to enable us to meet the monthly repayments; Harry's wage was only £2.15/- weekly.

In June I again became pregnant; we spent a happy Summer visiting friends, and Harry's Mother and Father spent a few days with us. At one of the houses where Harry worked, they had an Austrian girl as an "Au pair", who often spent an evening with us. She made wonderful dough-nuts which delighted Harry. She was very pessimistic, asking if we'd read Hitler's "Mein Kampf". She was certain there would be War (the year 1937), and she had no intention of ever going back to Austria; later, she married an Englishman, and went to live in Basingstoke.

Our baby was expected in April, and there was much fun and laughter when we paid our weekly visit to our friends (who still altered the clock), as Liz was expecting her third baby about the same time as our's. Our daughter arrived three weeks early, in the middle of the night of course! Harry rushed out to telephone the nurse, and I asked him to be as quiet as possible so as not to disturb the neighbours, but the milk bottles went clattering down the path. The baby arrived yelling like mad, although so small (only 6½lbs). She should have been an April baby, but arrived three days previous to Mother's birthday (31st March). Harry's Mother came to stay for a few days, and while she was there, we heard that Liz had also had a daughter, so as soon as I was able to take a walk, we went to see her, but it was so tragic, she was a "Mongol". Baby was christened Elaine, Iris. at the same church as we were married, but no one had to find the Vicar this time! Elaine yelled throughout, so she really got rid of the Devil!

Life was very leisurely that Summer (1936), just our usual visits to friends for Sunday afternoon tea (no late nights now), to Liz and John, or Stan and Iris (Elaine's Godparents), friends of Harry's since he was sixteen, when he first came to Bexhill, and he and Stan worked together at the nursery. Most afternoons I pushed Elaine in her pram down to Bexhill Town to meet Harry when he'd finished work; if one had no idea which house Harry was working at, one could always

tell by the beautifully cut hedge and lawn. Money was still short (still £2.15/- weekly; top rate one shilling and threepence per hour,) many gardeners not paid in wet weather, but Harry was fortunate. I suggested he might like to find a job for Saturday afternoons - he didn't like! He detested working after five o'clock, or after twelve on Saturdays, for which one couldn't blame him, as he had to work so hard; one place had about two acres to be gardened in one day a week. But finally he consented to take a job for two hours on Saturday afternoons (2/4d), but he "moaned" every Saturday afternoon on starting out. Most evenings he was so tired that he used to doze (he said, it was because he was contented) and in any case, he was only "resting his eyes", so he thought he would take up a hobby. One Saturday, on his way home from work, he called at the Post Office, and whilst waiting, he saw a packet of mixed stamps for a shilling (he only had five shillings a week pocket money), and when he arrived home, he emptied the 400 assorted foreign stamps on the table, and said he'd decided to collect stamps!

Christmas came and went, very quiet, just a visit to neighbours, who were married on the same day as us, but with no children.

March came, and Elaine's first birthday - the wall-flowers in bloom again. In the Summer we hired a taxi to take us to Harry's parents for a week (from Bexhill to Biggin Hill in Kent for thirty shillings!) Caroline's prediction of War seemed to be nearer - her country invaded, but we couldn't believe it would have any affect on us, but by August (1939), we were told to report to Bexhill Town Hall to be fitted for gas masks; Elaine was very good, she let me fit it over her face, and every now and again at home we had a rehearsal, so that we got used to them. "Hitler" meanwhile was invading other European countries one after the other, and our Government then informed him, that if he invaded Poland, we would declare War, which he did, and on September 3rd, we were at War. We were told to seal one room against gas, and Harry was putting the finishing touches, sealing all round the door with "masking" tape, with a thick curtain hanging outside, (Elaine sitting in her pram, highly amused at all the activity), when the "siren" sounded, which was a warning that enemy planes were on the way! Looking back, it all seems so highly comical; there was Harry, still sealing up the bedroom door, Elaine chuckling, and we not knowing how much time we had to get into the room, drop the curtain outside, and put on our gas masks! But, within a very few minutes, the "All clear" sounded, so either it was a false alarm, or the "Powers that be" were giving us a test. Things settled down, nothing much happened, and in the next few months, it was called the "Phoney War". I was to report to the Town Hall for War work, but having a small child, I was quickly exempted. Towards the end of September, an "Official" called to see if we had enough room to take an "evacusee" from London; she decided we had - in the bedroom we'd sealed against gas! She said he was a boy of fourteen, but would be later arriving than the other evacuees,

as he was in France with his Grandmother. All the neighbours already had their "visitors", and what a "to do" there was beforehand! As they were coming from London, there was great talk of getting out the carbolic soap and the disinfectant, which amused, and at the same time annoyed me, as I recalled my early days in London, with all the scrubbing and washing we had! Our "boy" arrived in October - an Irish name and a French accent; evidently, his Mother was French, and his Father Irish. One of my young Cousins was also evacuated to Bexhill from London; he was billeted with his school in the Town, in one of the empty boarding houses, so sometimes he came to tea on Sunday, when it was a "meeting of the clan", as he was also of Irish extraction, and like "our boy" Patrick, a Roman Catholic. Young Cousin Tom was full of ambitions, and had quite decided he was going to be a future Prime Minister (of Ireland, of course). Elaine was fascinated by the boys chatter, but they'd no time for a kid of eighteen months! One morning, Patrick came out to breakfast, full of apologies, to say he'd broken the "vase". I was extremely mystified, as I couldn't recall any vase in the room, and he kept saying, in his French accent, "You know, the vase", and it suddenly dawned on me that he meant the "chamber"! Young Tom wasn't very happy in his "digs", and decided he wanted to go home; he came to tea one Sunday, and asked us to loan him the money to return home. I told him I couldn't do that without telephoning his Mother first, so after tea, I 'phoned Cousin Lilian to ask what I should do. She said, on no account was he to return, he was to stay there. (I remember looking after him at Hornchurch, in my single days, when he was quite young, when "Lil" was having her third child, and he was a "rebel" then). She talked to him, and said, she and his Father would be down in a day or two, so back he went to his "digs", quite determined he wasn't going to stay. Next day, (Monday) I was washing-up after lunch, when two of his mates called to see if Tom was with me - evidently he'd walked out, and was on his way home, by walking! He'd~~a~~ walked nearly into Eastbourne, about twelve miles, when he was picked up by the police, by which time his Mother arrived, so he went home. A few weeks later, things changed rapidly. France was now being invaded (which greatly worried Patrick). All our evacuees were to be sent from coastal towns, inland to Wales etc., and all local men were asked to volunteer for service in the L.D.V (Local Defence Volunteers), later to be changed to the "Home Guard". Harry volunteered that same evening, and went down to the Town to sign on. On the evening that they were to be assigned to their different Companys, Harry was unable to go, but one of our neighbours informed him that he'd signed him on in the "Downs" company, with the other men in the street, which pleased him. They were to meet in the Drill Hall on the Downs, meetings to be arranged, pay, three shillings per night of meeting. The meetings were taken by ex-army officers, Harry's officer had been a Major in the Engineers, which meant there wasn't too much "square-bashing". If there was an air-raid warning at night, the Company was to meet on the Downs. Harry and I had an arrangement that, if the siren sounded, I would get up, get his bike out of the shed, and take it down to the

gate, whilst he was dressing. The first night the siren sounded, Harry was asleep, so I woke him, and wheeled the bike ready for him to ride off; it was completely dark, and I hadn't been back in bed for more than five minutes or so, when he returned. I was most indignant, and said, "Didn't they want you"? He said, "You woke me on the "All Clear"! (in the early days the two sounds were very similar) We hadn't even heard the warning siren! As he was tearing over the Downs on his bike, a couple of Home Guard men passed him, so he realized something was wrong, so he called out and said "What time did the siren go", and then he came to the conclusion we'd woken up on the "All Clear". We had a good many laughs over this, as so many people had done the same thing, we discovered next morning. It was decided by the Authorities that if there was a raid, as we had no shelters, the safest place would be the hall, which ran between the front and back rooms, so most people kept a couple of deck-chairs in the hall ready for emergencies. On the same night, our friends, two doors away, awoke, and Arthur insisted on them both sitting in the hall, and there they sat and sat, waiting for the "All Clear" (not even making a cup of tea), until six a.m. when Mabel insisted on going to bed - they'd done the same as we had, got up on the "All Clear"!

We were now getting many more air-raids warnings, many during the day, and if we were in the Town shopping, we went into the nearest air-raid shelter, usually built into the side of a bank, and waited for the "All Clear". Sometimes Elaine and I would be there an hour, which was very frustrating, especially if there was no sound overhead. Once we were in Woolworths when the siren went, which meant the store closing, with the customers inside waiting for the "All Clear". We could only stand there as nothing was allowed to be sold, but some of the conversations we heard were very amusing. One woman said, "George had just got out of the bath last night when the siren went, so I said, "You can throw the water away, I won't get in now" - we were even expected to economise with the water!

Harry went out every other evening to join his Home Guard Company for drill, and sometimes on Sunday morning, also on the firing range for practice. We now had a brick wall built about three feet away from the bedroom window at the back, to give added protection against "blast", and Harry made "black-out" shutters to fix at the window at night, so that no light showed, as the front of the bungalow faced the sea. Just as Harry was going to work one morning (8 a.m.), the siren sounded, and he waited and waited for the "All Clear", but by 8.45, when there was no sign of it, and no planes overhead, he was getting impatient, and decided to chance it; when he arrived at the house he was working at that day, he said such a funny sight met his eyes. There was no-one about, and when he looked in the dining-room, there were three women (two ladies of the house, and the housekeeper), sitting in the blacked-out room, on high backed dining-room chairs, with their gas-masks on! They were amazed to think he'd ridden his bike there. After this

experience they evacuated, and as this meant running two homes, they cut Harry's work down to one hour a week at one shilling for the hour! All he could do in that time, was to just mow the lawn, and they were most "put out" on returning, (just to see how things were going), to discover weeds growing profusely - I don't know what they expected! Most of the people in the big houses were beginning to evacuate to safer places, and Harry was left to look after the houses and gardens where he worked. One large house, where he worked two and a half days each week, was out of the Town on a high hill, which had views out to sea, and to Hastings, where there was a high block of Flats on the sea-front. Mrs. "B" finally decided to leave with her four children, and asked us if we would like to live there, which we did; we took what we needed from home - Elaine's cot etc., Looking back, I wonder how I stayed in that big house at night, when Harry was away every other night on duty from six p.m. until six a.m. the next morning, but my one determination from the out-break of War was, if possible to remain calm, so that Elaine should not be frightened - this was my one concern. Practically every day now, lone German planes were coming in off the sea, dropping a string of bombs, and going out again, with nothing to stop them; we had no guns. Fortunately many of the bombs dropped into the sea. One beautiful evening, just as the sun was setting, we watched a whole crowd of planes going out to sea, and unloading their bombs as they went; evidently they'd been turned back from attempting a raid on London, and were unloading on their return to Germany. When Harry came off duty at six a.m. he usually came to bed for a couple of hours, as there was no urgent need to get to work sharp at eight, as now all his "people" had left Bexhill. One morning, I was fast asleep, and suddenly woke up to hear Elaine saying from her cot beside the bed, "Mum, man, man", and when I looked, there was this soldier, in full uniform, complete with rifle, standing in the doorway; for the moment, I didn't know whether to challenge him, or dive under the bed-clothes. Before I had time to decide whether he was German or English, he spoke - Harry had been kitted out with his full uniform and rifle, which I had no idea he was to be issued with, only having had an arm-band before!

The Army now commandeered a room at the top of the house as an observation post, as it commanded such a good position, and they could signal to the block of Flats at Hastings, also an O.P. This meant they could come and go as they pleased, even at night. One very dark night about eleven o'clock, when it was pouring with rain, about eight or nine soldiers arrived, and clattered up to the top of the house to do some observation. I offered to make them tea, provided they didn't wake my child! They left about one a.m. I doubt if there was anything to report.

