

MEMORIES OF BAPTIST END, NETHERTON, DUDLEY

IN THE PERIOD 1895 - 1918

BY

NORA HAMPTON

"They" say that it is within the ability of everyone to write one book, at least I have heard it said - presumably the book of one's own life. But some, like me, are incapable of expressing their sentiments and life seems to pass them without any noticeable effect - or does it?

I am not enamoured with the idea of writing about myself even for the benefit of my children, but I suppose the limits in which I have lived 1895 - 1980 are some of the most momentous and exciting and terrorising in history. In my young days there were no cars - only horse drawn vehicles - gigs and hansoms for the gentry - carts for the workers. I remember I saw the first electric driven tram from Dudley to Cradley Heath - I would be about 3 years old. But I am overslipping my tale "told by an idiot" and should commence as David Copperfield did:-

"I am born!"

On the 21 November 1895, at Netherton, in Dudley, Worcestershire - the main road called "Cinder Bank" because of the cinders and "Black Country" but why "Black"?

I remember nothing of it but my mother said, that after a very hard struggle on her part that I made my entrance into this world, so tiny that I could barely fit into a pint pot and cried for 3 months; and when, in later years, I saw the clothes I was put into - no wonder I cried: Cold November and exquisitely embroidered fine linen: (no wool as these days) by my mother: who said I could chatter at 10 months and walk before I was a year old.

At this stage I think I should mention my parents and grand parents. My father's father died of pneumonia when he, my father, was 12 years old, leaving my grandmother at 56 years old, with 3 boys, to rear, my Dad, John, Uncle Elija and Uncle Tom. Grandma was nothing daunted, opened a little confectioner shop, made her own bread, cakes and scones. Father says he remembered going round to friends and customers with a wicker basket covered with a white scrupulously clean cloth, taking orders. Gran had 12 children - 8 lived - they lived in a

small cottage - with a big garden - near to St Andrew's Church. "Top End of Netherton" it was called then, and still is I believe. My grandfather for that time, age, was an educated man ie he could read and write a most beautiful hand writing. He was secretary to a Club - where the poor working folk, of which he was one, brought their pennies and halfpennies to save up for their burial.

I remember a beautiful manuscript, which my father kept for some years, with a poem composed by grandfather and written in copper plate writing - perfect. Dad's ambition was to be a cabinet maker, but under the circumstances then existing, took the first job offered - at a boot-making factory, in King St Dudley and afterwards Bakers, of Wolverhampton.

His ambition had always been, to be his own master, so a year or so before he was married, and in preparation for that event, as he had known my mother for several years, he rented a small house, along Cinder Bank, opposite the Netherton Council Schools, or the Board School, as it was sometimes called. There he repaired and made shoes. In those days shoes were sensible - lace ups above the ankles, and the more "fashionable" if that is the word - button ups, at the side. His work was in the front and the back was where they lived - that was where I was born, mother said he would often work till midnight and sometimes after, to fulfil an order.

When I was sixteen months old - my sister came along - Martha Maude - as I couldn't pronounce that mouthful - I called her "Sister" which got shortened to "Sis" and later was spelt "Cis" as is now there she is next door to me "Auntie Cis" to all my children at 4 Llewelyn Walk, Townyn, Wales in 1980. So I was left to the mercy of several of my father's sisters who were only too glad to have me being childless themselves, especially one Aunt Rachel, who was always a ray of comfort to me especially in later years and I look on the years of my association with her with pleasure and thankfulness. One incident, I remember when I was about 3 years old I should think, it was washing day and my mother, at that time, usually had a girl whose father worked for my father in the factory

her name was Adelaide - "Addy" we called her, to help her - now, whether she was away or not I can't recall, but mother seemed unusually hard pressed because she said to me "Now don't you go down the entry - you stay here in the yard" but of course, being me - obviously a bit of a rebel in those early days - I went down the entry which led on to the main road. There I stood in my little blue - navy blue - serge frock - without a pinafore looking at the passers by and the carts and horses in the road, when who should come by but Aunt Rachel with her basket on her arm - back from taking Uncle Sam's dinner. Forgetting all that I had been told I went with Aunt to see what she'd brought home and was just enjoying myself when mother came looking for me with a stick in her hand in a furious mood. Needless to say I rushed home - hid myself behind the door - was found and had a thrashing. I don't recall any of the other ensuing family having hidings but I had several and always seemed to be in trouble.

My father then had taken over a big 3-storey building at the bottom of the yard and had given up the little front room of the house where we lived - which for a time became a shoe shop - where more stylish shoes were displayed and shown in the window. My father's youngest brother was taken into the business, Tom, and later Uncle George and when I was about 10 years old a very big building was erected - the factory - in Park Road and it became Hampton Brothers.

To go back to my infant days -

I spent most of my time for the first 2-3 years amusing myself as sister was delicate - had a delicate stomach which the Doctor called consumptive bowels and rickets. I can remember going into the factory where the riveters were and pretending to smack their sit-downs with a strip of leather - and they would jump up and down pretending to be hurt - someone gave me a half-penny which I spent on a bar of cream chocolate, which I rolled into a sausage in my filthy hands: then sharing it with a little boyfriend - a neighbour: Alfie Boot.

My memory is full of scraps and scenes almost photographic of those days. The house where we lived then was one of a row with a common yard. Next door to us lived two old ladies, sisters and widows - Mrs Smith and Mrs Onslow. They kept a sweet shop but it was Mrs Smith who attended to the shop and did all the work - she stammered badly - the other lady seemed to sit down all the time dressed up - with a very ornamental decorative cap on her head always.

Mother was very reserved and "kept herself to herself". She always, to my eye, and I can see her now, seemed to dress well and she occasionally took us in the Pram to see her mother and a very old lady - her aunt Mary Perkins - at Old Hill. I hated to visit Aunt Mary as we were very strictly kept in the house because of a well in the back yard. Upon one occasion when mother was talking us down - it was a summer day and Cis was pushed up sitting ready in the Pram, I was dressed in best white cashmere with frilly lace at the sleeves and neck and whilst my mother was putting the finishing touches to her own toilet - fixing her hair I suppose, I decided to go down to the bottom of the yard to the pens to see how Dad was getting on. As I said it was a hot day and the tar which the pens were painted was sticky and running and somehow I got a patch on my dress and was left at home with Addy who was left to finish off the ironing. I can still see the malicious leer on her face as I ran crying running wildly backwards and forwards. I cried myself to sleep and can't remember mother coming back or anything more. At about this time I used to play occasionally with this small boy in a huge field, which extended at the back of the yard belonging to the cottages where we lived - in this field or meadow, Mr Billingham kept his cows. The place has been built up ages ago and is now Park Road with massed rows of little houses - two up and two down; called terraces. On one occasion, little Alfie felt the call of nature and to my astonishment just stood up and from the front of his trousers issued a stream - not being used to the anatomy of the opposite sex in those days! I thought how useful it was not to have to stoop down so I tried to imitate him - with dire results! It was, that, on one of those summer far away days

mother came running into the field "Come along children hurry and see what is coming down the road" and so I was to see the first electric tram from Dudley to Cradley Heath. I can see it now - how marvellous it seemed - the driver and the ticketman, I do not remember any passengers. The trams ran on rails, embedded in the ground, connected by a pole, in turn connected to wires overhead which were the source of the electricity. They were displaced a few years afterwards by buses - omnibuses - driven by petrol.

At this time I must have been about 3 years old and for our Summer holidays we used to have a week - always the first week in August at Kinver, a little beauty spot about 8 miles I should think - from where we lived. We stayed at various places - houses - no hotels for us in those days - we booked rooms and bought our own stuff which the lady of the house cooked and prepared for us. The place I remember most clearly is 'Rose Cottage' in Stoney Lane, kept by a very fastidious dear lady, Miss Stringer. I can vividly remember her going round in the evenings with a rhubarb leaf in her hands collecting snails from the garden, which was big and old worldish - it would be in 1898. We used to spend various times there, Miss Stringer seemed to get on with mother and not mind us. This was the place where, at the age of 2 years Cis first walked: I can remember her now with her arms outstretched to keep her balance - taking those few toddling steps! Father used to come to see us week-ends on his bike. I can definitely remember spending my times making mud pies with the soil in the garden, as it was very sandy - all Kinver was under the sea at one time, thousands of years ago and the Rock Houses - of solid sandstone were lived in then and until a few years ago. St Austin's Rock House and Nanny's Rock at the foot of Kinver Edge - happy memories - I wonder if it has much changed. "Rose Cottage" I believe is still there.

I can't remember much about Sis at this period, as she was too delicate and weak. The only thing I remember is playing on the hearth with her, when she bumped her head and made her forehead bleed, which upset me very much. I played with a girl named Nelly Dunn and got into trouble with her and had a hiding on her account.

I remember nothing about it except seeing her mother looking through our window at me rolling on the floor - whether from passion or pain -? What a little terror I must have been.

The next picture in my mind in that house is the bedroom - my parents' - mother sitting up in bed with my baby brother Leonard, in her arms, saying to Dad and Dr. O'Dowd looking anxious and yet pleased "It will be alright - I will rub it regularly" by that referring to the baby's foot which at birth was a little twisted - which never troubled him in his life - as long as I remember - he was always interested actively in games. Why I should have been in the bedroom is a mystery - no one seemed to realise I was there- I suppose I wondered what was going on being left on my own downstairs, so I just climbed up to see. I remember Leonard learning to walk - Cis and I had been playing "mothers and fathers" in the shop - must have been a Sunday as the shop was closed - I was father - I had father's waist-coat on which touched the ground, when mother came in holding Len under her arms while he took his first steps.

I have omitted to say that we were Baptists - puritanically disposed in those days - my grandfather and great grandfather were very closely connected with an old chapel - called in my day the Messiah Baptist - along the Cinder Bank Main Road to Dudley - so called 'Cinder' - because at one time the road was a mass of cinder and fires from the iron works and mines along that way. Now - last year in fact - the church has been raised to the ground - which is a catastrophe as a church has been on that ground for hundreds of years - we were immersed there - married there and several of my ancestors buried there. There was a Baptist Church in Netherton in the time of Oliver Cromwell. However, to return to my personal experience; I became in after years a member of the Sunday School and remember starting at the bottom of the school - we were separated by forms so placed to form little squares each with a separate teacher. Nelly Woodall was my first teacher - she was a member of the Church - and the year afterwards Alice Millard (who afterwards married my cousin). There were 200 Scholars - the boys on one side, the girls on the other and when we were singing hymns altogether the boys parodied some of the choruses very rudely I'm ashamed to say which we decided to ignore.

My first experience of Sunday School was very ignominious. I was called for one Sunday a.m. very early it seemed to me by a "big girl". It must have been arranged by mother, as the first I knew about it until I was being arrayed in Sunday Best - white socks, black patent ankle strap slippers. This "big girl" took me with her to her class - which was at the top of the school (I was about 3-4 years) and I remember I fell through the back of the form - causing a great commotion but not hurting myself and taking things as a matter of course. I don't think I went again for a year or two.

I was prone, as very young, and all my life, to very bad sinous headaches, my head seemed to be full of pain and mother said I used to be light-headed and have illusions and almost delirious and have frightening dreams - I remember some even to this day - but in those days we didn't dream of calling a doctor. Home remedies were used - eucalyptus and camphorated oil and tallow candle fat rubbed on brown paper and used as a poultice - now we have tablets on the Health Service - tablets for everything - I wonder why we don't rattle. Of course, at this early age, I don't recollect anything of a topical or political nature; we were comfortable at home - everything went smoothly - enough to eat - wholesome - but no fillis - or tinned food - let alone frozen. Mother had a woman to help on wash days - besides Addy - Mrs Burns at one time who didn't get on with "that young madam" Addy - then Mrs Nickless who lived near to us and used to stay late at night in the kitchen to do the ironing - father being still at work. We liked Mrs Nickless - she used to tell us nursery rhymes and fairy tales whilst ironing. She had twin children - a boy and girl - Harold and Florrie. Harold worked for my father when he left school at the age of 14 and we have always regarded the family as our friends - since I have lived here Townyn, Florrie and her daughter have visited me. The children, Harold and Florrie, used to come to us as long as their mother was with us and mother used to give them the cash to get themselves Fish & Chips for their supper from a local shop. Harold started on his own years afterwards when he was demobbed

from the first world war - married Blanche Darley and left the district for Kinver where Blanche died of T.B. They had a child Dorothy who married and still lives near to Kinver.

Well here I am again P.8 with some bare incidents of my infantile years - being too young to express any emotions except that of "Addy's" when things didn't go my way. I can't remember any feeling of jealousy although I can't remember ever showing any although I know I thought a great deal of my young sister and brother and remember telling someone I hoped for more brothers and sisters so that we could play "Ring of Roses" and wondered why they laughed. Mother never had any time to show any feelings of affection - kissing and hugs and exaggerated expressions were taboo in our family - she used to use the old rocking chair to get Leonard to sleep - backwards and forwards - singing "Home to Zion we are bound" one of Sarkey's Hymns - very popular.

