

Grandpa Cowper	1836 - 1895	lost at sea
Grandma Cowper	1850 - 1930	Port Sunlight
Willie	1871 - 1900	Cape Town
Agnes	1874 - 1963	Port Sunlight
John (Jack)	1876 - 1947	Vancouver
Fred.	1878 - 1919	Liverpool
Charlie	1880 - ?	?
Ernest	1883 - 1938	Seattle
Harry (Jimmy)	1885 - 1939	Fiji
Herbert	1888 - 1972	Dunoon
Daisy (Dorothy)	1890 -	

A
*BACKWARD
 GLANCE
 ON MERSEYSIDE*

By AGNES COWPER

NEWS IN BRIEF

***Village
librarian
22 years***

Librarian of the Lever Library, Port Sunlight, for twenty-two years, Miss Agnes Cowper, of Heswall House, Heswall, has died in Clatterbridge Hospital at the age of 89.

She was the oldest woman pensioner of the Unilever companies on Merseyside.

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Author's Preface

THIS LITTLE BOOK is not intended to be anything in the nature of a family saga; not even that of an ordinary seafaring family, the head of which came to Liverpool from Scotland three-quarters of a century ago to make his way and to bring up a family. Such an effort would be quite presumptuous if nothing else.

As one now in her seventy-fifth year, it follows that I was brought up in the era of big families in which, if deprived of their breadwinner, those families had either to learn to fend for themselves or go to the wall. And how often in that era did this particular deprivation happen to the families of seafarers?

If my references to my rather numerous brood of brothers seem to occur somewhat frequently I pray that I may be forgiven. Such references have been very largely necessary to provide the requisite pegs upon which to hang the story of those incidents of general interest, glimpses of which I have endeavoured to recover. Frankly, I am proud of Liverpool, and even more so of its myriad seafaring families, both of the present day and of my youth, now so long past. I have always appreciated the inherent kindness of the masses of Liverpool people, together with their hardiness and gay camaraderie. It has been good to have lived one's life and to have been counted among them.

It is just because the little recollections I have gathered together, whether of major events or more commonplace family incidents, together with the little hopes, disappointments and aspirations recalled by the latter, are likely to be found the common property and experience of so many of my fellow-citizens, especially those, perhaps, who are either elderly or 'not so young,' that I make bold to commit them to print.

AGNES COWPER

CHAPTER I

Leaves from an Old Diary

It was the 7th April, 1874; a bright, sunny day, with a strong breeze blowing, when the sailing ship *Truce*, of Greenock, sailed up the Mersey on her return voyage from New Orleans with a cargo of cotton. Everything on board was trim and tidy despite the ravages of a tempestuous voyage across the Atlantic, and the crew were in the best of spirits, all their talk being of home and the reunions which they would now so soon achieve. Although only five weeks had passed since the vessel left New Orleans, it seemed to the captain's wife, a young woman of twenty-four, a much longer period, for, whilst crossing the Atlantic, gales of unusual severity had been encountered, which the captain, a sailor from his earliest boyhood, pronounced as the worst in all his experience.

During one of these gales he had not left the poop for twenty-four hours, whilst his wife and infant son lay prostrate with sea-sickness. Her diary records:

*'March 22nd—*We are preparing for another gale from the south-west; the sky looks very black all round and the wind is gradually increasing. While at dinner we passed a vessel's mast floating on the sea, so some ill-fated ship has fallen a victim to the gales.

*'March 23rd—*All my expectations of yesterday came to pass last night and I can truthfully state that it blew a perfect hurricane. Matt, my husband, and I were asleep when it commenced, but at the first onset of the gale he rushed on deck. I was left in darkness, for the lamps had gone out. I felt very lonely and somewhat timid as I lay in

total darkness listening to the roar of the tempest. I attempted to rise in search of matches but was thrown violently backward, so laid down again, telling myself I was as safe in the dark as I should be in the light, for the all-powerful Hand was able to guide and save us. But still I could not quite dispel my fear, so made another attempt to find matches: this time a successful one. After a cheerful light was burning, my nerves felt stronger and the roaring of the waves did not seem quite so dreadful. All night it blew hard, and when we sat down to breakfast, such a heavy sea was running that, although the table was barricaded, with one roll of the ship everything was swept off.