Preparations were being made against invasion by the Germans; the promenade was occupied by the army, with observation posts, the beach was "criss-crossed with steel barriers; the Home Guard, being on the coast, were considered "front line" troops, and were given tuition in making "Molotov Coctails", which were

to be thrown at the enemy as they landed on the beaches, and now when they went on duty at night, they had to patrol in pairs every two hours, in case of parachutists landing. Harry, being a countryman, was quite at home in the dark, but on many nights when they walked through the woods at the back of Bexhill, it was so dark that he couldn't even see his companion walking beside him. Also, the church bells were to be rung should there be an invasion. One morning Harry went back to our bungalow, to see that all was well, when one of our neighbours said to him, "You were lucky not to have been at home last night, as "Albert" woke in the night hearing the church bells, so he called us all out (I knocked on your door, and then realized you weren't there), and we all rode like mad over the Downs towards the church. I suddenly said to Albert, I can't hear any bells,"and then we all realized he'd woken up with "ringing in the ears"!

Within a week or so, notices were posted at the Town Hall, saying that all civilians, not in the Home Guard, or on War work, should leave the Town; travelling vouchers and extra food coupons would be issued. I said I had no intention of leaving, but Harry said he would be happier if Elaine and I did go, as he would have to leave us in any case, if there was an invasion. So finally, I said we would go back to our bungalow, and see how many people in the street were remaining, and I would decide then. We were there by nine-thirty, and we found practically everyone had gone, or were packing up to go, some even leaving the washing on the line! I had no idea where to go, so got in touch with Harry's Mum and Dad to see if we could go there; they said we would be welcome, so I went to the Town Hall to get my papers, and when the Official said, with pen poised, "Where are you going", he nearly fell through the floor with amazement, when I said "Biggin Hill, Kent". He said, "You're not going to a very healthy place, I don't know whether I can allow it", but when I said there was nowhere else, he said, "Well, I suppose it will be alright". (I think that one of the saddest sights I saw, was a huge lorry outside the Vet's piled high with beautiful dogs which had been destroyed, because the owner's couldn't take them when they evacuated, and with their men-folk away on War service. (There were beautiful golden retrievers and airdales). On Friday morning, that same week, we went down to the station to catch an early train (about seven a.m.), and just as we were passing our local shops, a German plane came over, no warning, and machine-gunned us, so we had to run for shelter in the door-way of "Dobsons" the grocers. We had a good journey to Sevenoaks (Elaine so good, everyone in the carriage admiring her), and then we caught the 'bus to Biggin Hill. Harry's Mum and Dad said we were welcome to stay as long as we liked, but I was secretly hoping it wouldn't be for long. They had an "Andersons" shelter in the garden, with corrugated sides and roof, and which was below ground; this had been provided by the Government. It was not more than about five feet square, and when we were all in, a piece of corrugated iron was pulled over the entrance. Harry stayed until Monday morning, and every evening about six o'clock, without fail, the siren sounded, and

we all trooped down the garden, complete with sandwiches, thermos and rugs, knowing we would be there until six a.m.

Before Harry went, he made a small cot for Elaine. which was left in the shelter, so that all we had to do, was put her in, and she slept through everything - guns, bombs, the lot. We had very little room; Dad had his armchair down there, as he had to have his rest, because when he came up at six a.m. he just had a cup of tea and went off to work, whereas, Elaine and I could go to bed until about nine. Mum and I sat on upright wooden chairs, but the biggest upheaval of all was, when the man who rented two of Mum's rooms, and worked at the Aerodrome, decided when not on duty, to come into the shelter. He was a huge Irishman, over six feet tall, of colossal width, wearing a greatcoat, and weighing about seventeen stones! He was always the last one in, as he liked to see what activity there was, and he would completely block the doorway until the very last moment. There was nothing we could do down there in the pitch darkness, except nod off periodically; the gunfire was continuous, and so heavy that one couldn't even hear the bombs, so different to Bexhill, where we had no guns, and could hear the whine of the bombs. On the second week-end, Harry came, and when I said I was coming home, he dis-suaded me, as he said Bexhill was deserted, and practically the only house that was occupied in our road, was Dad's old friend Charlie's, next door, but I was quite determined that when he came the next week-end, we were going back, as I pointed out that we hadn't come away because of the bombing, but fear of invasion. When he left us on Monday morning, he arrived back at Bexhill about mid-day, and as he was leaving our local station (Sidley), a man on a bike called out, "There's nothing left of Pembury Grove", so he didn't know what to expect, but as he turned the corner, he could see our bungalow was still standing, although the windows in front were open, the latches having broken with the blast of the bomb which had dropped on one of the bungalows in the road opposite - one woman was killed. Harry had left our little cairn terrier with a friend in the Town whilst he was away for the week-end, and a bomb dropped on the house next door, and she was so demented, we had to have her put to sleep. Harry had moved back into our bungalow whilst I was away, as Mrs. "B" had decided to leave the house we'd been living in, and put all the odd china and the children's toys and books in the garage and lock it, leaving Harry with a key to keep an eye on things. The removal men came one morning to take all the furniture to Oxford, where she was staying, and evidently it was so quiet there, that when the men arrived about eleven o'clock, they said they'd never been in an air-raid, so Harry said, "If you're still here at two o'clock, a plane comes in every day (probably for target practice)", so everything was packed, with them ready to go, when, sure enough, in came the plane and dropped a string of bombs, about six, one after the other across the country, the final one hitting the viaduct. Harry said, that never in his life had he seen anyone move so quickly, the men were up in the van and away before he could even say goodbye!

Things were now beginning to get a little "touchy"

at Biggin Hill, Dad getting a bit irritable, due to not sleeping properly; Elaine was no trouble at all, but she could hardly "breathe" during the six o'clock news, or she was told to "hush", so I finally decided that when Harry came at the week-end (we'd been there exactly a month), we would return to Bexhill. Dad said "You'll soon be back", but I assured him I wouldn't, once I got in my own home. Harry came at the week-end, and there were so many of us to sleep in the shelter, (including the Irishman), that, Harry said we would stay in the bungalow and sleep in our beds, so Mum and Dad decided that if we were going to stay, they would too; it was a very noisy night, and the bedroom shook a couple of times, but after this, Mum and Dad never went into the shelter again, but stayed in the bungalow. On the Sunday, whilst we were having lunch, there was a continual diving and zooming overhead, so we all ran into the garden to see what was happening, and it was the "Battle of Britain". Planes were going up continually from the Aerodrome at Biggin Hill (which was just down the road), and intercepting German planes, which they really meant to be a fight for Britain before invading. We returned to Bexhill on Monday morning, which in one way Harry was not happy about, as during the previous week, he was in the Town, and he had to dive into one of the shelters as bombs were dropping, and he'd only just got in, when there was a terrific crash, and when he came out, a beautiful house opposite had been completely demolished, and there was absolute chaos, curtains hanging in the trees etc., When we arrived home, everywhere seemed deserted.

Harry's brother was to be married in November, so as soon as we were able, we went into the Town to buy a new "outfit" for Elaine (there was no waiting to be served in the shops)! We had ration cards for practically everything, the allowances were very small, but we managed; I always had plenty of tea left over ~~from~~ from our ration, so I could sometimes do a "swop" for a little margarine. Elaine was allowed two shell eggs a week; Harry and I had powdered egg, which sometimes I mixed with our meagre butter ration, to make it go further. We were allowed clothing coupons, and we either helped others, or were helped with these, if there were spare ones.

In November, we went to Harry's Brother's wedding; we spent the week-end with Harry's parents at Biggin Hill, and on the Saturday, we all went by hired car to Fairseat in Kent, which being a prohibited area, meant we had to obtain special police permission to enter. Most people had helped with rations, so there was no shortage of food.

Harry now had to go to Hastings for his "medical"; Having two growths in his right arm, I thought it impossible that he would be passed fit for military service, and I was amazed when he said he'd been passed "Grade A"; I wanted to know if they'd seen the lumps in his arm; he assured me they had, but taken no notice, so I can only assume they were desperate for men, to pass a man of thirty-six years, with two growths, or perhaps it was because he had already been partly trained in the "Home Guard". Now came a time of waiting to see if he would be

called up, which he was, and put into the Royal Artillery (Anti-tank Regiment), and was sent to Church Stretton in Shropshire for training. Most of his friends were also called up, "Stan" (Elaine's Godfather), into the Air Force; he was extremely knowledgeable about aeroplanes, loved them since he was sixteen, and had been in the Observer Corps - he didn't need to see a plane, he could tell what it was by it's sound. Harry's Brother also went into the Royal Artillery, but in an "Ack-ack" regiment.

We were now given a "Morrison" steel shelter, which Harry fitted up before he left. This was put in the back bedroom; it was like a table with a solid steel top, and round all four sides was wire, like a cage, and Elaine slept in this, and I slept in our bed at the side, so as not to disturb her, and it was amazing how much she slept through. Harry used to write home, saying he hoped I was sleeping in the shelter too, but I never did, as I was so afraid of waking her.

Food began to get scarce, except for our rations, as they didn't want a surplus of food on the coast. One of Harry's friends called in a great hurry one afternoon (he was due to go to London in the Fire Service), to tell me to go down to Dohsons the grocers quickly, as they had some bottles of H.P. Sauce - "lovely on your bread"! he said, so I rushed off to get a bottle.

I kept busy, trying to keep the garden tidy, and the hedges cut, which I also did for one or two neighbours who'd evacuated. Harry came home for his first leave after three months training, and almost the first thing he did, was to straighten the front hedge! He was enjoying his army life, and was capable of coping with any circumstances he found himself in. There were five men in his gun team, each with his own job to do in taking down, and putting the anti-tank gun together, which had to be done within a very few minutes, if not seconds, and I was quite convinced that Harry's team would be one of the best, as he was always such a perfectionist. He was also a good map reader, so there was no fear of his getting lost, and as for running up the high hills, over the top, and down the other side in record time, well, he was determined to be one of the first, in spite of being one of the oldest!

Elaine and I spent Christmas on our own, with a baked rabbit and apple pie for our Christmas dinner.

In June 1940, our position in France was very precarious, as France had surrendered to Germany, and we had to withdraw our troops as best we could. We managed to get them down to the coast, and then started a wonderful evacuation; every boat that could possibly go, went over to Dunkirk to pick up the men who were assembled on the beaches, with continuous bombing from the enemy; there were fishing boats, trawlers, pleasure boats, no matter how small; the men had to wade out with the water up to their waists, to be picked up. When they arrived in England, there were many billeted on the Downs at Bexhill, and so many rifles had been lost, that they

were on sentry duty with pick-axes. During the evacuation, the gunfire from France was continuous, and the air so thick with smoke, that we could hardly see anything out to sea.

After Harry's training at Church Stretton, he was sent to Romsey in Hampshire, to join a Company of Cockney lads (the Bow Bells), his shoulder flashes were three bells; they were billeted in empty Council houses, and had to keep them scrupulously clean, or they were in trouble. They were often on "manoeuvres" for a week, leaving one evening, and travelling through the night, to perhaps find themselves in Devon the following morning. They slept in the open, in ditches, but travelled fairly comfortably in trucks with the guns, and he often felt very sorry to see the Infantry trudging through the rain, water pouring off their capes. Being stationed at Romsey, he was able to get home fairly easily for week-end leaves. One week-end when he was home, we had some excitement, our next door neighbour, who was in the Air-force, was also home on leave, and decided to sweep the chimney by using an "Imp", which is a kind of chemical; Harry used them very often at the houses where he worked, to save calling in the chimney-sweep, and hopefully to save much mess. His procedure, was to have just a very little glow to the fire, place on the "Imp", put in front of the fire-place a shield of metal, stand well back, with a hoe or a rake to hold the shield in place, and wait for the soot to fall. Our neighbour, gave the fire a good stoke up, placed an inadequate shield in front, which he tried to hold in place with the coal shovel! Of course the soot got well alight, and was falling into the fire-place red-hot, the shield became so hot, it was impossible to hold it with the shovel. The chimney-pot cracked, and there were pieces falling off on to the pavement, and to add to his misery, he'd got all sorts of things in the loft, rolls of linoleum etc., when he was supposed by law to have the loft clear, so it was pandemonium, with Harry trying to clear the loft, "Jack" trying to shovel up the hot cinders, and the fire brigade squirting water everywhere.