At this period I seem to have been in my grandma Hampton's company quite a lot. Uncle Tom, being still unmarried, lived with gran, or she lived with him, in Round Street. It was reckoned to be a very pleasant, respectable quarter to live in. It was just an ordinary house, two up and two down, with a connecting accommodating passage or verandah, with the "brew"house and when I say "brew" house - it was a brew house - where anybody who liked and had the cash used to brew their own beer. I guess it was good, I can see now the great vats cooling on the floor - that gran had brewed and Aunt Rachel used to come and help her when the testing time came - such sips from mugs, cups and jugs and can recall helping myself to some left in a jug and being found fast asleep and drunk, Aunt Rachel used to say with great glee. Uncle Tom had a good time being looked after by gran. I spent quite a lot of time at that house in Round Street and Uncle Tom seemed to like me there - used to terrify me picking me up and rubbing his unshaven chin round my cheeks. I used to sleep with gran and the smell of a blown out candle reminds me of those occasions. She had some quite good pictures and ornaments which I thought ugly

but which would be precious antiques now. There were several Staffordshire dogs and 2 pictures one of St. John and Mark and St. Peter and James. I recall one Christmas we had at that house, when for some reason the whole family was there. Aunt Martha and Uncle Jim (whom I didn't like, even as very young); Aunt Hannah and Uncle Dick and George and Bert their sons, Uncle George and Aunt Ellen and Harold Percy and Bill; even Uncle Elijah and Aunt Alice and Violet, their little daughter my age. I remember that Violet was asked to give us a little dance which she did by spreading out her dress and bobbing up and down, most of the time with either Cis or Len on her lap. Uncle Elijah gave us a song "who killed Cock Robin"? and we all joined in the chorus. Uncle Elijah was a frequenter of a Local Pub and married Alice Smart one of the daughters. Elijah for this was more or less ignored by my dad and the rest of the family. There was a Christmas Tree hanging from the room and we children had a toy from the tree given by Uncle Tom. I don't know what mine was - I don't think I was much interested - I can't remember ever being given a toy before.

It was at this party that I became aware of Uncle Jim, Aunt Martha's husband - I never liked him - he used to terrify me. He had very bushy black eyebrows and piercing black eyes and upon this occasion he'd been down the cellar for a jug of beer - on coming up, a coat from a hook on the back of the cellar door had fallen partly over his head and back and thus he came crouching into the room - I screamed - I can see him vividly now - like Mephistopholes!

At this time things are a little hazy - I seem to have spent a lot of time with Gran - I guess mother was glad of the help of my absence afforded her as she had her hands full with Len and Cis. A friend - a lady friend - of Uncle Tom's started visiting us especially on a Sunday - she once brought me some cherries - Uncle took me once with him to visit her home in Wellington Road, Dudley. I remember she had a sister Alice who had a toy - which when wound up - was a lady on a swing - I very much admired this toy. Before going home the lady of the house asked me if I would have milk or tea. I said "tea please" and Uncle Tom said I was a naughty girl "I didn't understand this

until much later as of course he meant to imply that by saying "Tea" I had put the lady to a lot of bother - but I cannot bear milk - I like milk puddings - milk in tea and coffee - but to this day I have never had a drink of milk on its own. The lady visitor became Aunt Polly and I was destined to spend a lot of time at intervals with them, as for some years, they had no children. I know nothing of their wedding but Aunt Polly took over that house and Gran lived elsewhere - I think with Aunt Rachel for a while. Aunt Rachel then lived just over the way from us, in Brewery Street. Why so called I don't know as there was no brewery. So Gran went out more - one of her friends was a Mrs Taylor, an old lady - who lived in New Poole which to me in those days was like living in the country. I went with Gran frequently - I wasn't five years old and so hadn't commenced school but I must have been a good walker and so was Gran as she must have been seventy years old and New Poole must have been 3 miles from where we lived. Gran would call for me in her Paisley Shawl and her bonnet trimmed with jet beads and flowers and tied under her chin with an enormous black stiff silk bow. She wore, as all women did in those days, a voluminous black cloth skirt down to her ankles and lace up black leather boots, and so we set out, up the Buffery and across a rutted lane, with the remains of disused pits on either side. Netherton and its environs was a district where such pits were sunk for getting coal, which was invariably poor, and soon gave up and found to be not worth the trouble - it was almost like surface mining.

New Poole was a hamlet - if it was worth that name - just a collection of poor dilapidated cottages where miners lived some with quite big families. Mrs Taylor's daughter, Sarah Ann, known as Sar'ann, lived in one with her family. I used to see her husband, Mr Darley, leaning up against the door of the cottage in his dirty coal-dust ridden clothes - hands in pockets - as we passed. I used to love to go there - it was an old fashioned living room with a settee or screen - very near to the fire - which was always blazing - the floor was

of large red tiles covered here and there with cloth-pegged rugs. I used to sit on the settee with my legs dangling listening to Gran and Mrs Taylor chatting - one on each side of the hearth. I couldn't understand what Mrs Taylor said - as she had a very peculiar voice, way of speaking - I learnt later that she had a "cleft palate". We had pancakes for tea and I had a whole one not a half as at home. Mother said pancakes were undigestible for little girls. I don't know what old Mr Taylor "did" for a living. I think he was connected with a mine, owned by the Earl of Dudley as were all the large mines. But he owned in New Poole, a lot of hens, some of which laid away under the hedges - hence the pancakes - scratching all round the yard - and a very fat pony, which was very fond of and which he hitched into a "Governess Cart" at times. Sometimes father would hire Mr Taylor and the pony and cart, for a whole day and we would go trundling through the country side to Kinver or Claverley or Bobbington. I well remember one expedition to Bobbington. It was a lovely day - must have been a Bank Holiday - Whitsuntide most likely - we all went in a brake - by "We" I mean other members of the family - Aunt Hannah and Uncle Dick; Aunt Rachel and Uncle Sam and Aunt Polly; mother with Len on her lap and Cis and me. A Brake is a conveyance with seats on either side - and drawn by a horse - our destination was a Pub with a pool nearby - we took our own lunch. I can remember a huge piece of meat which somebody said was a boiled ham - we had sandwiches which we cut as required. I suppose the men patronised the Pub - Uncle Sam had his tackle and fished. We all had tea together in the dining room of that Pub - I can't remember the name - I wonder if it is still there. I remember Cis found $\frac{1}{2}$ d in the verge of the lane and we spent it with great excitement in the little shop which served as a Post Office too - in those days we could get 2 oz's of sweets for $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Our heads were barely on a level with the counter and the old lady wanted to know whether we were twins. Dad and Uncle Tom had followed behind the brake on their bikes.

I am now $4\frac{1}{2}$ years and getting on for school age and beginning to listen and hear remarks by the grown ups. My father had a weekly paper called "Reynolds". I know nothing about the paper nor how it got its name. It would be very interesting to know if anyone still alive remembers it. From that and his reading of it I heard him speak of China and the "Boxer Riots". The awful massacre very vague then and now - then one name often on his lips "Joey", "that Joey Chamberlain", and the Boer War had commenced, "wouldn't have done but for Joey Chamberlain" and of course, although I didn't understand I thought he was right. I should say that for his generation and social standing - if indeed he had any at all - because we were "working class" - Dad could play the piano and violin and when he had given up his work, for an evening, he would play a jig up and down the piano, which set us children dancing.

I was five years old in the November and the following March mother took me over to the Netherpton Board School Infants to have my name on the register to be educated. The Head Mistress was a Miss Ridgeway. I remember standing with mother at her desk in a big room full of children, feeling even then a bit frightened and mystified - the class-children were chanting "any, any, any" spelling lesson I suppose - but I thought "why are they saying" "henny, henny, henny", silly things it should be "hen" you see I was being critical even then. My first teacher was "Teacher Mary Rushton" whom I didn't like. Aunt Rachel came in during playtime that first day and brought me a piece of bread and butter for my lunch. Being a cold rainy day we weren't sent into the playground, only those who needed to "leave the room". I can't remember much of learning numbers or letters, but I remember a song or two about "Little Blue Jay, flying away to a nice little nest" and the head mistress bringing a piece of wood in the shape of a bird of some sort and saying it was "Little Blue Jay": "I'm a merry little Jap Jap come across the sea, From a honeysuckle land, With my big fan in my hand and my name is little Too See Wee, I can fan myself and toddle, I can wag my little noddle and my name is little Too See Wee", and then about a ship "What a pretty boat it is, Sails and masts and all, Father made it just like his, only very small, Take it in your little hands, Bear it

O'er the Golden Sands", and the marvel is that I remember the words after 80 years and the tune. Then we had our Christmas Carol. I know the tune perfectly;

"Welcome Christmas, Welcome here,
 Happiest Season of the year,
 Fires are burning ready to greet,
 Families together meet.

Brothers and sisters circle round,
 Loud the laughs and joyous sound,
 For Old England loves to see,
 All Her Children welcome thee."

Maybe the Boer War had made us patriotic.

The first real Carol was in Teacher Laura's class. I know nothing of her - didn't even know her surname. "Once in Royal David's City, Stood a lowly 'cockle shell'"; And it was some time before I understood why a "Green Hill" should need a 'city wall'.

I remember my first attempt at sewing. I remember a very dirty (by the time I'd finished with it) piece of calico with a hem turned down - we were told to stick the needle in at the bottom and pull it out at the top. It was about 6 inches long and we were supposed to have it finished, but almost at the end of the lesson I'd only managed about an inch of little pigging stitches but a kind girl next to me said "I'll do it for you" and she did in about ten stitches. I don't suppose these days children of six are taught in such a fashion their first sewing lesson. Then we had a game when we all stood on our forms and pretended we were trees. One was chosen to go round with a basket pretending to pick apples, while we sang, "Come to the orchard come away, the fruit is always there." Only once was I picked to pick the apples and I felt very silly.

It was in this class that I first remember having reading books. It was about the "Three Little Pigs" and I can vividly recall the illustrations. One was a very bad little pig and said "Let us run and run until we get to the sea" and there they were with buckets and spades.

Then to Teacher Martina's class - we pronounced the name "Martena", and everybody loved her. She was dumpy, a little woman with a kind rosy face. I entered her class at $6\frac{1}{2}$ years and it was whilst in her class I told her I'd a little baby sister. We had moved house - only a few doors up. We lived next door to a nice couple named Mr and Mrs Raybould. It was there Win was born. When I asked Dad what her name was going to be and he said "Winifred", I was appalled never having heard the name before, but when Teacher Martina said "What a pretty name" everything was OK. She was a person whom we could talk to and we used to tell tales of one another, to her as to what had happened in the playground. A very quarrelsome girl named Dolly Boot told Teacher Martina that I'd scratched her, Teacher Martina said, "Nora Hampton you keep your fingers to yourself". I know I was innocent and I felt very hurt and angry. In this class I learnt to knit. Mother supplied some very coarse red wool and two wooden needles. "Put your needle in, put the wool over, pull it through, slip it off". I struggled with it, hated it, but didn't seem to get anything but a muddled mess. "You are making stitches" said the teacher coming to see how I was getting on, "But I don't know how to make stitches", said I. It was supposed to be a scarf for Dad, but when, at the end of the year in that class, I took it home it was a muddled mess with a hole in the middle. During that year I began to notice things and people outside my own family. I remember now four boys in the class - but didn't like them. One boy named Percy Smith (who later became a friend of my brother Len) asked me for a bite of my apple. I indignantly refused - not because I was mean - but didn't fancy eating where other's teeth had been, the opposite to Eve who didn't mind Adam having half of hers. The apple was one of some Gran and Aunt Martha had brought from the Hop Country i.e. Hereford. Every year from all over the Black Country whole families went to various farms in Herefordshire and South Worcestershire to pick hops - families of the poor and "underprivileged," we say these days. But I don't think folk go picking hops nowadays under those conditions - it

wouldn't be allowed by law. I believe the conditions under which the pickers were housed were awful - they slept in barns - unhygienic and rat infested for a mere pittance - but to them it was the only holiday and change of the year - usually in September when the hops were ripe and all the schools were closed accordingly.

Gran and Aunt Martha had stayed in a farm house - Uncle Jim had gone to Canada, helping to build the Canadian Pacific Railway. Aunt Martha lived with us for a time. I've said I didn't like Uncle Jim - but he was clever and seemed to be able to adjust to any trade - he was at times a butcher, a green-grocer and even managed a pub - he also bought a glass factory in Leeds. Some of this I was told in later years but I definitely remember the grocery and butcher episodes. Now he had gone to Canada to try his hand at making money in another country - which was developing quickly.

I've written 14 pages of rubbish and am still only seven years old. For three years the Boer War has been in progress. Rumours of Lord Roberts, Baden Powell, Lord Kitchener - Mafeking etc. I remember sitting on the wall at the bottom of the yard and seeing the fireworks from Dudley Castle which must have been the occasion of the end of the war.

That year, in March, I was transferred with the other girls of Teacher Martina's class to the girls' section of the School (a separate building), only the girls, the Boy's went to the Boys' School - just in another portion of the same area. The portion of the school I left was called the "Infants" - now I was in the Big School. The play grounds of the "Girls" and the "Infants" were common but the "Boys" had one of their own, separated from ours by iron gates. We were in "Standard One" and the head mistress was Miss Weddell. To me then, she seemed "old" but when 12 years after I went as a student teacher to the school she didn't seem any older. She was very thin, with sharp blue eyes, a prominent nose and iron grey hair, swept up at the back into a bun, or bob, very thin lips and a reddish complexion. She was also a strict

disciplinarian. Our classroom was equipped with forms; i.e. long forms without any back support where we sat and a corresponding long sloping desk like a table in front with a groove where our pens or pencils were - they have to be seen to be believed, what we had to put up with in those days. The desks were very old and dirty and very ingrained and covered with marks left by previous occupiers. We had pencils and slates, greasy slates, on which we did our sums and tables and letters. The forms also went up in tiers - three tiers, the smallest child in the front and the tallest children in the back. I got into trouble almost the first day in that class. We were all sitting up straight - I should think there must have been at least 50 of us - with our arms folded at our backs - I was in the back row but one. Miss Weddell was in charge that day, to see for herself what material she'd got foisted on to her. She commenced with the front row asking each child in a screaming voice, which the frightened child couldn't answer and accompanying it with a slap. She'd got to the second row and we at the back sat there unmoving, waiting for our time to come; when I said to the girl next to me, I remember her name to this day, Lily Freda Jones, in a very subdued whisper "Isn't this governess fond of slapping?" To my astonishment and consternation she said "I'm going to tell her what you said" and she promptly put up her hand. I was frightened to death, "Oh no, please don't - I'll give you this pencil if you won't", but Oh no! she continued to wave her hand about until it attracted the attention of Miss Weddell, who when told what I said, came screaming up the space between the desks "Oh did you indeed! Come out you naughty little thing", she forcibly took my arm, yanked me out and put me in the corner facing the wall and my back to the class. I can't recall what happened afterwards but years afterwards when I was one of her staff she reminded me of it, to my embarrassment. She said "When I told my mother, she said, "You wretch:"

Queen Victoria had now died and Edward VII reigned in her stead. I was beginning to read everything that came to hand. Mother had a children's Bible

which I read till all the pages fell out. I grew very annoyed with the children of Israel and the way they treated Moses, "And the children of Israel sinned again and did evil in the sight of the Lord", made me mad with them - they weren't worth the trouble. History fascinates me and when I read of the civil wars I was so relieved that that sort of thing didn't happen now. Little did I think of the holocaust that was waiting just round the corner. I read "David Copperfield" when I was nine and anything of Dickens. "Robinson Crusoe", "Uncle Tom's Cabin" etc. I seemed to go on averagedly - Std II with Miss Adams, Std III with Miss Smart - had back thumpings and finger rappings, but I never cried - used to look down in contempt on those girls who did. I didn't know much of politics - there were two parties in those days, Liberal and Conservatives, and we were Liberal for "Free Trade"; and the Tories for "Tariff Reform". Whichever party was in power - the poverty was awful. I noticed the girls, my friends and fellow classmates, coming to school with thin, patched, but clean (some of them) clothes. One girl who sat in front of me, Laura White, expressionless sallow face, dull thin black dirty infested hair, smelt so much it attracted the teacher's attention and when questioned by Miss Weddell, she said her mother had "sewed her up for the Winter". And another girl was a mystery to us all - teacher never spoke to her - none of us did - I've thought of her since - how cruel we were - she was thin and miserable looking - with sore eyes and a rash all over her face and probably in her head - she had no hair that I could see and wore a woollen knitted cap all the time - she sat in the same place which happened to be the furthest away from the teacher. Don't know what happened to her - probably moved from the district - Lizzie Walford.