*'Evening—*I have been sick and ill all day, but now feel a little better. The wind is again increasing in fury; the sea is awful to look upon, and the cold is intense, for we are nearing the banks of Newfoundland. Matt says it is the equinoctial gales we are encountering; they certainly blow us home quickly, for which I am thankful. How much shall I appreciate the comforts of a home after being so storm-tossed, as this rough weather affects me in so many ways that I cannot mention here.

*'March 25th—*I could not write yesterday, as my little son Willie and I had to spend the day in bed, for on the night of the 23rd it blew one of the most powerful gales imaginable. The ship had to be hove-to. The sea ran mountains high, and all day yesterday dashed with so great a fury against our stern that it seemed that it would be knocked in. The mate had his knee injured with the helm. The wind drew an iron bolt clean out of the deck, smashed to pieces the carpenter's bench and did several other acts of damage. I really was afraid, for as I lay in bed listening to the captain shouting himself hoarse, to the rush of feet overhead, to the tumbling about of everything both in the cabin and on deck, and to the roar of

the wind and dash of the heavy seas against us, causing the good ship to shake from stem to stern, I began to think we should not be able to stand up to it much longer. I clasped my dear boy in my arms and thought of those at home, wishing how much I might pass the child to them; for I felt that though I myself could face death, it would be tragic to see him perish. But, thanks be to God, though the storm raged unabated throughout the earlier part of yesterday, we have now weathered it out.

'At 4 p.m. yesterday we again put on sail and proceeded on our journey home. We had a quiet night and slept well, for neither Matt nor I had closed our eyes for two nights. It is squally today and very cold, but much better than it has been of late.

*'March 27th—*I fear another storm is coming. All day it has blown with great violence, and has taken two men, lashed to the wheel, to steer the ship. The wind is now increasing in fury, while the sea is dreadful to look upon. Yesterday I could not guide my pen for the rolling of the ship. I could not raise anything to my lips and, very foolishly, I grew despondent. As I laid in bed, crying bitterly, my dear child slapped me for doing so and told me, "You are a bad boy." At noon we passed a brig, outward bound; she was hove-to. The captain hoisted signals asking if they wished to be reported, but they did not answer. It must be dreadful weather for outward-bound vessels. No person who has not crossed the Atlantic during the winter can have the slightest idea of the heavy, rolling sea. I must conclude, for every moment I am in danger of having my bones broken against the bulkhead.

*'March 29th—*Yesterday the ship was rolling about so much that I knew it was useless to attempt to write. We had a strong fair wind, which still continues, though more moderately. It is in our favour and is taking us home at a

rapid rate. Today, at noon, we passed a great amount of wreckage consisting of logs of timber and part of the bulwarks of a ship with stanchions painted black. Matt thinks it is part of a Quebec vessel probably lost last Fall. Today the ship has kept swiftly on her course and had completed one hundred and ninety miles.

'April 3rd—Several days have passed since making my last entry, and during that time it has blown a hurricane without ceasing. Now there is a lull, but only for a time I fancy. Astern it looks as black as ink. The gale has blown so hard that the ship could not run before it and has had to be hove-to. The captain says, "Never in all my experience have I known it to blow so hard," and the barometer was lower than it has been for the past five years. Heavy seas washed over the main deck, and one sea struck the new strongly made hen-coop and carried it away. The water also washed into the steward's and the second mate's cabins, filling them and the adjoining store-rooms with water, and has swept into the galley, extinguishing the fires, spoiling all cooking and doing other damage. The wind has split to pieces several new sails and smashed timber on the bow. The rolling and pitching was terrible, and in my cabin many nice things have been destroyed. This is Good Friday, and the cook had made a large batch of buns for the crew, but, alas, owing to the deluge in the galley they have been rendered uneatable.