We looked forward to Harry's week-end visits; he usually managed to find a book for Elaine - an "Amelianne", or an "Alison Uttley", and he saved his allowance of chocolate from the "N.A.A.F.I.". Sunday afternoon came all too quickly. Every afternoon I took Elaine out in her pram; I walked miles - out to little Common, to Lunsford Cross, to Glyne Cap, and over the Downs to the Town. Sometimes I walked to "Little Febsham" to borrow books for Elaine, or a doll, from the store in the garage.

The Army were billeted in the Grammar School at the bottom of our garden, so there was plenty of activity, a tune on the saxophone sometimes. They weren't so particular about their lights at night as we were!

We still had no ack-ack guns to fire at the "lone raiders", but we did have three "Howitzers" in the woods at the back, but when they practiced firing shells over our bungalow

out to sea, as soon as the first one went over, I rushed in to hold the china cabinet back against the sitting-room wall. as it rattled back and forth, as though it had the ague!

Many of our Air-force boys were being killed, some not more than twenty years old; two of my young Cousins were killed. Cousin May's boy was her only child, and one day I received a telegram, asking if I would give permission for him to be buried in the same grave as Mother and her Sister, in Farnchurch Churchyard, which I readily agreed to, but it was finally decided to bury all the crew in one grave. Cousin May's Sister, my Cousin Louisa also lost her son.

Another birthday for Elaine (her third); I was able to buy a second-hand dolls pram from a neighbour for thirty shillings. She was now invited to one or two birthday parties; she was so very quiet, that they couldn't imagine she was enjoying herself.

Our next-door neighbour was expecting her first baby, and "Jack" asked me if I would help the nurse when the baby arrived (he was hopeless), so about eight o'clock one November evening, he called to say she'd "started"; I assured him it would be hours yet, and I would go in about ten o'clock. The nurse arrived, and I ran back and forth with the hot water, and every twenty minutes or so, I ran next door to see that Elaine was still sleeping. Poor Mrs. "D" had a rough time, and when the baby finally arrived, she was so frail and tiny (only four pounds), that we hardly expected her to survive. I left nurse to clear up, and went home, to find Elaine wide awake, and wondering where I was. Within the next few days, the baby was so weak, that we thought we had better send for the Vicar to baptize her; it wasn't a very happy event. Mrs. "D" still weak, the baby also, hardly taking any food, and the Vicar whispering to me, "that there wasn't any hope, was there", and me, putting on a brave face, and saying I was sure all would be well. Many people say that miracles don't happen, but I know they do. A baby born in a bitterly cold November, weighing only four pounds, unable to feed properly, with no doctor, and then to survive! I'm convinced it was a miracle. Had it happened today, she would have been put in an incubator.

One Sunday, Elaine and I had just finished our dinner, when the siren sounded, and I could hear planes very low over the bungalow machine-gunning, so I quietly told Elaine to get a book, and we'd sit in the shelter, as a kind of game, and we'd just got under, when there was a "ping" - I thought something had hit the steel top of the shelter, but it was a cartridge that had hit the drain-pipe outside; I still have the cartridge case.

Harry had now been moved to Micheldever (just outside Southampton); they were put under canvas, which didn't please some of the "Cockney" lads, as the rats ran over them at night, and some of the men were so scared that they walked about all night; the bombing of Southampton was very heavy too. "

One Sunday afternoon, Elaine and I walked to Little ~~Green~~ Febsham to borrow a book from the garage, and when I got there, I found the door had been forced, and a lot of the books

and china were missing, so I called at the police station to report the loss, and to give a description of the missing articles, as much as I could remember. Nothing more was heard about them, until Harry came home on leave, and as we were walking round one afternoon, we looked in a second-hand shop, and outside on a table, were children's books, and inside were the children's names from "Little Pebsham", so Harry 'phoned the police, who were most casual, and said, "Many books come off the presses" - Harry said, "But not with the children's names in, from where they've been stolen". They were soon there, and found books and some of the china, and when they went to his home, found almost an "Aladdins Cave" of articles from other burglaries. I had to attend Court to give evidence, which was quite an experience, and when it was all over, and the articles returned to Mrs "B", she said we might as well keep them as we'd been put to so much trouble.

Elaine started Sunday School; she liked meeting the other children, but of course it meant catching all the "Childrens' Complaints", and it wasn't long before she caught Whooping Cough. She was very poorly, and very often very sick in her "shelter bed", which meant trying to make all sweet and clean again, with very little light; and, that Winter the water pipes froze! I had to fetch water in a bucket from a neighbour two doors away, and ice formed on the linoleum on the bathroom floor, as it faced North, and was completely frozen up.

Harry loved cats; we had a beautiful blue Chinchilla, and unhappily it caught cat 'flu, and died within a day. I had to write to Harry to tell him the sad news, and I had to bury "Tiger" in the garden, so I sent Elaine to a neighbour's to play, and with tears running down my cheeks, I dug a hole and buried him. How I missed Harry at these times - he was so dependable, and capable of doing anything. I wanted to get into the loft one day, so I put the ladder against the opening, which was in the Hall, and, just as I was coming down, the ladder slipped, and lay flat in the Hall, with me sitting in the loft opening with my legs dangling; Elaine couldn't put the ladder up, and it was too far to jump, so I had to sit there whilst she went for a neighbour to release me; one thing, I knew it wouldn't take Elaine long to contact the neighbour, as she never never walked, she always s'rippped along, no matter how far we were going.

Every six weeks or so, I went to the hospital as a blood donor; Elaine came with me, and sat beside the bed whilst the nurse drew the blood, which amazed the staff, her sitting there so quietly, just taking everything in.

Many Service men were now being sent Abroad, to Africa or Burma; Harry's Brother had gone, and Stan (Elaine's Godfather). Harry was due to go, and went for his final medical examination in Winchester. He was asked if there was anything wrong, and he said, just the two lumps in his arm, and he was told, he must have them attended to before going abroad, so he was sent

to Winchester Hospital. A surgeon opened up the larger of the two, but very quickly sewed it up again without operating, and told Harry he was unable to take out the lump, and that there were surgeons far more expert than he to tackle this. Soon after, the Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon to the British Army arrived, no doubt to see what interesting cases there were, and he decided that Harry should be sent to an Orthopaedic hospital in Surrey (Fyrford), of which he was the Director, so on his birthday in September 1941, he found himself travelling to Fyrford in Surrey, a place he'd never even heard of! At the week-end he saw the surgeon again, who said he would take out the smaller lump, which he did successfully, but said he couldn't touch the other one for the time being, as the scar wasn't healed from the opening in Winchester, and as he was shortly going to America for some months, he would see what he could do on his return. When he discovered that Harry was a gardener, he asked him if he would like to keep himself occupied doing his garden (he lives quite near); Harry jumped at the idea, as he hated to be idle, so Mr. "B's" secretary loaned him a bike (a lady's) to go backwards and forwards: the Hospital was partly military, so after morning-parade, he rode to the house. The garden was in a very rough state, with rabbits and chickens on the lawns (for food), and a Norwegian lady gardener, who, because of the war, would only attend to the vegetable garden, as growing flowers was against her principles. Harry enjoyed gardening again. He returned to the hospital for lunch, and then gardening again in the afternoon until four o'clock, when he had tea at the house with the staff. He made friends with the Sergeant at the hospital, who rented a very old cottage in Ripley, so he went there sometimes to tea. When he was allowed a week-end leave, he left after lunch on Friday, and returned Sunday afternoon. A big thrill for Elaine and I, was the lump of slab cake he brought home from the baker's in West Byfleet, his ration of chocolate, and perhaps a book too!

Early in 1942 Harry was due for seven days leave; we were all looking forward to this, when a few days before, Elaine caught chicken-pox, so I asked him if it would be possible to postpone it, as we wouldn't be able to get out at all, and, as a great concession, the military did. Elaine was covered in spots, except for her face, so it meant "dab, dab, dabbing" all day long with lotion, and if she started to scratch during the night, I would say, "You're not scratching the spots, are you Elaine?", and she used to answer "no", almost in her sleep; she was left with just one mark on her back. After a few weeks, Harry got leave again, so we had a very happy week, and I think the "highlight" was, that Elaine was going to a birthday party, so we asked her "hostess" if she could stay until six-thirty, so that Harry and I could go to the cinema - our first time out together for four years!

When he returned to the hospital, he found that Mr. "B" had returned from America, and was ready to operate.

He had his "equivalent" in the American Army in attendance, also one or two of his own important "underlings", as they were all so interested to see if it was possible to remove the lump, but it proved to be impossible, unless they took the risk of his arm being useless afterwards, as the growth, instead of being on the nerve, had grown in the ~~nerve~~^{nerve} itself, which meant severing the nerve, and grafting a new nerve, and there was only a fifty-fifty chance of it taking, and as it was his right arm, and he was still able to use it, they decided against it. In fact, Mr. "B" said, that the decision of the surgeon at Winchester to sew up the incision without operating, was a most sensible thing to do. After the operation, all the "big wigs" paid him a visit to see if he could move his first finger and thumb, to prove he'd still got use. The thumb was a bit troublesome for a time, but after therapy it finally returned to life, and Harry was allowed up, but with the news that there was no hope of his returning to the Army, and it was only a matter of time before he would be discharged; Mr. "R" asked him what he felt about that, he said, he'd very mixed feelings, as he'd enjoyed Army life, especially the training in Shropshire, but, there is no doubt in my mind, that he should not have been accepted in the first place, as dismantling and lifting the guns had obviously made the growth larger, but, on the other hand, I am more than proud that he was able to make his small contribution, and had made no attempt whatsoever to avoid duty, or given any excuses. Mr. "P" advised him to apply for a pension, but didn't think it would be much use, as it was "constitutional", so one day Harry went to the Law Courts to try his luck. The Board congratulated him on the way he put his "case", but, decided against a pension. He received his discharge in 1942, but didn't even get the usual medal, as his service was a month or so less than the two years required. Mr. "B" wanted him to stay on as his gardener, and offered him the chauffeur's room adjoining the garage to sleep in, with all meals at the house; Harry thought it a good idea for the time being, as there was no work in Rexhill, and in any case it would have been very hard work, with the gardens so over-grown, and he felt he needed to keep in touch with Mr. "B", in case his arm needed future surgery. The room had a sink, a brick fireplace, and with a bed, chest of drawers, and shelves for his books, it proved quite comfortable. He came home at week-ends, and we talked things over, and decided that if we could find a house to rent, we would move to West Byfleet or surrounding districts, but it proved very difficult to find anywhere. Elaine and I were invited to stay at the house for three weeks by Mrs. "B", to see if we could find anywhere. I'd never been used to "Domestic" life, and was highly amused; the cook-housekeeper sat at the head of the table, with her own tray and china, with her long dangling ear-rings, looking like a queen, the Norwegian lady-gardener scared to death of an Irish house-maid, who flew into terrible tempers, and every now and again, a Cockney scullery-maid would look round the kitchen door to ask some-

thing, and her answer would always be "Okey doke"! Elaine was sweetness itself, and thought she was in another world, with cake and biscuits for tea, although I had to tell her not to take the chocolate biscuits, as the housekeeper was partial to these, and when she offered the tin, used to hold them against the side! We spent one afternoon with Harry's Sergeant friend from the hospital; he, with his wife and daughter rented a very old cottage in Ripley. The beds had to be propped up with bricks at the foot, because the floor sloped so much, and one had to be very careful going from the sitting-room to the kitchen, not to get a bump on the head, as the doorway was so low, and one could sit in the fireplace and see the sky through the chimney.