Nowadays the school doctor or Health Inspector would have helped - such conditions and children do not exist, are not allowed to. Nobody seemed to care for those children or poor folk in those "Good Old Days". During a small miners' strike, Miss Weddell organised, one Winter, some help by asking the better-off

children to bring any clothes, coats, shoes, dresses we did not wear and fitted several poorer children with something warm. I guess several found their way, to the pawn shop. I made several friendships during this time, which I kept up after I left the School and which I still remember. I myself suffered a lot with chilblains and went to school wearing mother's shoes and was allowed to stay in during play time - also had a lot of "growing pains" in my legs which interfered with my sleep and troubled me a lot - now we all know those pains were rheumatism from which I have suffered all my life.

I didn't like Aunt Martha living with us - she was such a tease. The house we lived in then, had an attic but Dad used it for an incubator that he made himself and hatched chickens without the aid of a broody hen - he also made a rearer. There were two large bedrooms - Aunt slept in a big bed with Len who was only 4 and Cis and I slept in an alcove in the room on a made-up bed. I remember Cis and I swinging on the open bottom drawer of a chest and bringing the whole lot on top of us except for the intervention of Dad who rushed in - smacked our bottoms and threw us back into bed. It wasn't very often Cis did anything naughty. It was myself who got into trouble as a tom boy and ripstitch. At this time and in this house, on the main road, I think it is still there, I began to be useful and to feel a person and to think for myself - mother allowed me to wash-up - standing on a stove - I washed the dishes, first in hot water and Hudson's dry soap and rinsed in clear water and then put aside to drain. The sink and "back kitchen" or scullery was very primitive - no hot water system, no bathroom and no water loo - Friday night was bath night, when we bathed in the kitchen-cum-living room in a big tin bath, in front of the fire - I was also allowed to run errands and on Friday nights for a penny went out to get Dad's "Feathered World" from Reeve's paper shop.

One night I lost the penny:!

I also became a personage, or so I thought, in Sunday School and Chapel - I was on the platform! I can't remember any of the hymns - I know I was put

to sit by a boy, which I didn't like, the position I mean, not the boy - I still know his name and he has been deceased for quite a number of years. All my Aunts and Uncles went to see me on the platform at the evening service. I wasn't there - I'd broken out in spots which proved to be measles. I didn't mind - even at this early age I was critical, especially of the lay preachers of which we had quite a number when we couldn't afford to keep a minister - they were so long-winded and narrow-minded and boring, thundering from the pulpit about hell fire and eternal damnation! I was quite safe from hell as I went to chapel, but I was very worried about my favourite Uncle Sam because he never went anywhere - so I used to sing hymns under my breath hoping to influence him, and save him.

I was eight years old when we left that house, and went to live in Park Road - not much better in it's planning than the other - it was the usual planning throughout the country for the workers - still no bathroom nor hot water system - but we were on our own with a nice back kitchen with a fire grate, a water C. and a big garden to ourselves - the garden father was soon to make into a pen run for his fowls. I have a vague memory of a pig sty and I think we had a pig once but can't imagine mother enjoying that experience and extra work. Grandmother at this time moved to a little cottage in Bell Road and Aunt Rachel moved to a new house which she had built in New Road. So did Uncle Tom and Aunt Polly and Uncle George and Aunt Ellen which was a very posh residential area - or considered to be so. There were no buildings on the opposite side and a very good view of the Rowley Hills. Gran's cottage was cosy and private being in a little yard with just one other cottage. Aunt Martha lived with her for a time. Gran seemed to get old and not very often stirred from the old Windsor chair. I do wish I had asked her more about her childhood - her name was Ann Parsons and I know she lived practically all her life near to the place where she died in September 1914; which was called the "Top End" of Netherton round St. Andrews Church. I know she had several

brothers and sisters but I only met two brothers and those only just - I have very vague recollections of going with Gran to a funny little house in Dudley and seeing a man named Alec - who was ill - the house was dark and small and a little old woman, wearing a frilly cap sat by an old fashioned grate with a blazing fire, smoking a clay pipe. I imagine Alec was one of Gran's brothers. The other brother, Reuben, I met on Sunday nights when I'd persuaded mother to let me go and sit with Gran, so as to get out of a boring sermon by a more than boring preacher. Reuben intrigued me because he had a big cyst, as big as a golf ball, growing at the corner of his left eye; and the language he turned out and used, even to my young ears, was very wicked indeed; mother would have been extremely shocked and I would have been debarred from my Sunday visits. I was shocked to discover that Gran although she went to the St. Andrew's Church School, could neither read nor write. The school was just below the church and was very much under the domination, almost feudal, of the Church of England. She said the vicar came down to visit the school and they all had to go on various occasions, to "ring the Church" which was all the children took hands and formed a big ring round the church - that took place on "Pancake Day" when all of them had a holiday. At times they were all shepherded up to the gallery of the church for a service. There was an usher in charge of them called "Old Mackey" who gave them a smack if they so much as batted an eyelid. I tried several times to teach Gran to read from the big "Childrens' Bible", which I still have - but it wasn't encouraging when she would forget the letters I had taught her one week to the next. She would laugh and make remarks about some of the illustrations. She would talk occasionally of her "Old Aunt Nance" Parsons. She had plenty of money but didn't leave any to the family but endowed a school in Dudley, for poor children, which is still going now. "Parson's School" in Parson's Street. She lived in "Ineage" Dudley and how she was related to Gran and where her money came from I never found out. Gran loved a half pint of beer. She used to warm it by putting the jug on the hob and

sometimes put a hot poker in it whether to increase the warmth or the flavour I don't know. Sometimes she would put a piece of toast on the top and when it was thoroughly soaked take it out, put it on a saucer, put sugar on the top and give it to me to eat with a 'spoon': Ugh:

During this time, after Aunt Martha left and had joined Uncle Jim in Canada, where he had bought what was called a "half section" in Manitoba, North Winnipeg, the boys of the family, i.e. Dad, Uncle George and Uncle Tom, were allowing Gran so much a week, (I don't know how much) to live on because this was before Lloyd George had instituted the "Old Age Pension" and their wives namely mother and Aunt Rachel, Aunt Polly and Aunt Hannah took turns to clean the house and make Gran comfortable every week, whilst every Sunday turns were taken to send a hot dinner, I know when it was our turn, I was the errand girl and woe betide anybody who forgot! She died in 1914, September just as the First World War had commenced and a month before she would have been 84. She had nothing to leave except a few old pieces of furniture. Dad had the grandfather clock and I would like to know what happened to the corner cupboard and the bow fronted chest of drawers. So ended Gran Hampton except for characteristics which must be in most of our clan.

Of course we had another Grandma - mother's mother, Grandma Hubbard and her husband, Grandpa Hubbard. They lived about 3 miles from us at Newtown, a district between Old Hill and Cradley Heath. Gran, when I remember first, kept a small grocery shop there and Grandpa used to bring our order up every week. Can't understand why he wasn't at work. Mother had 4 brothers - 2 older - Uncle Will and Uncle Sam, and 2 younger, Tom and Joe. Grandpa had been an employee of the Earl of Dudley in one of his iron works - he was a silly man - he had a good job but used to spend his wage buying beer for his "mates" (as long as he had the money) every Friday night, Friday being payday, in a pub on his way home from work. Gran says he would often spend all his money and arrive home, the worse for drink, and the only money to keep the family she

took from his trouser pockets, what was left of it. They were very poor - mother said, when she was very small, say 6 or 7, she would sometimes fetch him from the pub. He would come back with her. He had some years in the U.S. to try his luck and did so well ; had the chance to become a manager in some steel concern; but had to return - didn't like America. Gran said she was never so well off as when he was there. But he returned to his old ways for a time - then gave up alcohol for good - signed the pledge and became Teetotal.

"Converted" by the Salvation Army - due to a frightening experience one night returning home - he took shelter in a hut - which turned out to be a pit-head - if he had taken a step further - he would have been one of the great number missing - hence his conversion; he'd been saved for some special purpose. All this I learned in later years either from mother or Gran. He died at the age of 78 in Burslem. Gran lived on in Burslem with her Grandson, Joe Hubbard, who married, and neglected her until mother persuaded her to live in Hagley with her and Dad - she died in 1940 at the age of 93. We never had much to do with our Uncles and Aunts or cousins on mother's side, as Dad didn't like any of them. Gran left Old Hill when Uncle Joe and Will went to live in Burslem because there was more chance of work. Uncle Joe's wife, Fanny, died when young Joe was born and Gran had reared him when Joe married again - Aunt Jenny, who proceeded to have a family of 4 or 5 boys. Of the other brothers, Sam went to U.S. and became an American citizen - we still correspond with Wally, his daughter. Sam married an Irish "lady" after jilting a girl who was engaged to him: Will lived in Burslem, had 2 sons and 2 daughters. The boys became graduates of Manchester University but joined O.T.C. and became involved in the First Great World War. Wilf gained the Military Medal and was wounded and was ill for some time. Harold, the elder, became an officer in the same war (as was Wilf). He managed to survive, as far as his personal wellbeing was concerned, but he fell in love and married a girl he met in London, who soon got tired and left him when Peter, their baby, was born. Aunt Kate was left to bring up the child. Harold "took

to drink", caught flu and died! Gladys and Kitty both married, normally, we knew all this from Gran - we didn't know any of them personally. Tom is the only one so far I haven't mentioned - he married of course Aunt Annie; whom I couldn't bear - she seemed so silly - we knew more of them as for a time they lived in the district and Uncle Tom was a favourite with us - he had a huge family of his own - five or six - but Cis and I had only a short friendship with May and Daisy - I last heard of them in Chester where Uncle Tom died of flu - during the epidemic of 1918.

I can just vaguely remember visiting Burslem - Stockton Brook - where Uncle Joe lived - before he married the second time. We went to see Aunt Kate and Uncle Will, and Wilfred and Harold and Gladys. I thought they were very posh as Aunt Kate kept a maid. I remember the park and Cis and I got separated somehow from the others and lost our way - all the streets and rows of houses looked the same and I was feeling very panicky when mother, feeling just as panicky rushed from somewhere, to us and we were saved! I was 7 years old. I didn't visit Burslem again till March 1917 and haven't been since - awful place. The only contact we have with mother's family is that we hear frequently from Wally, Uncle Sam's daughter, in Washington, U.S.A. since we lived in Towyn, Merioneth, 1966 to 1980.

Digression: Well here I am again, resuming the tale of what use it is to be - telling tales about myself for the criticism and amusement of my children and their children. I hope they will judge kindly. It isn't as though it will be any good politically - or even psychologically, as I was too young to be able to diagnose my personal reactions to events socially - or even if I did - couldn't express them - that happened only as far as my family was concerned and I accepted those without any demur as something to be put up with as I think I have done all through my life.

So here I am at the age of eight years in the Big School, Netherton Girls Council, Standard II, having left teacher Martina and her ten commandments

behind; for she was Church of England and sought to instil those precepts in us. I think the title of the school should have been "Church" instead of "council". I don't remember much of Standard I. We had a Miss Louie Willetts for our teacher - she seemed to be ill, (as indeed she was - she died a few years later of T.B.) and we were left to the tender mercies of Miss Weddell, the Head Mistress. I only remember one incident - it was a summer day - and we were all lined up in the school yard - we all had a medal pinned on our frocks - I wish I had mine now - I can't remember the occasion - probably the ending of the Boer War - because strangely enough I remember the words of the song we had learnt and sang there each with a medal and a flag - shall I write the verse! Yes I think I will:

Fling out the flags, ring out the Bells,
 Lets all have hol-ee-day today,
 The note of triumph grows and swells,
 Give joy its full abounding sway,
 Like thunder from a thousand throats,
 A British welcome cheer on cheer,
 To greet our lads in khaki coats,
 Our lads so dauntless and so dear,
 We are as one for Britain's fame,
 One folk that give her one fond name,
 Motherland! Motherland! See thy sons at thy right hand.
 Blood of Britain strong defender, let who will defy!
 One for Thee - all for Thee,
 Thine is fight or fall for Thee,
 Children of the Motherland whose name shall never die!