'April 5th—We sighted land at noon today, and now, at 5 p.m., are abreast of the Old Head of Kinsale Light-house. There is a gentle breeze which sends us along at six knots and, as it has been a mild day, I have spent it on deck. There are many fishing boats about, and the Irish coastline is distinctly visible. Oh, how nice it is to be once more in smooth waters! Everyone about the deck has a cheerful face, and I myself rejoice at the thought of soon being ashore.'

CHAPTER II

*End of a Voyage. Founding the Home.
A Strange Coincidence.*

In the joyful excitement of reaching Liverpool and of berthing in the Salthouse Dock, all the perils and discomforts of the voyage were soon forgotten. In the early noon of the following day the captain (my father) hired a cab and, with his wife and little son, set out to procure a lodging, presumably for a few weeks when he would then be at liberty to leave his ship and take his wife and little boy to her home in Surrey where, in August, she expected to give birth to her second child. Years later, my mother would relate to me how, after dismissing the cabman, they had started to look for suitable apartments, calling first at houses in Duke Street which, in the days of sailing ships, were largely laid out to accommodate ship masters and their wives. But, although in many windows a small card bearing the one word 'Apartments' was to be seen, the landladies in each case had an excuse to offer for being unable to provide the required accommodation. Doubtless they were apprehensive of the possibility of a little stranger arriving under their roofs and were reluctant to risk so embarrassing an interruption of their normal domestic routine. Upper Duke Street to Great George's Square were canvassed without success, and my parents were about to return to the ship when, at No. 5 Hardy Street, in answer to a ring at the door-bell, a lady of kind and cheerful personality appeared, and to the question, 'Can you advise us where to obtain apartments?' she replied, 'My drawing-room floor is vacant; would you care to see

it?' As this proved desirable in every way, my mother stayed there while my father went back to the ship to collect their luggage with which, in the evening, he returned to Hardy Street.

The next few ensuing weeks brought much comfort and happiness. The landlord was a Dutch master ship-repairer, and I can still recall the impression which a few years later, as a tiny girl, I formed of him. He was a short man with a big voice who interjected his conversation with 'Ja, Ja!' On account of this, and of his broken English, I regarded him as rather fearsome, despite the fact that he always had a pocketful of pennies to distribute among small boys and girls. I also remember that at all times he appeared dressed in a black frock-coat and tall silk hat. The three daughters of the house, girls in their early 'teens, were welcome companions to my mother and happy playfellows for her little son who was unaccustomed to young society, and delighted to find himself the centre of attraction and the playmate of these bright young creatures. Thus was laid the foundation of a friendship of many years duration. Pleasant, too, were the evenings spent in the garden of the Square, in which my parents planned their future and decided that, in early July they would go to Surrey, and after a short holiday in Richmond my father would return to Liverpool, leaving his wife and children in the care of her mother whilst he made another voyage, upon the completion of which they would all travel to Greenock, this being the home port of his ship, and that at which it was their intention to start a home; for although they had been married close upon four years, this period had been spent voyaging first to the West Indies and later to New Orleans. This was now at an end, for with the prospect of two children to look after, it was deemed advisable for her to remain ashore. But how

true it is that 'the best laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley,' for during the morning of the twenty-third of June, 1874, my mother was taken ill and at noon a small, weakly babe was ushered into the world. Doctor Carter, of Gambier Terrace, who had been hurriedly called in, was, on making his visit the next day, astonished to find the babe still alive, and some months later was even more surprised to find that this puny piece of humanity had developed into a remarkably healthy and robust child.

My mother has since told me how extremely disappointed she felt when told that her second baby was a daughter. She would say, 'I never thought of such a thing, and at first I did not feel pleased; but what, since, should I have done without you?' Any ground of complaint on the score of my sex gradually but entirely receded by the subsequent arrival of six further sons in succession before the arrival of her last child, a welcome second daughter.

By the time my mother was restored to health, and my father ready to depart, Liverpool, often contemptuously spoken of as 'dirty Liverpool' by passing visitors who knew but little of its great heart, had weaved its spell about them. My father, who had decided that in the near future he would transfer to steam from sail, thought, moreover, that Liverpool would serve his plans better than any other port.