We still had no luck in finding a house, but a day or two before returning to Bexhill, I had a "brain-wave" whilst walking round the garden, and said to Harry, why couldn't the garage at the bottom of the garden, with the chauffeur's room attached, be converted into a bungalow!

There was an upheaval on the Saturday morning, before I was due to leave on the Monday. Mr. "F", being away most of the week, did all his entertaining of colleagues and "V.I.P's" at the week-end, and on this Saturday, quite a few were invited to lunch. The Irish parlour-maid had given in her notice, and decided to go for an interview for a new situation, much to the annoyance of Mrs. "E", but she promised to return in time to wait at table. The housekeeper wasn't returning until Saturday evening from her holiday, so I lent a hand to cook the lunch; by twelve-thirty, no "Betty" had returned, and the guests were beginning to arrive, so I took in the food and put it on the serving table, only suddenly to realize, I'd made the meat pie in one of the Wittman enamel dishes, not very bright round the edges, instead of a 'porex' dish, and there was this old white enamel dish standing on the beautifully polished table, looking very out of place. I asked Mrs. "E" if there was a "pie frill" I could put round it, but she said not to worry as she would be serving from the side table. Betty came flying in just as they were about to sit down. Mrs. "E" asked her to hurry down to assist, but she said she had a taxi waiting outside, and was just going to collect her case, and she was off to the new situation. She was in a terrible temper, so Mrs. "E" didn't argue, but whispered to me a little later, "Had she gone", fearing another outburst, and heaved a great sigh of relief when I assured her she had.

On the Monday afternoon, Elaine and I returned to Bexhill; we'd enjoyed the change, had no air-raids, and I'd sown a small seed with regard to the garage.

After Christmas, I began to think about Elaine going to school, as she would be five in March, and I had to decide whether to risk her going to the bigger school on the Downs, which was quite a walk, and the "lone-rainers" still coming in, or to send her to the little Church school, just

a few minutes walk away (only two classes), so decided on this, knowing I'd be happier with her out of the Town. She started after her fifth birthday, still "skipped" there and back, and was quite happy, and I was happier, when the siren sounded, to know she was not far away.

One week-end Harry came home and said that Mr. "B" was applying for planning permission to convert the garage into a bungalow, but wasn't sure how successful he would be. By the Autumn he received permission, and the builder started; it was to be a very simple affair, just two bedrooms (one very small one for Elaine), a sitting-room, and the chauffeur's room to be divided to form the kitchen and bathroom, with the lavatory (already there) outside in the porch; the bedroom walls were left with bare bricks, and the builder wanted to leave the sitting-room the same, but Harry insisted on this room being plastered. Being war-time, everything was on a "permit", and therefore they cut down as much as possible on the timber etc., so that they could use it on another job. We had no skirting boards, no architraves over the doors, and I expect they had another place in view for our wash-basin, as they very much wanted us to forego this, and wash in the kitchen, but Harry was adamant, and insisted on it being installed in the bathroom. As it was, our new bath went up to the House, and we had their old one, a huge affair, pleasant to bath in, but took gallons of water.

Now came the difficulty of selling our bungalow at Bexhill; we thought of leaving it empty until after the War, (probably have made a fortune), but with the bombs still falling, and the possibility of the Army taking possession, we decided against this. We paid six hundred pounds for it in 1935, so there was still much to pay on the mortgage. We decided to ask eight hundred pounds. It was really well built, detached, with oak window frames and front door. I had a good many laughs over some of the people who came to view (all saying it was too much money), one "old boy" took out his compass, and gave it a good shake, to see which way the house was facing! I could have told him where the sun rose and set! One very "la-di-da" officer's wife found it much too small, but could she see the toilet (I hadn't a clue what she meant, as we never called it the "toilet") - I didn't enquire if she found this big enough! Finally, it was sold to a "jumped-up" business man, who thought he could let it for thirty shillings weekly, so brought a prospective tenant, and showed her all round, and paused at the airing-cupboard to say, "And this is the 'ot cupboard"! I now had to try to sell the things we didn't need - the greenhouse, my violin (of single days), etc., Harry was coming home for Christmas, and we were to move early in January. Just before the holiday, I went to see Elaine's headmistress to tell her Elaine wouldn't be returning, which she said was a pity as she was doing so well. There were quite a few people who had left Bexhill to go to Byfleet to do war-work at "Vickers", building aeroplanes, and they impressed on me, that if it was at all possible, I should try to get Elaine into the Primary

School at West Byfleet, as it was an excellent school.

About two days before Harry was due home for the Christmas holiday, we had a very heavy raid about eight o'clock one evening; Elaine was fast asleep in her "shelter bed". I usually stood at the front gate for a few minutes so that I could hear in which direction the bombs were dropping, and suddenly I heard a terrific "whine" of a bomb coming down, so I flew in the front door and banged it shut, as though I hoped to shut out the ensuing noise. It came down with a terrific thud, and I guessed it was somewhere near the gas-works at Glynne Gap, where Elaine's Godparents lived. Of course the windows flew open again, and next morning I found that two or three tiles on the roof had been shifted; I had "visions" of our "buyer" refusing to take over his purchase (even though the contract had been signed), but during the morning, his nephew arrived to see if there was any damage, and I quickly put his mind at rest, and assured him we would have the tiles replaced. Later on in the morning the baker called, and I asked him where the bombs fell, and when he said, one on Iris's bungalow, that her little girl had been killed, and Iris was in hospital, it was a great shock; they were evidently packing Christmas presents, and like me, heard the bomb coming, but couldn't get under the shelter in time - it was a direct hit. As we were moving early in January, I visited her in hospital before we left; all her chest and face were covered in little gashes, where the glass had splintered, and her fair hair was practically black with dirt; Stan was expected home from Italy on compassionate leave, and it was to be a few years before we met again.

The night before we moved, we slept at a neighbour's, three of us in one bed, not very comfortable, but never shall I forget our first night in the new cottage at West Byfleet - the gun-fire was continuous, and, not having been used to it, and fearing it would wake Elaine, I got out of bed, and knelt on the cold linoleum for an hour or more, ready to rush in to comfort her should she wake, but she slept through it all, and I finally crept back into bed, icy cold, and trembling with the reaction.

Now, a totally different life again, and where we were to stay for the next thirty years.

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ELAINE.

When I was expecting my child, I hoped for a Son,
But when my Daughter arrived, I knew I'd have fun -
Building dream castles high in the air,
Wishing her gentle, kindly, stately and fair.

What name should I choose for one so fair,
Elizabeth, Diana, Margaret or Claire?
Why not she who loved Sir Lancelot in vain,
The fair lily-maid of Astolat, the gentle Elaine.

I remember her first days at school so well,
Her shy gentle ways, tripping along like a young gazelle,
Her baby days are alas no more, she has her career, and
The wide open door to ambition, money, and all that it brings,
Friends, comfort, fine clothes and worldly things.

But, whatever the stars have in store for Elaine,
I know my dreams will have not been in vain,
And, in the years to come, as in the years gone by,
She'll still remain gentle, fair, thoughtful and kind.

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I decided the first thing I must do, was to make arrangements for Elaine to attend school, so one afternoon, I called at the West Byfleet Primary School to see the head-mistress, who informed me that she couldn't possibly take any more "evacuees"! I very quickly told her that we were not evacuees, but had come to West Byfleet to live permanently, so she agreed to take Elaine.

My next important visit, was to try to register with the coal merchant, who didn't want to know either, but with a little charm, and a fair amount of pleading, he put me on his books for my ration of coal, but it would be some weeks before he could deliver. It was a bitterly cold January and February, but with the little coal we'd brought from Bexhill, and the huge lumps of anthracite we found buried outside the cottage, we managed, although the anthracite didn't burn too well on the open fire.

There was two and a half acres of garden, most of it overgrown, due to shortage of labour, rabbit hutches on the lawn, (a source of food), the little ones constantly burrowing under the cages, and Harry running round trying to catch them, and oh that continuous search for rabbit food! There was also a couple of dozen chicken in the orchard, and although they had coops, they always slept in the apple trees, so that in the morning, their wings were all frosted, and almost stuck together, and quite often a fox was running round and round underneath.

The countryside was quite different to Bexhill - many beautiful trees, a huge old oak tree outside the sitting-room window, which almost blocked out the light, which we didn't mind at all, but our neighbours and visitors were very nervous of the tall pine trees, which swayed and creaked in the wind.

The "Buzz-bombs now started, (pilotless aircraft), which came over from Germany and France, and when their engines suddenly "cut out", we knew it was time to take cover, which we constantly did in an old underground apple store, which was very conveniently placed outside the back door. At night we could hear the landing of the huge rockets being fired from France, mostly on London. Harry was asked to join the rota of wardens for fire-watching, which usually involved one night weekly, and he often wondered how, one very elderly man he did duty with, would cope with a hail of incendiary bombs!

Harry was kept very busy in the garden, much hedge cutting, (a holly hedge almost the length of the road), and I could see in his eye, the thought of landscaping the garden at some future date, and, with his journeys four times daily to and from school, with Elaine on the back of his bike, he had little spare time.

Now, he said, "You must ride a bike, which filled me with misgiving, as I hadn't ridden since he taught me during the week I stayed with his Grandmother, when I was fourteen! There was a spare bike in the garage, which one of the daughters from the house rode when she visited at week-ends, so, every day, up and down the road I went, with Harry hanging on to the saddle, and me continuously asking if "he'd got me", to which he always answered "Yes",

but I think that most of the time I was on my own, and I had many a grazed knee to prove it! At long last I was fairly confident, and we had many rides to Wisley Horticultural Gardens, round winding country lanes, but Harry declared I damaged every bridge in the vicinity of West Byfleet, as, on crossing a bridge, I was always drawn towards the water, and ran into the parapet, and cycling along the many tow-paths was a nightmare!

Sometimes we rode to Ripley to visit Harry's army friend from the hospital, and when it was time to return, someone would give me a "push", and I didn't stop until I reached home. I now bought a bike of my own, as a £15. endowment policy had matured, which had taken about fifteen years to save, and was spent within a month. I never did ride alone, I just depended on Harry to say, "Right now" when we crossed a road!

Harry's arm was extremely painful at times- I always knew which side to sit when we travelled on 'buses, so that people wouldn't knock or grab his arm, and he held it very close to his side if anyone came near, and oh, how many times he paced the bedroom at night; once, when Johnny the collie dog who lived opposite, knocked the lump with his long nose, Harry had to sit down for an hour or more waiting for the pain to ease.. However, we knew there was always someone to keep an eye on him, and whenever there were any important surgeons visiting the house, they were always brought to the cottage, to see how the arm was progressing, and they still hoped, one day,, to find a way to sever the nerve and rejoin without detriment to the future use of the arm and hand.

Elaine was making good progress at school, and at one time they had a "paper drive" as a War effort, and if one brought ten magazines, one was made a "private", and so on up the scale; we had a huge pile of "Picture Posts" in the loft, so Elaine took some every day, and was finally made a "Colonel".

There were very few small houses near us (in fact there were only four large houses on our whole "island"), which meant Elaine had no companions, but she made friends at school, and they came to tea, or Elaine went to their houses to tea or birthday parties.

There was still much queuing for food, for a few oranges, or a piece of fish; we had to take our own wrapping paper for the fish, and one day I forgot, so had to send Elaine posthaste to Smith's bookstall to try to buy a newspaper, whilst I kept my place in the queue! Mr. "B" went to Africa for some weeks, and on his return, gave Elaine a banana, a great thrill as she'd never seen one, but she was not at all keen on the taste.

Elaine and I had many a "giggle", when we went to the chemist's, as the shop was in a terrible muddle; as the goods were delivered from the railway, they were just dumped anywhere in the shop, so that one could hardly get to the

counter. One day, a woman came in with a baby in her arms, and said, "Mr. "L", can I weigh the baby"?. Elaine and I looked round, trying to find the scales, which we finally saw under a pile of packing cases, which sent Elaine and I into fits of giggles, especially when Mr. "L" said, "Can you come back in twenty minutes or so, when I'll have the scales cleared"!