I must have been very impressed to remember all that. What a wonderful and unpredictable thing memory is. I wonder who composed - sounds like Rudyard Kipling to me. Jingoism my Dad called it.

Then to Standard II with Miss Nora(h)? Adams. She was pleasant and easy going and left to get married whilst I was in her class. She had very prominent teeth and was very neat in her dress - her hair was always the same - done in a mass under a net - no bob at the back or on the top, that I noticed, it used to intrigue me.

In that class I read fluently and reading a history book first came across the name "Stephen" which I pronounced "Step-her" - read of the Wars of the Roses,

and thanked God I didn't live in those days, "Alfred and the Cakes""Bruce and the Spider", etc. and then Geography! We learnt Geography beginning with our own country, England and the U.K. country by county and the first thing we learnt of that country was whether it was "Industrial" or "Agricultural" and I shall never forget my surprise and amazement when I heard Miss Adams pronounce Worcestershire "Agricultural"; living in the smoke and grime of the "Black Country" although within a few miles was the most delightful country - Clent and Kinver and more South Worcestershire, Pershore, Evesham, Malvern and an abundance of delightful villages and hamlets. In this class I came to love words and spelling. I loved "Composition" and "Dictation", but not so good at sewing - for instance sewing on a tape - all sewing lesson and playtime; and when I took it out to Miss Adams in the middle of the next lesson - she held it up and drawled "Why its growing hairs".

We had moved house now to Park Road, a very much more pleasant environment, and we were private and had a yard all to ourselves - but still the same plan - 2 up and 2 down and a big kitchen or scullery - no bathroom! In those days "houses to let" were common and we could move anytime anywhere - plenty of places "To Let", no one in our Social Strata could afford to buy their own house - we paid rent to a landlord; whose name on this occasion was Tipler and by nature too. The "yard" was soon made by Dad as a run for his fowl and he even bought a couple of rabbits for Len, but it was me who had to look after them and clean them out. One of the huts housed a bail of straw and I used to go there, lie on the straw and read "Robinson Crusoe". The immediate yard in between the living room and the scullery was paved with blue brick where Len and I used to spin our tops - I used to get quite expert at top spinning.

He was my playmate in those days and I became quite a tomboy joining in his friends and their game of marbles. Cis and I used to play mothers and fathers in the front room which was devoid of furniture. Mother never made friends with the neighbours - i.e. she didn't "neighbour" she hadn't the time

to go tea-drinking and gossiping, but we did have a neighbour, Mrs Gough, with whom she made friends for life. Mr Gough was a station master at a very small station and they had a little boy, Fred, who was always running up and down with a wooden train and making, supposedly, train like noises - we could hear him and felt a little contemptuous of him - but Cis one day contacted him - he stopped playing trains and stood and gazed at us through the wire netting Dad had put between our yard and theirs and we gazed at him without speaking, for a time, then we gave him a sweet! Mother and Mrs Gough exchanged cups of tea over the wall and at last Mrs Gough came to chapel with mother and was immersed later and became a member - thus cementing the friendship. When she was 2 years old, and we had been in that house for a little time, Win had a very bad throat which resulted in her having to have her tonsils taken out. I can remember it clearly - we children Len, Cis and I, knew nothing of it until coming home from school Aunt Martha was getting tea - where was mother? upstairs - the doctor had gone and Win was very sleepy from the anaesthetic - she was such a little thing - and there were those two big red things on the wash stand! When she got better we tended to spoil her - I gave her my bag of marbles - and Aunts Rachel and Martha made much of her.

The following year in the month of September, mother was taken ill, and we were all, Cis and Len and myself, shuffled off to Uncle George and Aunt Ellen, in New Road, for the night. Of course we didn't know what was happening - neither did we know much of the family - only very surface. As I have mentioned Uncle George was Dad's eldest brother, and a member of the Firm, and of the Chapel; Aunt Ellen we couldn't abide - she'd always got a bad back and made it the excuse to laze all the day and night. She had a maid, housekeeper, Alice Arnold, who was a good capable person whom we all liked - I think she managed the family and the house. I suppose I was too worried to remember much about it - Cis and I slept in the same room with Cousin Nellie and Len slept with the boys in the same room, Harold, Percy and William. They were all great

teasers and thought we were fair game - especially myself - when I took some eggs from our chickens up for Aunt - Harold would pick out a larger one and say, "What's this? A cock egg?" and William said he'd break my neck when I walked over their improvised cricket pitch - but Percy was always kind and I always liked him. Harold and Percy were among the first to be given a scholarship to the Dudley Grammar School which previously had been reserved only for paying pupils. Percy became a Baptist minister and Harold was very clever - an M.A. at 23 years, Birmingham University and became a Grammar School teacher in South Wales.

To return - Well next morning Alice had made porridge for us for breakfast - but neither of us touched it and went to school hungry. When we got home for dinner we found we'd got another little brother, Frank. I was nine years then and had begun to read anything and everything from "Christy's Old Organ", "What Katy did" to "David Copperfield", "Oliver Twist", "Dombey & Son", "Robinson Crusoe" etc. and Pears Cyclopedia which Dad had had one Christmas. I say I read what I could get and when I had the chance - for the coming of Frank I became nurse-maid - I doted on him willingly - fed him by bottle from a cup, spoonful by spoonful of what mother called "sop" which was scalded bread, with a little milk and sugar added. I gave up playing marbles and spinning tops and I carried him about or pushed him in a big unwieldy pram - had him over once - and fell down with him in my arms running to show him the rail motor going into Bowers Green Station; neither of us suffered any harm. Several times I stayed away from school on a Friday afternoon to "mind the baby".

At school my education continued under Miss Smart - we were under her tuition and "discipline". Standards III and IV in the same class-room, about 50-60 girls to a class. I can remember having "homework" instituted in this class. I very much enjoyed History and English - we learned multiplication, compound and division. I've never been good at Arithmetic and so when I had six weeks "enforced" because Cis, Len and Win went down with Scarlet Fever I

lost track of several methods of arithmetic which upset me very much, as up to now, I had found things fairly easy - I felt I was a dunce.

Miss Smart was a Tartar - she was tall and angular and sandy haired with no patience and a furious temper which she displayed against any one of the children in front of us - I remember vividly when she knocked one of my friends - Sarah Priest - down - she didn't mean to - was in such a temper because Sarah didn't quite comprehend a problem on the Blackboard - she gave her an unusually strong punch! We all stared in silence. But I think we all heaved a sigh of relief when Sarah got up - and an especially big one from Miss Smart I guess. I was a victim of her knuckle rapping and back thumping many a time. I spent a month of my student teacher year with her. I wondered if she remembered! These days, it seems to me the children take over the class if things don't go as they like - more's the pity - the pendulum has swung to the other extreme. I continued to help in the house as all girls did, and so they should - preparing for the future - I was taught to dust and polish, polish made of beeswax and turps made by mother - scrub floors - clean knives and forks on a board with a bath brick - steel in those days with horn and bone handles! and to run errands from Friday after school and Saturday mornings. I remember once asking the butcher for a nice "leg of shoulder". Sunday's from 9.30 a.m. to 7.30 p.m. was spent by all of us at the chapel and Sunday School. Mother dressed Cis and I alike and people thought us twins. On Sundays we were in our "best" cream cashmere dresses with lace in our sleeves and neckline and leghorn hats - cream with big velvet bows. I detested being in my best - as I was a 'tomboy' and didn't like to have to be "careful" to keep my dress clean. I detested the trouble of changing in between times of morning service and afternoon - didn't like Sundays at all in those days, especially the boring lay preachers and the hour's Sermon, - all hell, fire and damnation. In between lay preachers we had a resident minister. But they didn't last long - didn't please everybody. The Rev. Weir Blackie was one I remembered. They

moved to Birmingham and were friends of the family for years. When we were still very young Cis and I liked to help mother and took over the Sunday dinner between us whilst mother went to chapel. One Sunday a.m. - we got up early and peeled 7 lbs of potatoes! Taking over and cooking the Sunday lunch was no sinecure with an old-fashioned hotted grate and coal oven and a gale hook! We used to have some crises - one Sunday the whole saucepan of potatoes fell into the fire and put it out - the potatoes covered with ash, and had to be washed all over again! And the smell! I think dinner was a bit late that day - Cis fussing round and me trying to keep calm. I used to look forward to my Sunday dinner because we usually had a joint of beef - during the week we didn't have much meat - mother thought meat was too undigestible for children - but we had plenty of butter and bread and vegetables and fruit - we had half a penny per week for spending money! and I usually bought Williams' butter drops or a pomegranate when in fashion - Cadbury's chocolate was unheard of. Although we only had $\frac{1}{2}$ d. we saved up, in a Cocoa Tin, for mothers birthday. Win wouldn't join us and I can't blame her - Ma's birthday was October 10th and a day or two before I was deputed to get her a box of chocs - cost 1/6-and Len was to present them. He was sitting in an armchair - Cis and I - anxiously waiting - he suddenly drew the box from behind him and said "Here"! I can't remember mother's reaction - she must have known something was in the wind. We had another addition to the family when Frank was only about $2\frac{1}{2}$ years, a little boy, who came quickly and didn't live. What amazes me is that I never suspected anything - never observed any difference in mother's figure - so different from the precocious children of today - all the same I must have been very observant and unconcerned - almost incredible. At this period father's business expanded and a building - a factory - was going up just below where we lived in Park Road - Hampton Bros., Park Road Boot Manufacturer's - and Dad became very parsimonious and careful with his cash, especially as regards our clothes. I suppose the factory was taking up a lot of his cash.

Now I am eleven years old and in Standard V, Miss Frost's class - she was "somebody" - her brother being Edward Frost - Headmaster of the Park School Dudley - where the students from Dudley Training College practised. She had a funny twist to her mouth when speaking. She taught us to knit on three needles, fractions and a sort of problem; Compound practice I think it was called - as per - I bought 20 articles for 19/11 $\frac{3}{4}$ - we were taught to take 20 articles for £1 each and then take 20 farthings off - and then you had the answer !! We also had our first lesson in Cookery. We had to go - a few of us at a time - to Northfield Road School where there was a large airy, cookery room. I remember well our first menu - it was Irish Stew - steamed potatoes and baked apples - it was demonstrated first by the cook - then we - with cotton sleeves over our wrists up to our elbows - went to our separate tables and did our bit, we were marched down two by two by somebody from our own school. I used to like cookery lessons but don't remember much about them - but I remembered mother coming up against Miss Frost - I was a good, even, knitter so she gave me a sock to knit and to take home - I had to do six rows a night which was a great mistake on her part to allow a child of my years to go round with steel knitting needles - I may have had a bad accident - however mother wrote a note for me to take to her saying - she (mother) had enough for me to do at home without taking work for her. Where at Miss Frost screamed at me in front of the class "Whose work is this, do you think, Nora Hampton?", "Yours Miss", "No it isn't - its the inspectors!": And we all knew the socks were for her young man. I didn't take the sock home any more.

Meanwhile apart from school life went on around us as usual - Cis and I became very close - we helped in the house, running errands etc. but I still felt very close to my brother, Len, as Cis was very inclined to be nervy because she had a delicate stomach - she got away with quite a number of naughty little episodes because of that stomach and mother was inclined to spoil her but I didn't notice anything at that time - I became subject to growing pains and dreadful head colds and toothache and remember feeling under the weather

and having a turn of rigor - I just couldn't stop shivering and had to be carried to bed by Dad - where I became very sick after mother had almost forced black currant tea down me. The rest in the bed and warmth, for an hour or two did me good and I can't remember having another do like that - just went on as usual no doctor - no health service in those days - nothing to relieve the poverty which was rife - plenty of beggars. We children knew them - some were local - all harmless - one we called the "Dummy". He was totally mental and went round in rags picking up rubbish and anything he saw about - jibbering if any one accosted him - he was about 20 years old. "Dee Dar" was - or seemed to be - a middle-aged man pushing a wooden box on wheels gather manure - he always seemed good natured although teased by the children, we didn't know where he came from - but Jimmy James was looked after by an old couple and used to run errands for them - "Charlie the Whistler" was the most pitiable, he would appear every few weeks - no matter the weather, blowing his tin whistle - a dirty bandage round his face - under his chin to the top of his head - and a cap atop - the same thin, dirty, bedraggled coat - I never saw anyone give him anything - the sight of him used to make me shudder - I imagined an awful sore under that bandage. Then there was the old blind woman who always stood at the top of the hill by the station. On Saturday nights, coming back with Uncle Sam and Auntie Rachel from Dudley market shopping, her call would be "Pity the poor blind please" and the echo of it would float down to us as we hurried home. I used to think she must have been very cold and lonely there and how long was she obliged to wait there till somebody came to fetch her. These days it wouldn't be safe for her to be alone - vandals and muggers would have no compunction to knocking her down and taking her cash. Of course, the only alternative to these conditions and to this poverty for these poor folk in those days was the workhouse! Dreadful word! During this time the Liberals were in power - Free Trade and we were helped a great deal by the countries of Our Empire which was so well spaced over the world that "Over which the Sun never sets", the British Empire. We had

frozen lamb from Australia and New Zealand - butter and all sorts of fruit which we couldn't get or grow in our climate - So they were cheap to us! I used to hear Dad speak of the Russo-Japanese war and how the "Little Japs" stood up to the Cossacks and the Chinese Boxer Riots about which I don't know to this day but accepted in a disinterested vague kind of way.

Campbell Bannerman was Prime Minister then of the Liberal Government.