We all went to him with our little aches and pains; one day I was there when a young man came in, recently married, and Mr. "L" said, "How is everything, did it do the trick"? I've no idea what the "trick" was, but the poor young man was very embarrassed, but if one needed help, one had to have no qualms about other customers hearing about one's troubles.

Elaine had always suffered with Hay Fever, and I had hopes of it improving in West Byfleet; it normally started in June, but, in February, she had the usual sore throat and streaming eyes, and I thought, "It's starting earlier than ever here", but it turned out to be an attack of measles, which meant three weeks in a darkened room, but her bedroom was so small and so dark, that there was little need to draw the curtains!

We were able to register with a doctor, who informed me he was only there for the duration of the war, but would put me on Dr. "B's" list, who was serving in the Navy, and we were finally to stay with him for twenty-five years.

We were enjoying our new life, visiting our few friends, sitting in the garden and watching the many varieties of birds, and the many squirrels chasing each other round and round the trunks of the oak trees. Although the cottage was very small, with very few conveniences, it was very cosy, and all who saw it from the outside, thought how pretty and "olde-worlde" it was.

Mr. "B" was often given a present of grouse or pheasants, and he sometimes brought back from London some kippers, from which we benefited, and we were given a rabbit from time to time, which Harry ^{had} to kill (much to his distaste), and which I had to skin and clean, but we had to be thankful for small mercies. One day, whilst having lunch, we saw from the window Johnnie, (the Collie) running home as fast as he could, with a rabbit in his mouth, doubtless pleased to show his "catch", but Harry rushed out and shouted to him to drop it, which he did, and Harry brought it in, (it was still warm), so we had rabbit next day; poor Johnnie had to go home empty "handied", but our need was the greater! Mrs. "B" decided at last to kill off "old Bill" the buck rabbit who'd fathered all the young ones, so Harry killed him, and I had the job of skinning and cleaning as usual, but just as I got half-way with the skinning, he let out a squeak, no doubt ^{due} to air being trapped, and I've never dropped

anything so quickly in my life, but how he could be alive with his skin nearly off, I don't know! And, although I stewed it for hours, he was so old and so tough, it was impossible to eat it.

Great excitement to wake one morning in June, to hear on the radio that our troops had landed in France - "D Day" had arrived! We now looked forward to the end of the War, although there was still the War with Japan. The bombing of London was truly terrible, and at one time it seemed as if the whole of London was burning. My life-long friend "May", had a basement Flat near Victoria Station, and when there was an air-raid, all the occupants of the other flats congregated to her Flat as it was below ground; one night, a bomb dropped on the flats, and they were buried for hours. Of course, there was no light, and as they sat around in the darkness, one woman started to panic, so May said, she made her way round until she found the woman, swung her handbag, and gave her an almighty swipe round the ear, which kept her quiet, and she never knew what hit her! Later they were dug out, and given shelter and assistance.

There was still a staff of sorts at the House, (all too old for War Service), the housekeeper, with her own afternoon tea-tray, but having to take on more duties, shopping etc., and when sometimes she was able to obtain something extra (a few oranges, or a piece of fish), she would rush through into the drawing-room, complete with newspaper package, to show how fortunate she'd been. "Okey-doke Daisy" was still there, doing all the rough work, also the sewing-woman, who came each week to do the mending. No butler or valet now, but Mr. "P" was away so much during the week, that it wasn't necessary to have either. When he returned at week-ends, he never tired of walking round the garden, and hearing all that Harry had done during the week; he paid Harry his wages on Sunday morning, (£3.10 shillings weekly), and when Harry pointed out to him that it wasn't legal to pay wages on Sunday, he laughingly said, "You try and get it again"! There was always a great coming and going of surgeons, who had to walk round the garden, inspect the peas and broad beans, even if they were not the least bit interested in gardens. After lunch on Christmas Day, we had to go up to the House to receive our presents from the Christmas tree.

The War (in Europe) ended at last (1945), and although there was still the War with Japan, we felt the worst was over. There were tremendous celebrations in London, but we were very quiet in West Byfleet. Our friends from Ripley called in, and John talked of having a celebratory concert in the Village Hall in Ripley, and he persuaded Harry to take on the scene shifting etc., Harry was not too keen, as he'd seen some of John's theatrical "do's" before, but in due course it was all arranged, with Harry in attendance at rehearsals. One or two of the "turns" Harry thought a bit "feeble", but John would say, "Oh well, she's a trier", which is our favourite expression to this day, if there's a rotten turn on the radio or television. On the night, Harry performed his duties, but was not even offered a cup of tea, which greatly incensed him, after all his work!

One of Harry's chores, was assisting Mrs. "B" with her bee hives; he wasn't at all keen on this, as they were the most spiteful of bees, and although he would leave it until dusk, and put on his full bee "set" - trilly hat with veil, and old mac with the collar turned up, he always got stung. He took many a "swarm" from the apple trees, which I always thought a wonderful sight. One day, Harry was working on the flower border at some distance from the bees, when one zoomed over the hedge, and for no reason at all, stung him in the middle of the forehead; next day, both eyes were practically closed, and he looked like a boxer who'd had a tough fight. When Mr. "B" returned at the week-end, and saw Harry's face, he rushed indoors in a temper, shouting for Mrs. "B", to ask if she'd seen what her b..... bees had done (he was terribly scared of them). It always seemed to be Harry's job to destroy the wasps nests, take the swarms of bees, and once, to destroy a hornet's nest, which was in a hole in the oak tree (no one wanted to know about this, they were all really and truly scared). At dusk, Harry put the ladder against the tree, went up, and put the poison in the hole, and returned to the ground very swiftly: never have I heard such a noise, it was like a flight of aeroplanes!

Harry now had a job of extending the crazy-paving on the veranda, which was to be a half-circle, so with the help of one of the "army" from the hospital, he made a wonderful job of it, and it blended in beautifully with the existing stone-work.

Mr. "B" now had to go into hospital for an operation, and when he came home, he was not a very happy man. Harry had planted a special tree that Mr. "B" had always wanted, and when Harry told him it would probably be four years before it bloomed, Mr. "B" didn't think he would be there to see it.

It was now my turn to go to St. Thomas's Hospital for an examination; when I got there, I found the hospital had been badly bombed, so everything was in a great state of repair, and not much privacy, so I found myself walking from one group of students to the next, with my stockings dangling round my ankles, and almost tripping me up! The surgeon was very kind, (everybody knew Mr. "B", as he'd trained at St. Thomas's), and said I must have an operation, and would be sent for. Nothing happened for the next few weeks, so Mr. "B" said he would telephone, and he came back with the message that the surgeon had one more operation to perform, and would then do mine. Arrangements were made for Elaine to stay with Harry's parents, and Harry asked her teacher to loan her some books so that she could keep up with her work. St. Thomas's being so badly bombed, I was sent to a small hospital in Vincent Square (The Grosvenor); there were only six beds in the ward, so it was very pleasant.

Mr. "B" sent me a huge basket of fruit, and on the days when visitors were allowed in the afternoon, and again in the evening, Harry used to spend the intervening hours looking round the shops, or take a trip on the river. On my last Sunday in

hospital, there was no one to play the piano for the hymns, so I was pressed into service (I have an idea I "jazzed" them up a bit). After three weeks I was allowed home, and Harry brought my clothes, all beautifully washed and ironed, even my stockings!) He hired a car for the homeward journey, and whenever we went up and down a hill, there were seven at one place, I clung on to my tummy! I was pleased to be home, but progress seemed very slow, and it was quite eighteen months before I was really well: today, people seem to recover from the same operation in a very short time, no doubt due to more modern methods. I think I could form a club from friends alone, who have had a "hysterectomy".

The housekeeper left, so there was much running round trying to find another, and finally, an old family retainer came out of retirement to help out, which worked very well, as she was a real professional.

Mr. "B" now had to return to hospital, and Mrs. "B" went to stay in London to be near, and we were left to hold the fort, and some weeks later, he died, which was a great blow, as Harry had lost a friend, and we were not at all sure whether we would be staying on, and houses were so very difficult to find.

Elaine was studying for her "eleven-plus" examination, with Harry spurring her on; he knew her teacher very well, a Welshman, very keen on education, so Harry had a word with him, to tell him to be sure to "push" Elaine, as she was inclined to take things a bit easy. Elaine came home one day, most indignant, Mr. Jones had said, "Now hands up all those who want to take homework"! Elaine took no notice, and he said, "And you can take it". Of course she had no idea that Harry had approached him.

Some friends of ours were very fond of cats, having three, and one, who'd had many kittens, was expecting again, so, knowing how fond Harry was of cats, he was asked to have one when they arrived; he said he would, but it must be a "Tom", and a tabby, but when they arrived, there was only one tabby, and that was a "she". However, he decided to take her, and we all adored her, and we had her for nineteen years. There was only one drawback, she would bring in live mice, take them into the sitting-room, and promptly lose them behind the piano, and straightway lose all interest. Then Elaine was sent running round the garden to find Harry to come and catch it; he was not at all pleased, especially if he was in the middle of "planting out" or mowing. When he arrived at the cottage, still moaning, Elaine and I would be standing on chairs in the kitchen, and hear him poking about with a stick, shouting at "Tiger-Puss" to stop washing, and come and catch the mouse, when suddenly, it would dart under the sitting-room door, into the hall, and I would lift up my skirt, and run like mad to open the front door to let it into the garden again! Harry, still cross, would leave us to put the furniture back in place.

How he disliked being interrupted! We had a very very

old vacuum cleaner (since we were first married), which was repaired with masking tape, and which could not be switched on and off on the machine, only at the electric point, all most unsafe, and Elaine was not allowed to use it at all. One morning, whilst sweeping the bedroom, I saw a pair of my stockings disappearing up the flexible tube, and I didn't know whether to hang on to them, or leave them and rush over to the switch! Anyway, it was too late, and they got stuck half-way in the long flexible tubing. A frantic run round the garden for Harry, who came armed with a long bamboo cane, which he poked and poked through until the stockings were dislodged, full of holes! And then the usual "inquest", "How did it happen, what were you doing" etc., etc.,

Another of his pet "hates" was painting and decorating, (it still is). We would postpone it as long as possible, and when, finally, a room simply had to be done, he moved so fast, I didn't know where I was! As soon as breakfast was over, the things were whipped off the table at lightening speed, heavy furniture moved into the garage, and if Elaine and I had our usual giggling turn just as we were helping to move the wardrobe, it would be put down in the middle of the path, and we were told that if we were going to play about, he wasn't doing any more (which wouldn't have taken much)! By three o'clock in the afternoon, everything was back in place, with ceiling done, and two coats of emulsion on the walls. Harry no doubt hoping it wouldn't happen again for a few more years!

Mrs. "B" now decided to go to South Africa for a few months, and asked if we would live in the House whilst she was away, which we did, and quite enjoyed it, except that "Tiger-Juss" took over, much to the annoyance of Mrs. "B's" cat.

One morning, Elaine was sent home from school to tell us she had passed her "eleven-plus" exam, which greatly thrilled us all, Mr. Jones included. She now looked forward to going to Toking Grammar School at the end of the Summer, and we, had to find the money from somewhere for her school uniform.

The "old retainer" and "Okey-doke Daisy" had left, so there was just a "daily". I decided I must do some Spring-cleaning, as we'd lived in the house, and of course did too much washing down of paint, so finished up in bed, with my chest too painful to let me even sit up. Mr. "B" was not too pleased, and wanted to know what the "daily" was doing, (also one of his patients).

Mrs. "B" returned from South Africa, and we to the cottage; staff was proving very difficult to obtain, as all the younger domestic servants had been doing war-work, and were valuing their freedom. The only ones available, were people who had never been in service, and just thought it was an easy way to obtain a home. We had some extraordinary types, missionaries from Australia, women with children who skipped on the landing outside Mrs. "B's" bedroom, which was not at all Appreciated! There was even a German couple from Hamburg, the

man starting his work by hoovering at 6 a.m. finishing all chores by 9.a.m. and quite convinced that the rest of the day was his own, so he lit up a cigar, and prepared himself to take things easy, which didn't go down at all well, so there was a great coming and going. Harry and I took turns to sleep in the House on alternate weeks. At last, there was a well-educated married couple, who wanted to learn the whole business of running such a house, with a view to emigrating to America to take up similar work, and they fitted in very well until they went to America. The only snag was, we were sometimes given their wage packet in mistake, only to find they were being paid six pounds weekly, all found, and we, three pounds, ten shillings.