I can't remember who was head of the Tory party (Lord Balfour?). I heard Bonar Law mentioned, but it meant nothing to me. But I remember one election - Liberals went round wearing big blue bosses - rosettes - of blue ribbon - Tories wore Red - and the War - yes "War" - raged fast and furious - the Pubkeepers were all Tories and gave free beer and beef sandwiches to all and sundry hoping to cadge a vote - this led to fights in the streets and on this occasion - that I am about to mention - murder. The contestants were a Mr Hooper (Liberal) and Mr Boscawen, Tory - we used to sing "Vote Vote Vote for Mr Hooper - He is sure to win the day - all the liberals they will come with a doubled barrelled gun and drive all the Tory wags away" and vice versa. Park Road had a reputation for being all Liberal and when our man won - a rabble of humanity from the Top End of Netherton with sticks and staves, raided it the next night - we watched them from the front-room window - they reminded me of the rabble in Paris during the Revolution, or so it seemed to me. The outcome of that night, was that a boy's body with stab wounds was found in a marl hole, along Cinder Bank, past Grazebrook's Works - it was supposed to be the action of that gang although nothing was ever found out - everything was hushed up; but years afterwards rumour was that one "Dicky Steaks" had confessed on his dying bed. The incident is true and worthy of "the Black Country Bugle". The boy's mother was a widow, Mrs Clarke, with three daughters. They were too poor, I suppose, to investigate and Mrs Clarke never recovered from the shock.

But Liberal or Tory - poverty and misery still remained - although food was comparatively cheap, labour was cheaper, miners worked in shifts of 8-10

hours for 30 shillings per week - existing that time underground on a bottle of cold tea and dripping sandwiches and deaths by falls of coal and earth were common. I saw one body brought home in a coal cart. In those days there were no Trade Unions - working people seemed to be and had to be resigned to the tyranny and persecution of the bosses - one of the worst, the Earl of Dudley.

Of course, it was the mothers, the women, on whom the weight of these conditions rested most. How they managed I do not know - some were shiftless, and you couldn't blame them, having to contend with such; because some men would spend nearly all their earnings on drink - some women went out cleaning or took in washing and some even continued making nails in the little nail-shops at the back of the house - I used to be fascinated sitting on the ledge - a hole in the wall - no glass in it and watching the women revive the furnace - very small of course - by using the foot attached to a piece of rope - pushing in the thin strip of iron - hammering it while red-hot and shaping the nail - and then continuing till the length of wire was finished. Not until 1921 did women have the vote and only then if you were 30 years old. Almost incredible isn't it?

Of course we never thought of ourselves - our family - as poor. I suppose we were working class although my Dad was his own master. He had worked exceedingly hard to become so. We had enough of the best food - plenty of milk in a jug from the milkman, Mr. Guest, at the door - twice a day, plenty of butter, homemade jam, porridge for supper or breakfast - plenty of oranges and apples. We didn't have much meat, bacon or cheese although Dad kept fowls, we had one egg per week; on Saturday a.m.s and I made mine last a long time. Dad used to sell some eggs to the neighbours - one I remember, Mrs Price. We always had a turkey for Christmas and plenty of sage and onion sauce - plum pudding and mince pies, all home-made. Cis and I spent hours stoning the raisins. Santa Claus wasn't very generous to us - not toys or dolls - I certainly didn't like dolls - books as a rule was, or were, my share and I used to spend Christmas Day after dinner reading. I knew who Father Christmas was at a very early age - as I was always

a very poor sleeper and used to see mother, put a book for Cis and I at the foot of the bed. One Christmas Eve, when he had gone, I crawled to the foot of the bed and inspected the books. I didn't like the look of mine so changed with Cis. I didn't feel guilty and neither mother nor Dad made any remark, the next morning of course we had games - Blind Man's Buff, Musical Chairs, Hunt the Thimble and had a good time between ourselves. In these days of sophisticated precocious youth such pastimes would be called "Corney". If we could get Uncle Sam to join in our games we were in our seventh heaven. He was stout and short and had no hair except a little fine fringe at the sides of his head - he smoked a pipe always, except at work and got through two ounces of Best Dark Virginia every week to Aunt Rachel's disgust; so he used to puff and smoke and join in our fun to please us although I guessed he felt tired and glad when it was all over. He and Aunt had no children and their house was so quiet and so immaculate - it was a haven to me - it always smelt of tobacco smoke and fruit. Aunt used to take his dinner every day - a cooked dinner in a basin in a basket to where he worked, Turners in Wellington Road. During my holidays when I grew older I used to take it up the main road, by the side of an isolation hospital - Brettel Street, Aston Road, by the side of the cemetery - how many years ago? I suppose its very different now - all built up.

When I was twelve and ready for Standard V, Miss Weddell told several of we older girls (12 Years) of an exam for another school - a newly built one - in Dudley, Bath Hill - The Upper Standard School - but it had several names - the Higher Elementary - Gilbert Claughton School - etc. I went up and sat for the exam - found it very easy and passed - can't remember whether it was a Saturday we went, or a Friday afternoon, but I know we knew the results the same day and commenced at the school next week. The Headmaster was a Mr. James Golding - he had been head of the school where my father attended and Dad didn't like him. He was a very small pompous little man and like all little men had a high opinion of himself. He had a personality and a nice voice. I

used to like to hear him read passages from the Bible in the Central Hall every morning where the whole school met - boys in rows on one side - girls on the other - to sing "New every morning is the Love, Our waking and uprising prove, Through sleep and darkness safely brought, Restored to life and power I thought". I especially liked him to read "Scrooge" in Dickens "Christmas Carol". He was paunchy and had very short legs. I had to travel - to walk - now to school about a mile all weathers of course - back to dinner - back to School in the afternoon and back home after School. This was a new experience for me in many ways - I met a different class of children - no poor - as far as clothes were concerned - no neglected girls or boys. The class consisted of about 40 pupils - 20 boys and 20 girls - boys on one side, girls on the other - strangely enough I don't remember much of any particular person - I didn't like the boys being in the same form. We had no teacher - it was obvious that Mr Golding intended getting his School full - by hook or by crook. It was several months before we had a form mistress - we were left to the occasional visits of Mr Golding and one or two elder girls and a Miss Pasfield who had a form next to us. Chaos reigned most of the time and those few months were wasted. Then after the August holidays we had a form mistress, Miss Humphries, who couldn't control us and another batch of new scholars was incorporated into the school - we recognised that by seeing new boys who seemed very serious, on the other side of the hall for morning prayers. The boys' class rooms were each side the hall - down stairs - ours were upstairs round the Balcony. There was an art-room - a cooker room and a laundry - for teaching cookery and laundering - Some girls took Sandwiches and ate them in the Cookery room instead of going home to dinner and I once tried that but when I'd eaten my sandwiches I went home.

It was a very well built school and very grand for those days - even more grand than the Grammar and High School - in the building - but the Staff was not so highly qualified - just teaching diplomas - no University degrees. This made a very great difference to the atmosphere entirely - as I was to discover when

I became a pupil 3 yrs. later at the D.G.H.S. But there were extensive grounds and fields round the School and it was there I first learnt to handle a tennis racket and to play net-ball which I loved.

There were men to teach the boys and women (ladies) for the girls. Some-times we had a man to take us for a lesson but they always seemed to think we should be treated more tenderly than the boys and seemed a bit out of place - we had once a week a chemistry lesson by Clifford Harris - sometimes Mr Archie Cartwright - Mr Mellor once for games - it was a windy day when we had netball and the wind blew our skirts over our heads and he seemed to be having a good time laughing uproariously. There was Mr Pasfield and a Mr Markins, who had a glass eye and a very sharp manner, so we were told, and whose face was a blue black shave. Teddy Markins was Mr Goldings dog's body and feared by all the boys. I knew him in later years as a friend of Uncle Sid's.

During my year in Miss Humphries I suppose I was becoming - or was made aware - in a very surreptitious kind of way of the facts of life. In the middle of learning about Hengist and Horsa and trying to pick up the rudiments of Algebra - which I couldn't understand because it wasn't taught properly - when I went to the High School I understood and loved Algebra because I was taught properly.

So, as I said, Miss Humphries was kind but couldn't maintain discipline and various girls took advantage of the noise - there seemed always to be a noise - to whisper and form whispering cliques which appalled and disgusted me - I was twelve years old and was sitting by and associating then with a very nice girl, Hilda Whitehouse.

Two things - happenings - I remember of that year - One was a concert - held in the classroom - on the Friday afternoon - because we had 100% attendance. Three items I remember of that concert. Two boys from another form gave us the quarrel scene from Julius Caesar between Cassius and Brutus. I remember the "Itching Palm" and "I'd rather be a dog and bay the moon than such a Roman" but they made it up in the end.

The next item was a boy singing a song - an Irish song. He had a merry face - he wore glasses - he wore a shabby cap pulled over one eye and hurled a

stick and told us he was "A daycent Irishman"

"When I left Old Dublin Bay - my father tore his hair
 My mother she was weeping my sisters in despair
 But I'm a daycent chap from Ireland
 Deny it if you can! O Starem Searem diddle dum darum,
 I'm a daycent Irishman".

I thought he was quite nice and still recollect his name - Tolley. The third contributor on the program was a girl - small with brown eyes and hair and a pleasant face. I thought she was very brave to stand there in front of us and recite Tennyson's Poem, "Dora" I still know the gist of the poem but the lines that stuck in my memory are "The reapers reaped and the sun fell and all the land was dark". She was Olive Hancox and I caught up with her at the High School and she was my friend for some years. The Second Incident - Miss Humphries waxed very ambitious. We had been studying, or reading - can't imagine "Study" in that form - "As you like it", and she decided to have us act "The Seven Ages of man" in the Art Room in the presence of Mr Golding. I can't remember who was the "infant mulling and puking" but I recollect Bertha Evans was "the whining schoolboy with his satchell" and, would you believe it, she chose me for the "Lover Sighing like furnace" and anything less like a lover was me. They did something with my hair to make it stick up and I wore my own coat with a roll of white manuscript, "a ballad made to my mistress' eyebrow" - we certainly were encouraged to enlarge our literary inclinations. Dad bought me "Little Women" for Xmas, but hid it, or thought he had, in an old chest, where I found it and had read it before he presented it to me.

Just at this time too at home we'd had another baby a little boy, John Archibald, who had died being born - too quickly - Aunt Martha, in charge, would have us look at his little face and kiss it.

Also at church we had a new minister - a young man fresh from college - Rev A. R. Boughen. He came to us full of enthusiasm. I have a vivid recollection even now as he entered our Sunday School - over 200 of us, that Sunday afternoon. I know now that he was regarding us as seeds for the Harvest and indeed he worked very hard to that end. He instituted a Junior Christian Endeavour in the boys'

end of the school room every Thursday from 7 - 8. I used to love it. Cis and I used to go - about 20 - 30 boys and girls altogether. We had a little wheezy harmonium played by a boy whom I thought superior - Luther Round - because he was always tidily dressed and went to the Grammar School - going home one night he caught up with me and asked me to go "over the hills" with him!: I was only thirteen and had to be home early - no staying out for me and I wouldn't have gone in any case - too shy. To return to the C. E., Mr Bougnaen made out a scheme for the service - we had a hymn and a prayer and we all gave a text from the Bible as our names were read out - "So after "Jesus bids us shine" we said our texts. I remember mine was "Create in me a clean heart oh Lord and Renew a right spirit within me". Can't imagine how or where I had that one from but I remember one boy quoting "Wine is a mocker strong drink is raging for:out of it are the issues of life". We grew very fond of Mr Bougnaen - he used to talk to us of Grenfell, a missionary in the Congo - with his boat. The 'Endeavour' exploring the River Congo and ministering to the poor coloured people under the rule and Government of King Leopold of Belgium who was a monster - I made up my mind there and then to be a missionary. Mr B. lodged, or lived, with Aunt Rachel and Uncle Sam until he married a few years later - which he wisely did as he was the centre of interest to all the young eligible ladies of the church - those single, of course.

He stayed with us for a few years, longer than his predecessor, Mr Rev. Weir Blackie, whom the deacons, John Garrett and his Brother Chris, treated very shabbily, indeed so I heard. My father paid Mr Bougnaen's salary for some time as the chapel at that time was in a poor way. All this is very dull reading and not interesting; but it was my background and looking back on it now - well compared with the privilege and opportunities of today - it was another world - a much cleaner one morally speaking and we all accepted it without demur.

So back to school and Miss Higgins this time. She was my form mistress this year and we all liked her. She seemed to control us by seeming to become one of us. She seemed about 25 years (I should think) and was smart in her dress according with the times - she was tall and had a good figure i.e. nice bust -

slim waist and wore dark dresses which fitted her figure smoothly and created what was called in those days "The Grecian Bend", it was considered the height of fashion. She had a fair complexion and platinum blonde hair. I think it was natural as in those days dyed hair was frowned upon and not considered respectable. She had a sense of humour. There must have been about 40 girls some of whom I remember very well and became friends with. Quite a number of us walked to and from school together - twice a day in all weathers - in groups of 3 or 4. Some leaving at the age of 14 for a job - others to go to the High School. Miss Higgins formed a small library - Bertha Evans was librarian and I was assistant. We used to pick our own books and make records of books to various girls - there were squabbles occasionally with girls saying we allowed our favourites to have the most popular books. I shall never forget reading "A Tale of Two Cities". I was enthralled - I devoured it - read it in 24 hrs. couldn't put it down till it was finished. Then "Jane Eyre". I took it into prayers - found an obscure corner and read it. I've not read the book since but have seen it as a play several times. So I continued reading and learning and loving the use and meaning of words - I remember having to read a "composition" I had written to the form, 100% Miss Higgins gave me - but I was just as thick with maths. I had a friend, Edith Parkes, who could see a "hole through a brick wall" in math problems and was no good in essays - so I did her essays (surreptitiously of course) and she did my maths problems.

One other incident I remember of that time - an incident of which I have never spoken to anyone. I was in the playing fields when a senior girl came up to me and said "Mr Golding wishes to see you". I followed her to the porch where we girls hung our outdoor clothes. There stood a woman and a girl whom I had seen about but who was in a form lower than I was - a new girl I would think having what seemed to be serious conversation about my new white woollen scarf which Mr Golding had in his hands. He gave it back to the girl and said "How do you know it is yours?" She very over-eagerly plucked at the scarf and separated

the one surface from the other. Mother had bought that scarf for me for Xmas and there were dozens about - the fashion then. I looked on in amazement before the penny dropped. I was being suspected, by this girl! and I never remember her name - never knew it - never met her afterwards - of being a thief! I felt very angry and contemptible of this girl's method of identification. However, I didn't say a word - then Mr Golding turned to me and said quietly, "Do you mind giving it up, my dear?" of course I acquiesced - I just didn't think it worth an argument but strangely enough mother never said anything about missing the scarf - and neither did I. That was the end of the incident as far as I was concerned but I've wondered since if - she found her own scarf and what would have happened had I not given in, what would have been Mr Golding's actions.