Ever since we'd come to live in West Byfleet, I had always hoped I might meet my old employer, to whom I was secretary for eleven years, as I knew he lived in the village, but knowing he must be more than eighty years old, I hadn't much hope, but one day, I saw this very tall lean man coming from the shops, and although I hadn't seen him for about eighteen years, I knew it was he; I made myself known, and he was very pleased to see me, and to chat about his family, how his wife had died, and his son was a Don at Oxford.

Gardeners' hazard was lumbago, or a slipped disc, call it what you will, and Harry was no exception; after a very nasty bout, Mrs "B" said he really needed a holiday, so Elaine could stay at the House, and we could have a week's holiday, (our first since before the War). We didn't really want to go, but she insisted, so we decided to go back to Bexhill; we couldn't afford it, but with two week's wages, and a few pounds in the post office, we managed. As it was October, it was difficult to find a hotel still open, but found a small guest-house on the Front. We were given a large bedroom over-looking the sea, rather bare and rather cold, but Harry was in his element next morning, to see the delivery vans from various shops, and driving them, "Old so-and-so", who had either been in the Home Guard with him, or as a boy had delivered on a bicycle. As soon as we'd arrived the previous afternoon, he called on a friend, who was a Manageress at a Dry Cleaners, to ask for the loan of her local directory, so that he could see if any of his previous employers were still alive. We found one, who had given up his large house, and was living in a small bungalow; Harry telephoned, and he said he would be pleased to see us the following afternoon. When we got there, we found he was living in the past, and was very concerned about the price of things; only that morning he'd bought a bottle of whisky, and the price appalled him (twelve shillings and sixpence, used to be three shillings and sixpence)! And the rail fares! He used to travel from Brighton to London for two shillings and sixpence return, he expected it was five shillings now! The last time Harry had seen him, was when he was called up to join the Forces, and Mr. "J" had come over to settle his account, but while he was there, the siren sounded, and he was ^{so} anxious to get back to his retreat in the country, that he rushed off, owing Harry fourpence. I didn't dare mention this, for fear of his having a heart attack! He suddenly said, "Will you make the tea Connie"? I looked round for Connie, but

no-one appeared, and Harry signalled to me that he meant me; he was muddled again, so off I went to make the tea. Later Harry informed me that Jonnie had left years ago.

Our next visit was to the daughter of someone Harry had worked for since he was sixteen, when he first went to Bexhill. She had died during the War, but her daughter was very pleased to see us, and we were highly amused when she said, "Mother used to say, Harry is a naughty boy, he will talk to the errand boys whilst cutting the hedge"! Undoubtedly what worried her, was that whilst he was talking, he stopped clipping, and she was afraid she wasn't getting her money's worth!

Our last visit was to be one evening to our great friends since our early marriage days, when John used to put the clock forward to induce us to leave early, and whom we hadn't seen since the War. We knew we would be very late, so asked the proprietor if we could have a key; he said we certainly could, but to be sure to lock up when we came in. We had a lovely evening, didn't stop talking (their children agog to think anyone could talk so much). We arrived home about one a.m. carefully locked the front door, and put the lights out on the landings, but next morning, our host informed us we'd locked him out; he'd taken the dog for a last run along the sea-front, and then found he couldn't get in, but fortunately found a small kitchen window open, so managed to squeeze through, and he was no "slim-line" either!

Altogether we enjoyed our week at Bexhill, but Harry decided he wouldn't want to go back there to live, to him, the pace of life seemed very slow.

When we returned to West Hyfleet, we found the London County Council had purchased a huge piece of land by the canal (where we went to gather moss for potting plants), and were to build hundreds of council houses and flats for those in London who had lost their homes through bombing. The ground was so wet that the pumps were working day and night for weeks to drain the land. Later we were to meet a family who lived there, and we have remained firm friends ever since.

I was now having severe tummy pains, so had to go to Weybridge Hospital for an x-ray, and as I'd had nothing to eat the previous day, I was extremely hungry when I returned from the hospital, but Elaine had made some lovely soup, and had gone to the trouble of making "croutons", which I never did, and we always joked about it afterwards if we had soup, saying, "With croutons I hope".

A week or so later, at Easter (snowing hard), I went into hospital for the removal of the gall bladder; the surgeon said it was full, almost ready to burst, so I asked him to save the stones for me. He sent them up to me after the operation in a little bag, (fifty-five), no wonder the pain was so intense, they must have been forming for years, even before the last operation. Weybridge was a lovely hospital,

small, and there was much laughter in the ward. I have always been very very fond of grapes, and I always say, that the best part of being in hospital, is to see the grapes coming in! I had to stay in for a month as an abscess formed; my own doctor used to visit me, and he was so tender-hearted, that he went quickly when Sister said she was going to put on very hot fomentations. I think I was in the warmest place, as it was so bitterly cold outside; Harry and Elaine came to visit me most evenings, and looked frozen, having to wait about for buses. Elaine moaned a bit, saying they were living on sausages, but I often wonder how they did manage, as money was so scarce, and with bus fares etc., (not forgetting the grapes), I think they must have lived very frugally.

Mrs. "B" was still unable to obtain staff, so the "family" decided that she really ought to return to London, so the House and cottage were put up for sale, which was very worrying for us, as we had no idea whether new people would want a gardener, or whether Harry would want to work for them. The estate was sold at last, and after Harry had an interview with the new owner, he decided ~~to~~ it would be worth a trial, and it proved to be a wonderful arrangement. They were, and still are, after more than twenty years, so very kind and thoughtful. They did all that was possible to make the cottage more comfortable, a hot water system in the kitchen, etc., There were four young children, and these, we have seen grow up, marry, and have families of their own, and what fun they were,

Harry's Father now became very ill (1957), so there was much travelling back and forth to Figgin Hill, until he died, at the age of eighty-one. He was a wonderful man, full of character, a real countryman.

A Man of Kent.

The fog lay thick o'er the little village
On that grey November day,
When they laid to rest the Man of Kent
In his grave of yellow clay.

They bore him slowly to the wooden church,
By the road he knew so well,
The road o'erlooking the valley,
To the sound of the tolling bell.

The old folk were there, to bid their friend adieu,
A Justice of the Peace, an airman, neighbours and family too,
We sang, "Now the day is over", with sadness in our hearts,
Remem'bring how oft this hymn we'd sung, in happy years long past.

Remembered too, how changed the village,
Since as a youth he'd worked upon the land,
Picking strawberries cleanly and deftly as any Gypsy band.

Remembered the ride with horse and cart
In the clean fresh night air,
To sell in Covent Garden the dewy fruit,
Gathered with such patient care.

They buried him in the churchyard, on the windswept hill,
 Within sight of the fields he'd loved so well.
 And we wept at the passing of so true a friend,
 And knew, alas, we should ne'er see his like again.

We shall ne'er forget his handshake true,
 His forthright speech, his deepset eyes so blue,
 His special gait, his style of dress,
 This fearless man, this Ventish man, this Englishman,
 In his belov'd countryside, now laid to rest.

-----oOo-----

We had plenty of running about, to Piggin Hill,
 to London, and Sevenoaks to sort out Mum's affairs. ~~XXXXXX~~
 Harry had a grumbling appendix, which was playing him up,
 but finally things were settled. I decided to visit Mum
 once a month, and stay a day or so. What a nightmare that
 turned out to be! Mum's road was an unadopted road, and
 finally the District Council decided to take it over, and
 for months it was in a terrible state, with mud over one's
 ankles and wooden planks across trenches, so I wore "over-
 boots" to the end of the road, then peeled them off, and
 stuffed them into a paper bag, so that I could look fairly
 presentable to travel home.

Elaine passed her "O levels", and decided to take
 shorthand and typing at school. We told her that if she
 wanted to be a school teacher, we were quite prepared for
 her to stay on at school, even though money was scarce.
 She was wonderfully understanding, and would often say, the
 girls in her class had "so-and-so", television etc., but
 when we said we simply hadn't the money to buy these things,
 she never worried. One of the big jokes was, and caused us
 much laughter, was, that she always came home from school
 "starving", and as soon as she got to the corner of the
 cottage, she would say in a very peeved voice, "Anything
 cooked"? We used to say, we thought you had your meal at
 school, but she pointed out, that when you were head of the
 table, and had to serve the dinners, you couldn't very well
 take a large helping yourself.

She left school at seventeen, and obtained, by
 herself, an interesting position on a weekly philatelic
 magazine in London; she enjoyed travelling to London every
 day, and seeing where, as a young girl, I had lived and went
 to school. She was thrilled with all the book shops in
 Charing Cross Road, and spent most of her lunch hour there.

There was a competition for a philatelic "Beauty
 Queen", so we persuaded Elaine to enter, as she really was
 beautiful at seventeen, and had a good knowledge of stamps;
 she got into the finals, and came second, which thrilled us
 all. (Dame Anna Neagle, ~~was~~ the actress, was one of the judges).

Someone decided to form a Stamp Club in Woking,
 so, Harry, being very interested, went along, and was soon
 roped in for the Committee and secretarial work, and he
 offered to print the News-letter, which meant, not only

plenty of work for him, but for me also, as the stencils had to be typed before the duplicating, and a member of the Committee, who was a member of a London philatelic society, asked Harry if he would print their News-letter, saying they were very short of funds, and Harry, a glutton for work, agreed; this was really complicated, as it included "post marks" in each copy, which meant Harry laborously pricking every stencil with a pin before duplicating. He was able to buy a second-hand duplicator for a pound, also a typewriter with a "brief" carriage, eighteen to twenty inches long, which lived under the sideboard, as it took up so much room.

On "printing nights", we all prayed everything would go well, as it only needed the ink to run thick, or the duplicating paper to be a little inferior, and tempers would flare; once, when returning from a week-end away, and having put the duplicator in the garden shed, we found a mouse had eaten the gelatine roller, which meant a trip to London to get a new one!

One Friday evening, a wet and miserable one, things were prepared for printing, an old pink bedspread covering the carpet in our only sitting-room, Elaine banished to the kitchen with her gramophone, when I thought it would make life a little more pleasant, to light a fire, so I put a match to the wood in the grate, but in a few minutes, some loose soot caught alight (the chimney having been swept only a week or so previously), and it was soon panic stations, and Harry, in what we always called his best "whip-cracking" manner, gave us our orders - "Bring the bucket", to Elaine, "Get sacks from the shed", to me, he was already rolling the carpet back, and moving the duplicator; he soon had the fire under control, but a neighbour had already 'phoned for the fire brigade; suddenly, we saw seven or eight firemen, (they all seemed extra short), marching up the path, one behind the other, hatchets in belts, which all proved too much for Elaine and I, we just ran into the kitchen convulsed with laughter (our usual outlet). They were very good, damped things down, and apologised for their wet boots. This was not the only time they were called!

Harry used to do a lot of judging at local flower shows in the Summer, and one Saturday morning he left early, his employer and family having gone to Devon for three weeks, I thought I would get a lettuce for lunch, and whilst in the garden, I heard a terrible "crackling" noise, and when I looked up, I saw the holly hedge was alight. Elaine and I rushed back and forth with buckets of water, which had no effect, so I looked for the hose, but when I found it, I brought it down the wrong path, and it wouldn't reach, but a neighbour came to our aid, (the only one that did) who was a cripple with an artificial leg, having been a prisoner of War, but he managed to get the hose along the right path, and played the water on the hedge; the fire was practically out when the fire brigade arrived, but were able to "damp down". When Harry came home, he was amazed to see the big gap in the holly hedge, and although it was replanted, it took years and years before it was filled in.