June 1981

Well I haven't done anything nor added anything to this script for weeks. For one thing I don't think it's worth continuing? - just thoughts and memories getting dimmer and worthless - a long vista getting narrower - a long lane. But now I have come to what I think was a very silly season - looking back I'm embarrassed and blush for myself and why should I divulge the secrets of teenage - don't suppose anyone knows of my especial experiences and I don't suppose they were peculiar to myself - every generation has it's own characteristics - We made our own fun and entertainments - there was no electricity - in fact when we lived in Park Road - I was then 14 yrs - we had a hanging paraffin lamp and no light above stairs. The house was comfortable and one of a row; but we had our own privacy as Dad had fenced off the yard with wire netting where he kept his fowls with a little garden at the top and I believe there was a pig-sty left by a previous tenant, and I think we once had a pig.

I was 15 when we left that house, for one Father had built. Previously we had been tenants and paid rents - now we owned our own place with quite a big private garden with a tall wooden fence and a drive. There were three large bedrooms and a large kitchen with a big range which heated water for washing up etc. We also had a scullery where there was a gas cooker. We also had electric light

and an electric kettle - I think Dad was very forward looking to have electricity installed - it was quite an adventure and at that "early age" some thought of it as a risk, In domesticity - no radio - no television - no aeroplanes - scarcely any cars - no bombs.

I began to be aware that I was what is now called "a teenager" by little boys offering me bags of sticky sweets and even sending them with messages by my brother Len. - who was very amused and couldn't understand my disgust. And I still remember my surprise when one of the opposite sex raised his hat to me.

At this time too Edward VII was "on the throne" and enjoying himself with the ladies - although of course this became of interest to me many years afterwards, I used to hear my father talk of him and laugh at his peccadilloes - on the continent making friends with France and with his cousin Kaiser William in Germany - the latter even came over to visit us and I remember the picture of him in the 'News Chronicle' with his arrogant stride and silly upturned moustache. The King was very much liked abroad and earned for himself the sobriquet of "Edward the Peacemaker". In 1910 he died of "stoppage of the bowels" in other words appendicitis and I clearly remember my father coming into our bedroom early that morning, saying "The King is dead". I can't remember any service or any fuss being made - nor any fuss at the Coronation of his son George Vth. We were very small fry. No pomp - no circumstance. Meanwhile I was still a pupil of the School - "Higher Elementary" and had reached the top form - which was Mr Priest's form - he was a slight fair man and very kind - we called him Daddy Priest. I had Mabel Higgs as a desk partner. I made another friend who became almost one for life - Edith Parkes. She did my maths and I did her essays. ie we had separate desks but they were joined together. She was a lovely girl and we had fun together - we played "noughts and crosses" biggest part of the time and apart from the fact that I learned to appreciate Elgar's "Land of Hope and Glory" and the Welsh National Anthem, and finding and reading voraciously Stevenson's "Treasure Island" and "Kidnapped" and Scott's "Talisman" and "Ivanhoe"; and Shakespeare's "Henry Vth"

and getting 100% on an essay about "David Livingstone" I don't think I learned much. I left that school one week and started at the age of 15, at the Dudley Girls High School. My father had to pay a fee per term as I was too old to sit for the scholarship due to Mr Golding's deliberate negligence. I was very much indebted to my father for his thought in sending me there - it opened a new world to me. The outlay in cash for a uniform and gym outfit must have been a great struggle mentally as he was very "careful" how he spent his money especially on us.

However, after a year I was allowed to take, in the school, an exam called a Bursary, by which, Dad, was not only exempt from paying the fee but allowed £2.10 per term for the rest of my stay there.

The Head Mistress was Miss Burke - she was a very kind good woman - dressed very severely as a High Church member and was of retiring age obviously - indeed she retired whilst I was there I had been a pupil for ~~2~~ years when we had a Miss Frooc who was a direct opposite if not in character and personality - in dress - up to date - more than ultra fashion. Miss Burke had a Miss Trinder as help mate - the same house - Miss Trinder was big and masculine and always looked well scrubbed - very red face. She was games mistress too and took me when I started Latin. Miss Burke took us in Scripture. I loved her Scripture lessons and it was in her session that I got top in the Scripture exam. She was so pleased that she asked me if my parents, being Baptists, would mind my taking a Scripture exam to do with her church, the Church of England and High at that. Needless to say I heard no more about it.

The school was a new one - built as far as I knew at the time in the most advanced style, with extensive grounds in one of the best sites in Dudley - the Priory.

The border of our grounds, except for a small field, met the borders of the Grammar School Boys fields, in St James Road. The corridors were of tessalated

(I think that is the word) marble and the shallow steps to the 2nd storey of polished teak. So we had to change our shoes when we arrived to indoor shoes and pimsols for gym, which we kept in green stuff bags, embroidered with our name and on our numbered peg in the cloakroom.

The form rooms led off in corridors from the front corridor which ran the whole front of the school. The large hall, where we had prayers every a.m. led off from the front corridor too, so did the cloakrooms. The hall was also the gym equipped with all the instruments of torture for our physical culture, rib stalls, horizontal bar, "Puff Ball" and "horse" and two ropes - I could manage all except the ropes.

The gym mistress was Miss Brutnell - pretty girl with pale golden hair. I remember over exerting myself in one session and falling back in a faint and waking up to find myself stretched on the floor - I'd sprained my wrists.

My first form was IVB with Miss Bicknell as form Mistress. She took us in literature too and the first study was Spencer's "Fairie Queene" which I didn't like much - it was an eulogy on "Queen Elizabeth 1st" and we studied various poems from the "Golden Treasury" which to me was a delightful treasury - I found the mediaeval Poets very romantic and I was at just that age, I commenced at the school, aged 15 years, in the March half-term 1910. I met up with several girls who had been at Mr Golding's School who had won scholarships.

We were expected to be in the classrooms - or at school - 8.45. I had to start from home - nearly always leaving a silent house - at 8.15. First morning I met two sisters Clara and Eva Davies who lived "over the hills" Netherton - they recognised me as a new girl and showed me the cloakrooms.

Every a.m. at 9.00 we marched in pairs, according to our height to the hall for prayers, little girls leading and so on to the tallest bringing up the rear. Now for me began a new and very interesting life - I was so grateful for the opportunity of knowing more about people and things and books! Particularly Books! I wanted to read all the books in the world - so simple - so innocent!!

I commenced to learn French and was very proud of myself. The French mistress realised I was a new girl but not that I'd had no earlier French and I shall never forget my first French dictation: 37 mistakes! - I didn't understand the endings of the verbs - So I was given individual tuition by an elder girl for a few weeks - I liked French very much and our first French story book as I remember was "Contes et Legends" the first tale was "Les Trois Ours". Miss Bicknall used to take us for that (as she did for music too) and she chose me to take part in a little classroom play, which frightened me to death - I couldn't do my part for laughing.

1910. This year we went to Barmouth in Wales for a week's holiday. It was my first experience of a holiday by the sea. I was very excited and delighted. We went by rail, all of us. Uncle Tom and Aunt Polly and Annie, their daughter, joined us and we rented rooms in Glasfor Terrace - it is still there and apart from the fair for the children B'mouth hasn't changed much - the view from the bridge looking up the estuary and the harbour, and Panorama Walk - cannot be altered - they are still most beautiful. There was no prom then - the dunes and the grass verge went down to the sea. I have always loved this coastline here in 1981 I am living in Towyn - a few miles south of Barmouth - the National Hymn "Oh Land of my fathers, Land of my love" I seemed in those years to identify myself with.

Usually we spent our holidays in August in Kinver or Clent. I have very happy memories of Enville Road and The Edge, Kinver. We sometimes made a party up with Uncle Sam and Aunt Rachel and I have tender memories of sunny mornings before breakfast walking with Uncle Sam; up the lane, he was a dear.

1911. I omitted to say that Uncle Tom, Uncle Sam, Father and myself climbed Cader Idris that first visit - we set off by rail to Arthog leaving a lovely hot day at B'mouth; but as it often happens the peak of the mountain was enveloped in cloud so we saw nothing of the lovely view boasted about by the natives. "As far as over to Ireland" We were soaked - I'd gone up, was wearing, a red coat and cotton sun bonnet - the red from my coat had soaked into everything

and Uncle Sam wore a hard hat - Belly=Cock Hat - was the very vulgar name. We had tea and a bun at the tin hut on the top and Uncle said he'd had a fly in his bun. I remember that as we were climbing the last bit, we met an old Welsh woman coming down. She produced a bottle and a glass from somewhere, whether from her bag - or a cache - just there in the moss and we had a drink of most delightful water - very acceptable just then.

At this time, the powers that be, connected with the Chapel had decided we should form a Primary Department. The leader was to be a Miss Alice Millard, who was one time my S.S. teacher and an uncertificated teacher. Cis and I and Cousin Nellie, Ethel Adams, Lily Garratt and Mr Will Smith - were her helpers. We had children up to 8 yrs and soon had quite a number 50 - 60 every Sunday a.m. 9.30 - and every Sunday 2.30 - 3.30. We enjoyed it - at least I did - we had early Bonar Hymns - they were lovely I played the organ - the Primary was held in the Chapel no other place being available - the organ was an old piped organ at which I laboured having been taught the rudiments of the scales from "Henry Farmer's Tutor" by my father on an old fashioned piano which he bought before he and mother were married - a little boy "blew" the organ and when he forgot to "blow" the organ gave out with an awful sigh. I became very fond of Alice - she was eleven years older than I was.- She became engaged to my cousin Harold - Nell's brother - who was a graduate - one of the first - of B'ham University - an M.A. and taught in a grammar school somewhere on the south coast - at first - but later in Llanelly, South Wales. They married and went to live down there; and I took over the primary - quite informally and we had great fun, being only youngsters ourselves, except for Mr Will Smith - he was a member of the Church and had a grown up son and daughter and how he became incorporated in our young company I'm sure I can't remember. But he seemed quite satisfied to be with us. He was a dear. Our Time Table ran thus:-

At 9.30 being all gathered together in rows - pews - and a teacher, one of those mentioned - we would commence with a hymn "Father we thank Thee for the night" or "Day again is dawning" - then the Lord's Prayer and I'm sorry to say I

was shy or reluctant to say it - or pray at all in front of the children and Adults - although all only just as old as myself and very often I missed a phrase out - then as a change from that say - "We will ask Mr Smith to lead us in prayer" and he would - so simply and unaffectedly and genuinely - he never seemed to feel anything - that there was anything out of place in his being amongst us although he must have been 50 - and we never regarded him as anything but one of us - he was so humble and inoffensive - he was a Saint.

Well! How I have wandered on (Such a long time ago) then I would tell the children a Bible Story - in the afternoon we split up into classes and the children illustrated the story in sand trays - with paper figures and crayons. Because of that we were very much out of favour with the care-taker Mrs Pritchard - no wonder! - not the only time we were out of favour either - the Xmas Party! We saved up our pennies - because we were only working girls - to give the children a party - we made jellies and cakes and mince pies and oranges and apples and toffees and a present each - which took some doing - we begged from some of the elders of the chapel - the party was held in the Sunday School and we enlisted the help of some of the bigger boys to decorate it. We played "Blind Mans Buff", "Musical Chairs" etc and Will Arnold kissed me tentatively under the mistletoe to my surprise, on my cheek. When we had settled all up and paid all the bills we had a (one) shilling left - 5p - which in all innocence I presented to the care-taker, Mrs Pritchard, as a tip in return for her trouble - "What" she said "Only that, I'll tell your Uncle George", which I suppose she did - I never heard anything more of it and Uncle George was the recipient of everyone's troubles and complaints.

I seem to have skipped years to do with school life and home life. But at the Chapel after Mr Boughen leaving for we had a series of lay preachers till we got landed with Rev. Fred Wynn, who had previously been a Rev. in Coseley, who had an invalid wife, a son married and, in London, a daughter, at a warehouse in London, and a young son of 12 years - Leslie. The daughter, Dorrie, I became very friendly with for some years. So you see how our life was - no social life except

to do with the Church and an occasional "Social" to do with the C.E. or S.S. No dancing or Concert - they were the work of the Devil - So much so that when at school we were studying, "The Merchant of Venice", and some great actor was performing at the "Prince of Wales" Theatre in B'ham, I was the only one in the form who didn't go to see it. I sometimes think it wasn't so much a moral issue - as a financial one - for Dad was very mean with us - we had plenty to eat - no frills - but he was mean as regards clothes. I wore the same heavy blue dress summer and winter - despite other girls pretty cotton frocks - my alternative was my gym costume, when I could wear a white cotton blouse. Yet I never felt inferior - nor sensitive and only one girl remarked about it - I accepted conditions as I have always done, even at quite an age - 16 - we three girls slept all in one double flock bed; then I was given a single bed with a straw mattress!: At that age - young age - my bones ached - no comfort and so cold - no hot water bottles in our jeunesse - all spartan. I never felt warm in the house although quite well built - big rooms high ceilings and good fires - the kitchen in which we lived all the week - was large with a range fire place - a high backed old fashioned settee - wooden no comfortable padded chairs - a tiled floor and the only covering a rag pegged rug on the hearth, but we all gathered there after our evening interests and were happy swapping stories of our daily duties. There were no electrical equipments so mother had a "char" woman several times a week. But we did have electric light and an electric kettle - and I think Dad was about the first in Netherton to have electricity installed in the house.

I seem to have left my school experiences far behind - swamped in domestic affairs - but that is life - the two intermingles; whilst I still had to help in the house weekend - scrubbing floors - hall - kitchen etc and clean up in the scullery - I still had to work - at school subjects, homework. We had one form mistress - but a different mistress for every subject and each mistress gave us work for every night and marks - which marks were added up per cent and we had a report card which was presented to us to present to our parents for our father's

signature every week and I'm ashamed to say that I forged Dad's signature quite often if we misbehaved i.e. untidy, noisy, irresponsible, careless - we had an order mark, and that took a mark from our subject marks and true to character I was guilty again. Why am I confessing all these delinquencies I wonder? The school also was divided into "Houses" not N.S.E.W. but ABCDEF. We competed mostly in games - each mistress was head of a house. Ours was Miss Madan, a graduate of B'ham University, who knew my cousin Harold. She asked me about him. She was also our History mistress and very "sweet". I say "Ours" meaning "B" of which I was a member. We were the weakest house, I think, and perhaps that was the reason, when Match Time came round, (Net Ball), I was chosen as "Chuck" for our team much to my surprise and apprehension. Nevertheless when the great day came round I scored a goal!

That brings to mind a tale against myself. I had been at the school only a few weeks and I was standing with one of my form, Dorothy Carder, watching a game of Net Ball, by two teams when I heard one girl at the back of me say to her companion "Who's that new girl there?" "Hm! wouldn't be a bad looking kid but for her nose". Dorothy was laughing, the tears rolling down her cheeks but I was furious.

My next form, September 1911, was IVA and Miss Mitchell form mistress and also Geography mistress for the whole school. She looked very strict, and was so but with a sense of humour. She endeared herself to me right away, because she chose me to give out the maps for the various forms, her monitress, because she thought I was a "tidy sensible girl". I could have hugged her as my mother always called me a "ripstitch" - never could keep a ribbon on my hair and my Dad, "If there is any mud anywhere you will get in it". We commenced Latin in that form and Miss Trinder, "Trinny", captain of "F" the most popular house, and assistant head, took us for the first term. If we weren't very sure of our homework we would get her talking about her house and its success at games and the lesson time would be gone and she would say "Dear me girls, how time does fly,

we must work hard next time". I liked Latin - it helped with my English. We took English Lit. with Miss Bowler. "Comus" which I detested and "The Tempest". She was a tiny dainty, frail looking little woman, with fussy sandy hair - she used to struggle to arouse interest in us but not to much avail. "Palgrove's Golden Treasury" was my chief interest - it opened a new world to me - I loved Robert Herrick, Ben Johnson, Tom Hood. When for our homework, we were told to choose and learn a poem, I chose "I remember the house where I was born" Thomas Hood. That brings to mind "The Bridge of Sighs" "Of't in the Silly Night", I always recall that Ruby Lovatt chose the shortest poem, by Leigh Hunt, but the most lovely.

"Jenny kissed me when we met
 Jumping from the chair she sat in,
 Time, "who loves to get sweets into your list"
 Put that in
 Say I'm lonely?, Say I'm sad -
 Say that health and wealth have missed me -
 Say I'm growing old, But add -
 Jenny kissed me".

That poem to my mind is exquisite, an expression of delight and joy!

Shakespeare's Sonnets - Wordsworth - Gray - Byron-Scott - Keats - I'm sure similar Curriculum as today, but I just revelled in that new vision of English. The Art room was perfect - big windows - tables in a circle - the Art mistress, Miss Marianne Richardson, became famous as the author of a new style of writing called, "Cursive Writing" and many books on the subject. She gave us lovely subjects to illustrate, apart from still life, such as a scene from a poem, "The Forsaken Merman", Matthew Arnold, which was one we were studying, A domestic Scene - I did one showing our living room, with the Cat - Nance - sitting in front of the fire and patterns for handkerchief borders - china - clocks, etc. Auntie Lil, years afterwards, during a lecture given by Miss Richardson, at Dudley Training College, saw my name on some of the illustrations passed round by Miss Richardson. She was a remarkable and charming (in the truest sense) personality. We discovered years after that she was only a year or two older than we were - but the severe attitude she adopted - her plain straight dark dress or overall -

her straight dark hair, parted down the middle, made her seem a lot older. My memories of her are always pleasant. I've read several of her books. She died young, and then there was the choir and our choir master, Mr William North - Billy North, at the time he took over he must have been about 25 and Organist of Dudley Top Church, St. Thomas. Previous to the choir we had our singing practice, last lesson of the week with a Miss Clare, which really was an uproar as she was too good natured and couldn't control us. I vividly recall the first appearance of the day of a slim dark-haired nice looking young man. I guess it was the first time he had confronted a collection of girls 16 - 17 - 18 of teenage females and he certainly seemed for a few minutes unsure of himself and embarrassed especially as at the other end of the platform, sat Miss Mitchell at an improvised desk, pretending to mark exercise books!: It was very funny - Miss Mitchell was embarrassed she seemed to find it difficult to lift her head to look at us - chaperone indeed! - the situation continued for a week or two and then finished - I wondered what had been said between the head, Miss Burke, and her staff or perhaps he was found to be quite proper in his behaviour! - it was ridiculous and I laugh inside myself at the recollection. A year later we all had individual voice tests with the idea of forming a special choir. I was one chosen, my voice, he said, was sweet and true if not strong. We sang from the "National Song Book" which I loved, and still do and pieces from Handel and Mendelsohn. Then he decided we would enter a competition - a Midland competition. The piece chosen was "Beauty and Truth" the words by Keats, the music by Coleridge Taylor. It was a set piece - the words and music exquisite. We worked very hard - we had to as our singing master was so particular and insistent on perfection, or as he thought was perfection. The crucial test came one lovely evening in July in 1913 I think it was. We were instructed to wear white and be at B'ham Town Hall at 6.00. I recall that a friend, Gladys Barnsley, invited me to tea with her, in Old Hill and that we had pork pie for tea, which isn't conducive to good singing - at any rate we didn't think of that then. We must have seemed a very insignificant group which assembled on that great wide platform in B'ham Town Hall and all that

afternoon - no audience - except the other choirs there, waiting to undergo a similar experience. I know I felt anything but sure of myself as one of the choir and hoped the others weren't feeling the same. When it was over - the ordeal - our conductor and trainer Mr William North - sat himself behind a pillar - he seemed to withdraw himself - we all felt we'd done everything we'd been told not too awful. However, I don't know who the judge was, we won the Shield for the best School Choir, that year, of the Midlands. The Shield was hung in the School Hall for years, because when the time for the next competition came round, the FirstWorld War had broken out and there was no time for competitions nor anything else. So I am speaking truthfully when I tell my friends that I once sang in B'ham Town Hall. I find myself even now humming "I waited for the Lord" or "Rest in the Lord".

Well now - how am I to begin. There comes a time in every girl's life! when she becomes aware of the opposite sex or they become aware of her. I had two brothers and so wasn't much impressed, somewhat disgusted, when they made use of my brothers to get to know me - some in the same street - some in the same church or chapel! Walking up to school would find myself accompanied by a male object, who would appear from somewhere. Then I noticed that as I passed the road, he would be standing half-way up, till he saw me passing then would join me. He was Fred Rollason! I wonder what happened to him. He wrote me up to a week before I married and I returned his letters unopened. He was a very nice boy and the tricks I played that boy, to be sure! I was sixteen then and he was the same age. He had a widowed mother and a lot of sisters and a brother in New Zealand. He was so shy I found it hard to get on with him. He would "walk" me home from Dudley, where I had met him I suppose and buy me choccs or toffees which I told him to give to his sisters. I remember once it was a "do" we had at school, and Win had been to the occasion and Fred met me outside and Win embarrassed me by something happening to her knickers.

The only time when I definitely met him seriously was through my then school

friend Alice Neath - she lived at Tividale and it was the School Anniversary and I arranged to meet Fred at Top Church and Walk with him to the anniversary Services at Tividale, which I did and we met up after the service at the chapel with Ben Deaken and came over the Rowley Hills home down the Buffery. Another time I'd arranged to meet him at the Dudley library, and went very reluctantly and saw him there; he was very short sighted and wore pebble glasses. I saw him looking about anxiously for me, but he didn't see me, and to my relief didn't contact me; so I came home, I was a cat.

Then the war broke out and he joined up immediately and I saw him coming up Dudley High Street looking very smart in uniform. He wrote me and I wrote him but the letter was returned. The last I heard of him he had been appointed manager of a Bank in Madras, India. He was a very nice boy and I hope he married a nice girl. He continued writing almost up to the time of my marriage and I returned his letters unopened. I wish I hadn't now. There were several in the offing - one who said I had hair like Lily Ivy Close, and if I didn't take him as a "steady", he would join the Navy. But when war did break out he went on munitions and didn't enlist ever. He used to way-lay me at all times!

Then I had a girl friend, whose brother turned up whenever we had arranged to meet - even when we'd arranged a holiday away - at Evesham I remember - he turned up the week - ending. Then there was Jack Harley who used to stand facing the house, on the opposite side of the road hoping to accost me. On one occasion I had to call on mother for help to go with me up the way - no one let alone one of the opposite sex, would dare to oppose a mother! different from the ways of teenagers these days - which are much more free and easy. We used to meet in very unconventional ways, even then, we of the working class; we were usually accosted by the "feller" first, in the street, or at school, or in Church or Chapel - we called it "clicking" or "cliqueing" or sometimes our friends would introduce us to their friends - who introduced us, casually to their friends - and so on.

It has been some months since I wrote anything in this abominable narrative - at which I blush and feel ashamed at silly doings, quite at variance to my usual self - or so I like to think and so many incidents are not unfamiliar to my family especially, my daughter Rosemary - but it is like talking to myself - with my thoughts and memories.

The year 1912 we were studying - or going through the motions of studying - for our Exam for the certificate, or Senior Oxford as it was called - or as now A levels, which if passed we were eligible for college or University. In my spare moments I was very friendly with Alice Millard, who was 10 years older than myself - a teacher and engaged to my favourite cousin, Harold Hampton M. A. He was away teaching and Alice and I would go walks - sometimes with my sister Cis. Sometimes, on dark nights, we would buy chips from the fish and chip shop and eat them, usually from a newspaper, on the way home - those were the days. They were delicious - the chips I mean - all the more so for being considered "infra dig" by respectable folk. As respectable folk too - we had to be "in" by 9 o'clock even up to the time of my marriage - that seems fairly hard and unfair but to be preferred to the goings on of youngsters - in this day and age, when morals and cleanliness of living seem to have gone to the wall and parents are afraid of their children - afraid to correct them in case they leave home and take to "sleeping around" or take drugs - the cases we hear and read of mere children killing themselves with drug taking and crime is appalling. But to get on to my next case or "feller".

And so I continue this silly tale - for the amusement and very likely - contempt - of whom I wonder? Just for the satisfaction of myself as I sit here talking to myself and going over again - living again - more vividly those years ago - than last years. It always seemed sunny - or perhaps it is the sunny days we remember in the days of our youth, I've plenty of the other sort to brood over now. But I will try to forget those days.

It must be twelve years or more, when Rosemary lived in Kenilworth, that I saw the notice of his death in the B'ham Post - aged 72 of Hunters Moon,

Four Oaks, B'ham and it struck me as a remarkable coincidence that I should see the notices as I wasn't ever interested in the "Post". How these past experiences do crop up. Then last year, my son Frank, who was staying with me for a few days said right out of the blue, "Who was Austin Morley?" I was taken aback and only said "Oh just someone I knew once". Then I remembered that Frank had our family "Holy Bible" and he'd come across the name in the marriages - put there as a joke and a tease by my two brothers. Being the eldest of the family I had a lot to put up with from those two, Len and Frank. Still do from one of them.

It was the year - the end of the year 1913 and we had a breaking up do at school - can't remember whether it was a prize distribution or not but just an end of term Xmas Party when the Grammar School was invited, that I noticed (Miss Burke left - retired that year) this boy mainly because he was - or seemed to be - enjoying himself with Alice Heath and Gladys Cottam - two of the prettiest girls of the form. The November of that year I had taken the first part of the Exam for the certificates for teaching - as I passed that I was eligible to take the second part in March, which was the chief deciding factor.

January - the next term I was in the library, Dudley, at the desk waiting for a book when he came along with his cap stuck on the back of his head and I recognised him - to my astonishment he doffed his cap and smiled and wished me, "Good Evening", afterwards asked "could he see me home?" and that led to a friendship for a year. I don't enjoy writing these silly incidents and wish I hadn't commenced but I've just read part of the autobiography of Margot Asquith and was shocked, but amused at the unembarrassed manner in which she wrote and told of incidents in her life - for a woman of her age and upbringing and social standing - I wonder Asquith could have married her - he such a sensible stolid character, however.

By that tirade I mean to imply that if she was silly! I had an excuse to be - being so much younger. As a matter of fact - at the time of which I am writing in my own life Mr Asquith was Prime Minister - after having had Parliamentary experience under Gladstone and Campbell Bannerman as a member of the Liberal Party.

I remember quite well hearing my father speak of him and also of Loyd George who introduced the pension for old age.

That which attracted me to him or him to me at first (from the first) was his accent - it wasn't Black Country, he had quite a "cultured" voice or that it seemed to me well modulated and a sophisticated manner - he was witty in the way he talked of and mimicked the Staff of the School. Apart from that he had nothing attractive - he had a pointed red nose and face - a white fleck in the front of his very coarse thick hair and as if that wasn't enough he had one eye with a fleck in it, which was very comical but he seemed quite unaware of it. There was nothing romantic about our friendship - no canoodling - not even holding hands - it seems incredible when I think back on it, especially compared with the manners of today - today there is a difference between being a "friend" or a "boyfriend" but what it is I haven't yet found out - I liked his company because he liked to talk and I found out that his family were landowners and his father a school master in Wednesbury - our acquaintance amounted to just one walk per week, usually Saturday down the Priory as far as the turning to the left which led to St James Road - down Wellington Road and home for me 9 o'clock on the dot!