Elaine was now enjoying life, with amateur theatricals,

and attending parties given by old school friends, and at one of these, when she was nineteen or twenty, she met a young man; we liked him immensely, he was so much to be admired, as things hadn't been easy for him, having lost his Father when he was sixteen, but he was determined to get on, and he certainly did.

He and Elaine became engaged, and decided to marry the following year, when she was twenty-one. We had to decide where the money for the wedding festivities was to be found! Harry's employer gave him twenty-five pounds towards expenses, which we thought extremely generous, as Harry had only been with him a few months. Harry then decided to sell a small collection of stamps he had, which realized about forty pounds, and even today, more than twenty years after the wedding, we still tease Bob, and remind him how we had to sell our stamp collection to pay for the wedding, which he takes in very good part, and like us, sees the funny side of it.

On the day, (30th Jan.1960), Harry was in his element, organizing everything, and doing his best to see there was no hitch. When I left for the church, Elaine said, "Now, you won't cry, will you Mum"? I assured her I wouldn't (Elaine had been to a wedding a few months earlier, where everyone had cried). She had no fears for her Father, he was most unconcerned; the taxi arrived, and Elaine was all ready, when Harry decided to take the driver round the garden, and Elaine was standing looking at her watch, and wondering if they knew what the time was. All went well, Elaine looked beautiful in a cream brocade dress (made by our friend at Pexhill), and with a very unusual bouquet of flame coloured gerber daisies, and her one bridesmaid (her cousin), in a rather lovely flame coloured dress; it all looked so bright on a rather overcast January day, but, as Elaine always said, she could never get married in June with her hay-fever at it's height, and with eyes streaming! When she left for her honeymoon, she had a very pretty blue coat, but oh, her gloves! They were out of this world, red leather, of the finest and softest! How I love beautiful leather gloves, so used my Mother. Although I didn't cry at the wedding, I found it was too much to ask of me, to say goodbye when she left, so I kept in the background. And, how I missed her the following week - I felt nothing would ever be the same again, but she was so thoughtful, and left us a little note of thanks, and even found time to send a card whilst on her honeymoon!

A friend of our's who was a builder, asked me if I would do his book-keeping and "Pay as you earn" income tax, which proved to be very frustrating, as it was just a morning job, and he would leave until the very last moment, going to the bank for the cash for the wages, which meant checking notes, silver and copper for more than a hundred pounds, and then making up wage packets, when I knew Harry would be waiting for his lunch, and I was not sorry when he moved away.

I'd already had a similar job for the father of one of Elaine's school friends, book-keeping and "P.A.Y.E", which had really been a "nightmare", as he was a terrible "muddler", and I could never get the girls at the factory to understand the

stoppages in their wage packets. He manufactured little plaster figures and animals, which after "firing", were then hand painted, but the complications came, when Government Officials had to decide which was a luxury item, and which utility (for Purchase Tax), egg-cups were "utility". Eventually the factory was sold, and the family emigrated to Australia.

After these two experiences, I never looked for any more situations.

The year Elaine and Bob married (1960), was also our Silver Wedding Anniversary, so as a surprise, Harry arranged for Bob and Elaine to meet us in London for lunch, and had booked seats for the theatre in the evening - a very enjoyable day. Harry bought me a row of pearls, and I had set my heart on giving him a watch, which he had been looking at for weeks; as usual, there was no spare cash, and try as I might, I couldn't manage to save more than six pounds towards the twelve pounds needed. I asked Bob if he could loan me six pounds, to which he readily agreed, and which I repaid on "easy terms". Harry was delighted, and is still wearing it after another twenty years!

In 1964 Harry's Mother died, she was eighty-seven; I had known her since I was fourteen years of age, and she had been a good friend in our early marriage days. She was a very courageous woman, never afraid of hard work, especially, if in the end, it meant an improvement in her life. She had many illnesses, including operations on both eyes, rheumatic fever in her young days, and an internal complaint, but I never heard her complain.

Everything was now beginning to alter in West Ryfleet, houses being built everywhere, people with large gardens, selling part for building, so that a new house would be almost outside their back-door, leaving them with a very tiny garden; some people leaving the district, and selling their estates. There were no more gardeners' cottages on estates (our's was practically the last, quite a few people knocking on our door asking if we wanted to sell!), no more Commons covered with heather, and no more sweet chestnut trees in the woods, where we used to gather chestnuts, as many as we could carry.

Harry had altered our garden beyond recognition; he extended the lawn down to the woods, built a rockery and a pool, planted heather beds, and thousands of daffodils in the orchard, a swimming pool had also been built, so now it was a really beautiful garden, the envy of all around. What happy Summer afternoons I spent in the orchard.

1967, our first Grandchild, a boy, Matthew James, but how small he was! I was always afraid of him slipping through his napkins! A real "live wire". He's now fourteen, and what a lovable boy.

Harry's "appendix" was now becoming really troublesome, but on visiting the hospital, it proved to be Gallstones; the surgeon said it would be a few weeks before he could perform the operation, and Harry said, if it was all the same to him,

he would prefer to have it in the Autumn, as Spring and Summer were his busiest times (Harry never afraid of saying what he thought), so this was agreed to, and the operation was performed in December, but I think he came home too soon (entirely his fault), but he was anxious to get home, (he couldn't control the garden from the hospital!). He promised faithfully to rest every afternoon, and with his little bundle of "dressings", they gave him, he improved steadily, and was finally back to normal. He's a wonderful patient, no trouble at all, and, like his Mother, never complains, but, oh, when he's on the mend (especially after a bout of lumbago), and can take a walk round the garden, he's terrible, he can see how much work there is waiting to be done, although we've all done our best, keeping it watered and mown, but it's not the "professional touch", and we all had to "line up" for our orders!

The squirrels were becoming a great pest, eating the fruit (we never had a chance to sample a cherry), and the rhododendron buds. We were lying in bed one morning, thinking about getting up, and I could hear a squirrel rushing round in the back porch, and rattling the empty milk bottles, so I asked Harry if he would get up and chase it away, before the bottles were broken. When he went into the kitchen, the squirrel was there, running along the window sill, and knocking all the flower pots into the sink, which was ~~covered~~ covered in soil, so Harry opened the back door and chased him out, and came back to bed; then his brain started working as to how the squirrel could have got in, as the kitchen window was shut, and surely, he thought, it couldn't have come down the geyser in the bathroom, as it would have been singed with the pilot light. When we got up and went into the sitting-room for breakfast, we saw only too well where he'd entered, down the chimney! There was soot everywhere, and a complete mound at the back of the grate, and the stench! Harry and Mr. "L" shot quite a few, and "Tiger-Puss" would catch anything, stoats and snakes as well, but unfortunately, birds also. How we missed her when she died, which was whilst Harry was in hospital.

1972, a second Grandchild expected; Matthew, now five years of age, and when told there was to be a brother or sister, he said, "Well, I hope it isn't a girl, as she won't fit in at all" (with all his mates being boys, and, his friend next door, having just had a baby brother), but, of course, it was a girl (Elizabeth Jane); how pleased we all were, and what good fortune for Elaine and Bob to now have a boy and a girl. Matthew took to her straight away, and was most protective. Elizabeth is now eight years old, quite grown up, and such fun, she entertains us all with her dancing.

Harry's "boss" now decided to take up yachting, so we all went down to Bosham in Sussex, for the launching; it was a very happy day in early April, sun shining, champagne flowing. Being a journey of one and a half hours from West Byfleet, it meant, very often them staying over-night, if the tides prevented them getting in, so finally they decided to sell the house and cottage in West Byfleet, and find one in Bosham. This time we

had nothing to worry about, as, with his usual thoughtfulness and generosity, Mr. "L" offered to buy a house for us, wherever we wanted to live. After giving it some thought, as to whether we should stay in West Byfleet (now vastly altered since we first moved there, even office blocks), and as Elaine, Bob and family were happily settled in Claygate, (Surrey), we thought it would be nice to live in Besham too! All our friends had cars, so we knew we should not lack visitors, and I knew Harry would be happiest doing a little gardening for people he'd worked for for twenty years, and, with another garden to landscape, I knew he'd be in his element. So, after thirty years in West Byfleet, longer than anyone else living in the road, we once again started afresh, which I think will be our last move, although one can never tell!

I don't know whether I shall have time to write the Besham "story"!

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In April 1973, Mr. "L" bought a house in Bosham (Sussex), which needed some alterations, so there was no hurry to ~~leave~~ move, and then came the problem of finding a house for us; small houses were very scarce, but finally, we had a choice of two, next door to each other, and just what we wanted, three minutes walk to the station, the few shops, and the post office, with three bedrooms (one for Harry's "Study"), gas central heating, and a very small garden, which pleased Harry. All was settled by August, but we were not to move in until October, which gave us ample time to arrange everything. With the help of our good friends on the Sheerwater Estate (Glad and Ron), we were able to get the carpets laid, with Ron re-upholstering the chairs, and Gladys making the curtains; how kind they were. But, oh, what a clearing out we had after living for thirty years in West Byfleet (twenty years for Mr. "L"), which meant almost a continuous bonfire for three weeks. What laughter we had over the stuff that was turned out, and all saying to each other, "Do you want to take this"? We had a large "skip" outside the front door for all unwanted items, which before very long was getting filled, and everyone of us, having articles we couldn't bear to part with. Harry, being very methodical about his possessions, stamps, books etc., packed everything in cardboard boxes, labelled, and stacked them in the small bedroom, and which soon reached almost to the ceiling. It took nearly a week to move the contents of both houses, starting Monday morning, and finishing on Friday. By the time Sunday arrived, we were all exhausted. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, the removal men were busy packing at the House, and, on Thursday morning at eight, they arrived to pack our's. A beautiful October morning, a day before our Wedding Anniversary (26th), so I'd had to buy Harry's present secretly (a Coalport china cup, saucer and plate), and keep it hidden. The men were finished soon after eleven a.m. as Harry had done most of the packing, so I gave the cottage a final sweep through, with a little sadness after thirty years. Harry thought it would be a good idea, if I caught the 12.18 train from Woking, and I would be in Bosham before the men arrived, and he would come down with Mr. "L" about five o'clock. Knowing how "dim" I can be over travelling, I was given my final instructions about the train from Woking, with a very indignant rejoinder from me, that I knew exactly what I was doing! I arrived at Woking just as the train pulled in, heard the announcement "Guildford and Havant", so got in. I looked at the clock as we left, and noticed it was sixteen minutes past, and thought, "That's unusual for Harry to make a mistake, and tell me eighteen minutes past"! Anyway, we travelled along, and an attendant came through to say, he'd received a message from Waterloo, saying a lady needed assistance; he looked at me, and said, "Is it you Madam"? "Oh, no, not me", I said (little knowing I should soon be needing some)! Suddenly, I realized we were passing through stations which weren't familiar, so I said to the man opposite, "Does this train go to Havant"? "Oh no", he said, "SOUTHAMPTON". I hadn't the remotest idea what to do now, so at Basingstoke I got out, and asked the porter what I should do, and he said, "Get back into the train, and change at Eastleigh", so I changed

~~se I~~ changed at Eastleigh, and caught another train to Fareham, (I'd never heard of it), and as we went through Winchester, I thought, "I've always wanted to go there"! The old Marie Lloyd song kept going through my mind, "My old man said "follow the van", and "Don't dilly dally on the way". We arrived at Fareham, a country station with grass growing in the tracks, and I had visions of waiting hours for a train, but the porter said, "Next train coming in, change at Fratton". I never wear a watch, so had no idea of the time, and not once had I looked at a railway clock, for fear of seeing how late it was. I arrived at Fratton, and suddenly the thought crossed my mind, that I'd heard Harry say that this was on our line to Bosham, so I gave up asking the porters for Havant, and asked if I get a train to Bosham, he said, "The one after the next". I finally arrived at Bosham at three minutes past three, and quite expected to see the removal men pacing up and down, but there was no sign of them, and I had just picked up the "Hope you'll be happy in your new home" cards, when Harry arrived from the next train, and when I said I'd just arrived, his face was a "study", he couldn't believe his ears, and swears he'll never be able to let me travel alone again!

We kept expecting the "tea-lady" to arrive, as we'd read many times in our local paper at West Byfleet, how, when someone moved into a new area, either the larder was filled with "goodies", or a neighbour called with a tray of tea and biscuits, but she never came!

All our possessions arrived without mishap (even the Japanese tea-service, which had been moved from place to place, I don't know how many times), except that the stopper hadn't been put on firmly on the washing-up liquid, and all the cake tins, bun tins etc., were half-full of green liquid, and all had to be thrown away, if we didn't want scented fairy cakes!

We settled in happily, all the neighbours were very kind (just nine houses in the little cul-de-sac), and the only time in the whole of my life, that I'd had a warm bathroom - heaven indeed!

I've never seen anyone move so fast as Harry did, to get his "Study" ship-shape; shelves put up, books and albums in place, before one had time to blink!

Mr. and Mrs. "L" were most kind as usual, and said that anything they didn't need, we could have first choice, so we had the washing machine, a smaller fridge, which fitted under the "working tops", a very nice chest for the bedroom, and a flowered carpet for the bedroom, so there was nothing else we needed. All was straight by Christmas, and one would have thought we'd lived there for years.

On Christmas Eve, we thought we would go to Communion Service. At West Byfleet, we always went to the mid-night Service, but knew it would be too far to Bosham Church in the dark, so decided to go to the Village Hall, just round the corner, and we were highly amused, as the service was at

four p.m. with about twenty in the congregation, a couple of babies in prams, with Mothers trying to keep them amused, and when we knelt at the "altar rails", they were so frail, they wobbled! We paid our usual Christmas morning visit to Mr. and Mrs. "L", and had much to talk about.

We were extremely happy in our new home, and as we were about twenty-five minutes walk from Old Bosham, we often went there and watched the yachts coming in and out, and had many a laugh as strangers brought their cars to the water's edge, sat for a while, and then took a walk up the tiny high street, when suddenly, someone would run in and out the shops, or the pub, asking who owned car number "so-and-so", as it was almost a-wash, with water up to the wheels! They didn't realize how quickly the tide came in at that point! There is a beautiful old church, just across the green from the water, with a tablet in the aisle saying King Canute's daughter was buried there, and the church has a special Charter, as, during the Plague, the inhabitants of Bosham used to place food at the gates for the victims.

We enjoyed our trips to Chichester, our nearest town, (about three miles), a very ancient city with a lovely cathedral, and so many little back streets and alley-ways. As soon as the roads are open, archaeologists flock there, and have had some marvellous "finds". The City walls are still standing in parts of the town, and at Fishbourne (a mile from the town) there is a wonderful Roman palace. How I love old towns and villages with all their history.

What a coming and going of visitors we had that first Spring and Summer, some for a week or more, some for the weekend, and many just for the day; most of them came by car, so they took us round the Sussex countryside, and I even had my day in Winchester, which I had always wanted, so I was able to see the different places that Harry visited during the war, and the hospital he was in. I didn't think the Cathedral so nice as our's in Chichester.

One happy outing was to Romsey, where Harry had been posted at one time; how he enjoyed seeing the old places, and I thought Romsey Abbey (at which he had to parade on Sundays), one of the loveliest.

Two of our friends from Addlestone were very keen on Worthing, so we had many a happy day there. On one of our visits to Worthing, we had just had lunch, when it started to rain, so we sheltered in doorways, and were looking in a jewellers (as Harry always looks at the watches), and there was a watch in the window for one thousand pounds, and Harry, as usual, full of fun, called to me, and said, "This is the watch I'm going to have". There were two elderly people also sheltering, and I heard the man say to his wife, in a whisper, "Look, this is the watch that man is going to buy". Little did he know that Harry hadn't a hope! In fact, we very often call him Lord Rothschild! As his Mother used to say, "It's no good being poor and acting poor", and Harry certainly lives up to this!

Another happy day was to Tetworth and Tetworth House, and to Midhurst (another old town), all so medieval; a lovely Sunday at Goodwood House, the beautiful china was a joy to see.

Harry was very happy going to Mr. "L" every morning for a few hours, and he was beginning to get the garden ship-shape. Our little garden was looking nice too, with a rockery, and quite a few clematis (which we couldn't grow at West Byfleet), and of course, my beloved wallflowers!

He joined the Chichester Philatelic Society, but was a little disappointed that they only met monthly, instead of fortnightly, as he'd been used to at Weybridge and Woking, but he enjoyed the meetings. He had decided, before moving to Bosham, that he didn't want to be on any Committees, having had many years at West Byfleet as Secretary, judging etc., However, he still attended his Committee meetings on the Board of the British Philatelic Association in London, rather a long journey from Bosham, leaving before eight a.m.

My Cousin came to stay, and we walked the countryside; we had a day at Southsea, and a great thrill for me, was to see a huge grey battleship, just a little way out from the beach, so close, one could see the crew.

Then came the first wedding of Mr. "L's" four children, which was a very happy affair in April; on the previous day it snowed heavily, so we were not exactly looking forward to standing around for photographs to be taken, but it proved to be a beautiful sunny day, with a marquee in the garden, and the garden in "full bloom", much to the surprise of the guests, as Harry had planted scarlet geraniums in pots in the beds, with a view to taking them out after the wedding, for fear of frost (there was a heavy one that night, but we only lost one geranium). We had a very enjoyable day, met many people we knew from West Byfleet.

In October 1975 we had our Ruby Wedding Anniversary, a very quiet affair, but very enjoyable. Elaine, Bob and the children came, and, as a surprise, our four friends from Addlestone arrived unexpectedly. There was much laughter as to where Harry was going to take me the next day (Sunday), which was really the day; our friends said "You must go somewhere nice for lunch", and on looking in the local paper, we found a restaurant in Bognor, serving a four course lunch for fifty pence! Next morning, we were awake early, and exchanged presents, with Harry giving me a beautiful lladro figure; I had decided to give Harry a new watch, but instead of being twelve pounds, as for our Silver Wedding, it was now fifty pounds, and having saved all the Summer, found myself, in the last week, as usual, short of the final amount, and had visions of history repeating itself, with me having to ask Bob for a loan, but I managed to save the final five pounds out of the "housekeeping".

We had a happy day in Bognor, but as it was October, and most restaurants closed, it was difficult to find somewhere for lunch, but we did. but not at fifty pence for a four course meal; however, we did see the cafe, which looked like a "good pull-up for Chinese carmen"!

Two of our friends from Addestone, decided they would like to retire to Sussex, which was Kay's birthplace, so we were kept very busy trying to find the sort of property he would like, and we scanned the local paper every week, but although they travelled all over Sussex, it was proving very difficult, but finally, one Friday morning, just as they were on the point of giving up, we saw particulars of a bungalow, which seemed to be just right, so telephoned, and it proved to be just what they were looking for, with a large garden overlooking fields, with sheep grazing, really rural! They were to move in January, so spent Christmas with us, Marjorie bringing most of her house-plants (about forty), for us to nurture until they got their new home straight; what a day when they moved! snowing hard! We went over to give a hand, unpacking china, and never took off our woollies or boots! What fun it has been, having them just a few miles away, and what happy day excursions and holidays we've had together. We've been to Holland in tulip time, which was beautiful, also a self-catering holiday at Brixham (Devon), when we had one afternoon at Buckfast Abbey, and I could hardly believe my eyes, seeing all the tourists that were there, when I could re-call going with my parents when I was about eighteen, when we were the only three people there, and a young monk walked down the road with us to show us where we could get lunch. It is now all so commercialized.

We saw the yachts preparing for the start of the "Round the World Yacht Race" at Portsmouth, also the Fleet the night before the Queen was to review; it was a bitterly cold evening, and we'd overlooked to take a flask of coffee, and it took an hour or more to get out of the car park, but it was worth every inconvenience, to see the Fleet "lit up".

A few years ago, my leg was being troublesome; the doctor said I had obviously had a thrombosis, so said I must have a week in bed, if Harry could manage. I telephoned Elaine to say I'd just washed my hair, given her father a conducted tour round the kitchen, and was now off to bed for a week, although, feeling so well, I didn't know how I was to occupy myself; she said, I could always write my memoirs!!! What a week it was! waited on hand and foot, Harry cooked the meals superbly, did all the chores, washing, ironing etc., made excellent coffee (offered to show me how, when I got up), announced the visitors, and gave them tea, brought flowers and grapes, and then informed me that I looked like Queen Mary sitting up in bed receiving her courtiers! I had hoped to lose a little weight, but with all the good food, there was little chance of this. "Came the dawn" at the end of the week, back to the old routine! My "Queen" for a week was over!

Another wedding, a great number of guests, one spent the night with us, and another to lunch on the day. Harry had everything arranged, as usual, taxi booked for two p.m. (wedding two-thirty); no taxi, just after two, so Harry telephoned, and was told it was on the way; just as it arrived, and Harry ready to shut the front door, one of our guests decided she must go

to the "loo"! I and the other guest were in the taxi, hardly able to contain our laughter (Elaine can imagine what her Father looked like), and we just managed to get into the church before the bride!

Being "Old Aged Pensioners", we were now able to buy an annual railway ticket for a few pounds, which enabled us to travel at half the ordinary fare, which was, and still is, a great boon. One Autumn, the Railway Company decided, out of the kindness of their hearts, to allow us to travel one Saturday, wherever we liked, absolutely free. What excitement! Everyone deciding where they should go for the day. We thought we would like to go to Bexhill-on-Sea, so, early in the morning, we caught the train from Bosham to Brighton, where we were to change. The train was packed, but everyone was in a happy mood. When we arrived at Brighton, the platform was a mass of people; we managed to get on the train, but had to stand as far as Eastbourne. We had some lunch in Bexhill, went to the De Le Warr Pavilion to see an exhibition of paintings (nearly bought one), walked round the roads where Harry worked when we were first married, great alterations, some of the houses where he'd worked, converted into flats. Early in the afternoon, Harry said, "What shall we do now?" I said, "I thought we came here to see the sea"! He said, "I'd completely forgotten the sea"! Even when we lived at Bexhill, he seldom went on the sea-front, but, as he would have returned home without even seeing the sea, I made him sit on the promenade for fifteen minutes, even though the sea was grey and the wind blowing! We left Bexhill quite early, as we guessed the trains would be crowded, and they were, but we managed to get a seat, and everyone still in a good humour, and all telling of their travels. We heard afterwards, how one woman caught a very early train from Bosham (complete with bike), to Bath, rode all round Bath, then train to London, another ride round, finally arriving at Bosham in the evening! She'd certainly had her day out! We're now all waiting for another day of free travel!

1982. We are still enjoying life in Bosham; there's a coming and going of neighbours; soon, we shall be as we were at West Byfleet, the longest-living ones in the road!

Harry has made a beautiful garden for Mr. and Mrs. "L", so the work has now eased a little.

He was finally persuaded to go on the Committee of the Stamp Club, but it is not nearly so arduous as it was at Woking and Weybridge, no exhibitions to arrange, with planning starting eighteen months in advance!

Another wedding for Mr. and Mrs. "L", a very joyous affair, only one more to come.

We still have plenty of visitors, some from Scarborough we hadn't seen for about ten years.

Some old friends have died, which has brought sadness, "May", my life-long friend, since we were girls of sixteen, "Ron", who was so kind when we moved here, and Elaine's Godmother and Godfather from Bexhill, who were Harry's friends from the age of sixteen.

Our next "big event", in three years time (when

we're eighty), will be our Golden Wedding Anniversary, Elaine and Bob's Silver Wedding, and Matthew's eighteenth birthday, so it would be as well to start saving now, as I expect it will have to be a gold watch next time (if I'm still here of course), but, if the Almighty decides to call me before then, I shall have had a wonderful life, much love, some sadness, but oh, so very much laughter.

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