But to my astonishment and embarrassment he commenced meeting me outside school - the dinner hour - 12.30 - 1.45. I walked home to dinner - hail, rain, snow, sunshine - I walked - never thought of taking a tram and mother never suggested I stayed dinner in school - which a lot of girls did. So there was no time for dawdling. He came with me Prior Road, Stone Street, Flood Street to the top of Station Hill leading down to what was then Blowers Green, where we would sometimes stay talking. Then there was a rush for me - and must have been for him as he lived in Grange Road and what excuse he would give his mother I can't imagine - looking back on it - just as a pleasant interlude. Billy Burton was one of his friends to whom he introduced me - Billy invited me to a gym display at the school - So Alice Neath and I went - it was held in the school Hall and visitors sat round on chairs - apparently there was a reason for the invite as after all the exercise and acrobating was over the prize - the Cup - went to Billy as Top Dog and in front

of everyone he brought it to me - I was very embarrassed but had to make a fuss and congratulate him. I felt very honoured I suppose. Afterwards Alice and I were escorted round and over the school by two of the masters, Wagstaff one (Wagger) followed by a crowd of boys. It was very amusing and so very silly. This was the year Miss Burke resigned in the July. She gave a party and I had a new dress - it was a resider green-fine cashmir - not a party dress really but nice and serviceable. I remember dancing with Hilda Wright whose sister Lynne married my brother Frank - years after of course - at this time Lynne was in the Kindergarten at school and the fact that I had a new dress was due to the fact that mother had allowed my sister Cis to go to a Mrs Hughes in Dudley to be trained in dress making - so she thought she ought to patronise her. Mrs Hughes was a good dress maker and "made" for some of the most fashionable "Ladies" in Dudley - She had two girls to help her Emily and Lennie, they were nice girls and came to have tea with us several times. She had a son Jimmy whom she spoilt dreadfully - he was a lay about nuisance - I wish even up to these days mother hadn't allowed Cis to go there and can't imagine how she could have done it - but Cis seemed to like it - going to and from home to Dudley and mixing with different folk did her good, she was a retiring nature in those days - she was supposed to have been "delicate" since she was born. (P.S. In this year of our Lord 1982 she is entirely different!! She is Mrs Monkton, Auntie Cis - a widow these last 6 years of Towyn, Merioneth.) This was the year too that Sir Ernest Shackleton made his last attempt for the Arctic and we High School girls collected to buy him a dog.

That year we all as a family went to Barmouth for our annual week's holiday. We were very fond of Barmouth, I still am - very fond of this western coast of Wales - from Tenby to Abersoch and the Lleyn Peninsula - we went by rail excursion - which was cheap and the usual travel of the working class - Glaslyn Terrace, where we stayed - is still there. It was the custom of "our class" to book rooms - get our own groceries and meat and vegetables etc. and the landlady cooked for us. This time we were caught up in the pandemonium of the declaration of war with Germany - so like everyone else made our way home - sending our luggage on - and it was some

days before we saw it again - we'd almost given up.

School had finished that month and year for me, life commenced in earnest - I'd passed my exams and was ready for a training college. But the powers that be ordained that we had a year's practice course - at various schools in case our teaching capacity wasn't satisfactory. Some of my friends went to Cheltenham Teacher's Training college and I would like to have done so, but my father decided that Dudley Training college was good and I could go there - in the end I didn't go anywhere, but continued as an uncertificated for several years - war years - at a pittance of 18/- per week a class of 60 children mixed-with an increase of £2.10 per year, i.e. 6d per week.

I had to go to see the Director of Education, Mr James Wynne, at the office in St James Road and was appointed for my years Student Teacher - that is what we were called - to my old school The Netherton Girls' Council School, and my old head mistress, Miss Weddell, was still there. James Wynne Esq. gave me a lecture on the advantages of going to college and the pension I would get when I reached sixty years of age. The thought of 60 years' teaching made me exclaim "Oh! I don't want to go on teaching for 60 years". "Oh that's the way the land lies, is it Percy?" he said to the clerk, for me to hear.

So August 4th 1914, as everybody knows, War was declared with Germany and everything seemed to change from that very hour. As usual as a country, we were unprepared - we are a comfortable lot and had not had war in our country since the Civil Wars. Asquith was Prime Minister - he had followed Campbell Bannerman and as a country our Government had followed the Liberal policy of Free Trade, as against the Conservative, Tariff Reform, and everything especially food was cheap, as most of our food came from our Colonies - Australia and New Zealand. At least that's how I saw it at the time and when I heard of the horror of the German invasion of Belgium, I thought civilisation had gone back 4 hundred years and was filled with dread - I was only 19 - and my imagination ran riot. All this destruction and whole sale misery because of the occasion of the shooting of an Archduke in one of the Balkan States. I did understand the circumstances but have

forgotten. "The lights are going out all over Europe" said Sir Edward Grey, who was then Foreign Secretary, and they certainly did and have been dimmed ever since.

Of course, as a country, we weren't prepared for war and Asquith who was Prime Minister with his Slogan "Wait and See" was too slow so Lloyd George took over and things became more vigorous and enthusiastic - women became involved in munitions - in factories making arms - discarding their skirts and adapting slacks and overalls like men.

Which brings to my mind a personal incident:- Whilst walking along Priory Road with Elsie Little one day, we were passed by Miss Mitchell and Miss Bicknall. Said Miss Mitchell to me "Nora walk properly whilst you are young and your skirts are short". Strangely my skirts have been getting shorter ever since, Thank God.

So there was no unemployment in those days - everybody in some sphere or another making guns - munitions - for the war - the hospitals full of wounded and dying - the first big battle - either the Somme or Mons - the Worcesters were engaged and a number of boys whom I knew were among the missing or dead - Dudley was in mourning.

Titled elegant ladies formed Societies for Knitting socks for soldiers sewing shirts - making bandages - joining nursing societies - organising soup kitchens - serving in the Canteens and cafés which were attached to the factories. "Harper Beans" was a big factory in Dudley and Vaughtans in Tipton. Big colourful posters, prominently displayed everywhere depicting Lord Kitchener pointing with a big forefinger "Your King and Country need You". Up till October 1915 enlistment had been voluntary - then the Derby Scheme came into being and conscription started - that is every able bodied man or male over a certain age had to join up - join the army, Navy or Air Force. Food became scarce and unpredictable, queues formed outside shops; one Saturday a.m. being free from school, I stood for five hours, outside a Maypole shop in Dudley - from 9 - 2, with dozens of others of course, for 2 pounds of margarine - one pound for Aunt Rachel. Cis in the town, saw a crowd of women following a cart - so she did likewise - which arrived at a

grocery shop - Masons - and so was able to get a jar of jam. Another time mother, on the prowl, which was seldom, noticed a queue outside a butchers - Aunt R. was one of the queue - this time for a bit - a joint - of rabbit!, but unfortunately the rabbit gave out before she got to the counter - two vicious half starved dogs commenced a fight amongst them and that didn't add to the joy of things. It was 1917 before it occurred to the powers that be to commence a scheme of rationing. I forget what the amounts were which we were allocated, but it wasn't much and of course there were folk, who stocked up dishonestly and without conscience. Meat was very scarce and very risky - I remember one joint - mother got from somewhere - not from our own butcher - couldn't have been - gave off such a smell in cooking, that we were convinced it was horse - so we dug a deep hole in the garden and buried it! Just one of those incidents!

In September of 1915, having finished my student teacher year, I was appointed, as an uncertificated, at the Halesowen Road Council School, commonly called the "Tin Tab", as it was almost entirely made - not built - of corrugated iron and was "built" as a temporary when my mother was a little girl. The Headmaster was Mr Troath - on the point of retirement - it was a dreadful place - atrocious - in every way. After having left a school where the organisation was meticulous, it was a shock to have to put up with a place where the Head had let everything slack - there was no syllabus even and he always left early - just before 12.00 to get the bus to Dudley for his midday meal and he was invariably late back. It was a mixed school. By that I mean both sexes, boys and girls and a very big percentage of them from very poor homes from Windmill end - Mushroom green. The Staff was mixed too - Mr Cresswell took the top class Std VI - Leslie Perry V and Mr Jennings IV. Mrs Pearson was in charge of III and the girls sewing - she walked nearly every day from Holy Hall. The other two staff were Mrs Davies who lived in Church Road, Netherton and was my companion backwards and forwards, to and fro, to school and home lunch time and end. She was a very nice person - her husband was in training in the army at Abbeville. My first class was Std 1A. Mrs Dawes took 1B, we shared one room - it was quite a good sized room and Mrs Dawes to my consternation

wasn't very conscientious - or so I thought - as she liked to spend such a lot of time talking - and she was very vulgar! "Vulgar" that could mean anything - to me she was boring and used to tell indecent sexy tales on purpose to shock me I think, as I was only 20 and whom she regarded as very naive and innocent. I probably looked it as I was very slim and had very fair hair called "flaxen" in those days. But I was soon moved to another class of older boys and girls - as Harold Jennings was "called up" and I took over Class IV and then began the worst year of all my teaching experience. There were nearly 60 children squeezed into the smallest and worst room in the school - the desks (not lockers) very old and dirty, crushed together so that it was impossible, or nearly so, to get round.

In those days children were moved up the school according to their ability not age, so I had children in my class nearly fourteen years old and bigger than I was myself. Quite a few left school to go into munitions and were being paid as wages more than I was. I very clearly remember getting one boy across the desk, after school, and hitting him - he seemed to enjoy it - his name was Edward Cooper. I wonder if he remembers it? If he is alive he must be 80!! Looking back on those days, I find them, especially my attitude to them, very amusing. I was so conscientious and so aware of my responsibility towards those pupils, and aware that I wasn't maintaining discipline - as I saw it. Took things very seriously.

After that awful year I had a nice airy room with the children I'd taught in Std I. At the end of that year I was moved from the school for a term to Northfield Road Infants, under Miss St Clare and was in just as much a quandary as I had no idea of Infant teaching. Fortunately a pupil teacher who had experience was there to help me - she really took over and we were soon playing trains and playing soldiers and waving flags - it was very relaxing as Miss St Clare was very kind but it was only for a term and then I was moved again to Parson's School Wolverhampton Street, Dudley. Again it was to take up a class the teacher of whom had been called up. The headmaster also had had to join up and the school was run by a Miss Hancox. It was a small charity school and had only one other teacher

a Mrs Brown beside myself. I was happy there and got on well with my class of boys and girls aged about 12 years and had no trouble at all about discipline. Parson's School has personal family connections. It was founded by my grandma Hampton's aunt, Nancy Parsons. She lived in quite a large house called Ineage House near by. How Aunt Nancy came by the money to found such a school I never was told. How I wish now I had asked grandma more questions of her childhood and family. I never said anything about the connection to Miss Hancox even when I saw stockings and shoes and jerseys and caps being doled out to some of the pupils. I wonder if it is still there.

My next appointment was to my old school and Miss Weddell was still there. She threw her arms round me when I walked in that morning "I knew I was to expect someone but I didn't dream it would be you". I was there very happy because I could walk home to lunch and it was very handy only five minutes walk from home - some of the staff who had taught me were still there and sometimes the situation became very comical - embarrassingly so - when Miss Frøst, now Mrs Marris said "You'll be saying I gave you a good telling off soon". "You did more than that" I remember her nearly knocking my lungs out of my throat once. I stayed on the staff of that school till July 1921.

Whilst all this was going on, as regards my life and career the war was going on - The aim was to stop German troops from taking Paris and over running France - keeping the "balance of power". Boys from the Sunday school went to defend their King and Country. Battles of Mons and Liège - Hill Sixty - the Canadians defended that - The Paper Boys would run through the Streets "English Advance: over 3 miles" and more often than not a reverse - and thousands of lives of the youngsters and best of our nation being slain and ground into the mud of Flanders. Will Arnold was one of the first - he joined up in 1914 and I remember seeing him in a navy blue uniform with a peaked cap - that was before we had time as a country to adapt Khaki as the standard colour. The two Woodall boys, Clarence and Stan, were both killed - those so well remembered in S. School and Junior Christian Endeavour. There were many more, Bill Monkton and Syd his brother,

who had to join the "Pay Corps" because of bunions, and who afterwards became my brother-in-law, "Uncle Sid". Will Arnold had an arm blown off and nearly died - of course he was demobbed - after that "Brighty One" the term by which any misfortune went and was coveted by most of the "Boys" when they'd had a month or two over there. Will was rewarded a pittance - a Pension - with which he bought - with the help of his family - a horse and cart - to load coal from the pits to the customer. How he managed with only one arm I fear to think. Albert Dealey, whom we girls thought scruffy and dirty, was killed after winning the M.C.

I'm afraid, after all these years, I may be getting a bit mixed up chronologically but will try to go on as I remember events. This was a "World War" and it certainly was. The Russians joined in and rumours circulated, that they, some of them, had come to Britain - some said from the North of Scotland downwards but they were on our side, the Czarina being one of Queen Victoria's daughters married to Czar Nicholas. Russia kept herself to herself but rumours of all atrocities by the aristocrats to the peasants began to leak out and about the influence the dirty obscene immoral Priest Rasputin, had over the Czarina: My father's firm, "Hampton Bros", was honoured by an order for hundreds of pairs of Cossack Boots from the Russian Government - a direct order - they had to go to London to the War office - all three of them - Dad, Uncle George and Uncle Tom - "Innocents Abroad" as they had never been to any city other than B'ham and must have been confounded by the London traffic - a pair of those Boots was eminently displayed in the window of the biggest Store in Dudley.

Oh those skirts! - yards round - thick heavy material and heavy braid round the bottom edge to keep them down - I vividly remember when I must have been about 3 years making up my mind to dress up in my mother's clothes and becoming entangled in one of her skirts and my panic - the darkness - I struggled and struggled I couldn't breathe - untie! my mother passing guessing what was happening - with 2 fingers and a thumb removed the menace. Oh my relief-I can feel it now.