After my father's departure, my mother looked for a house and, in September, found one to meet her requirements in one of the many new streets which were being built and developed in the Parliament Fields area of Toxteth Park. It was new property, not finished in detail, and on discovering that the front entrance had not yet been fitted with either lock or bolt, by locking her bedroom door at night she initiated a habit she retained to the end of her

life. There followed many busy days taken up with furnishing the new home, or rather buying its essentials for my mother would not think of purchasing the more ornate non-essentials without the advice and, in her opinion, the superior judgment of her husband. At first the only people to cross the threshold were the three young daughters from Hardy Street who had now become her regular companions. Very soon the house next door was ready, and was let to a young lady who was the possessor of a merry laugh, a pair of bright blue eyes, and a head of light brown curls held, in the fashion of the time, by a large comb which left them loosely hanging down her back. Soon after her arrival this attractive neighbour made friends with little Willie over the back wall and, later, knocked at the door explaining in an apologetic manner that she had called in the hope of settling a dispute! As my mother did not know a soul in Liverpool apart from her Hardy Street friends, and had never spoken to her neighbour, nor even knew her name, she was somewhat taken aback to be called on for the purpose of settling a dispute, and even more so when she was informed that the dispute was between the caller and the caller's husband! However, the lady proceeded to explain that her husband, Captain James Robertson of the s.s. *Arabian*, had recently arrived home and, after observing my mother, would persist in saying that in the Spring of that year he had seen her standing on the deck of a ship which was leaving New Orleans. She was sure that he was entirely mistaken for, as she pointed out to him, there were two young children, one only a few weeks old. She had therefore called to settle the argument and was somewhat astounded to find that her husband's surmise was correct. How strange that two people should stand close to each other in a city thousands of miles across the Atlantic; that they

should cross the great ocean, land in the same country, the same city and suburb, and even the same street, and actually come to dwell next door to each other! This remarkable coincidence led to the formation of a perfect and unique friendship between two families which stood true and firm throughout the trials and vicissitudes of over forty years, without the blemish of even a solitary misunderstanding on either side. When we were little children we could not pronounce her name, and it was John, the second boy, who first called her 'Rom,' and 'Mrs. Rom' she remained to all of us ever afterwards. Here I would like to pay tribute to all Mrs. Rom's who, like her, give love and understanding to little children, and give to the mothers of them their completely disinterested friendship, loyalty, and sympathetic sharing of perplexities, responsibilities, joys and sorrows and who, like our Mrs. Rom, leave this world commending her friend and family unto the safe keeping of our Heavenly Father.

CHAPTER III

Early Recollections of a Sailor-father

My earliest recollections of infancy having passed, my next recollections include one of a bear-like creature coming into our home and monopolising my mother's attentions. I deeply resented removal from my mother's bedroom and having my place taken by this strange creature. Up to this time, when I was three years of age, I had rarely come into contact with grown men for, during my father's absence, my mother led a very secluded life.

However, this bearded and whiskered stranger soon evolved into a jolly playmate known as 'Papa.' To us, as children, he was an affectionate and fond father, but as we grew up he proved himself to be a strict disciplinarian demanding and obtaining from each of his seven sons implicit obedience and deep respect. I remember how, during the schooldays of the elder boys, they would have to line up sharply at 8 a.m. for personal inspection before breakfasting prior to leaving for school, to ensure that hats and suits had been brushed, boots had been well polished, hair combed and brushed and, in particular, that their ablutions had not been performed so perfunctorily as to leave any telltale 'tide-marks' about their necks. Except on Sundays, meals for my father were always served first and in a separate room, the children having to wait meantime for the serving of their own meals. Accustomed as they were, during the long periods of my father's absence to prompt attention, they did not appreciate these occasions when they became servitors who only stand and wait. On one such occasion my brothers, Charlie, aged eleven, and Ernest, aged nine, on returning from school were told that Pa had arrived, and that they were to go into the next room to meet him and were to kiss him and say 'How are you?' They thus dutifully greeted him, and then promptly returned to their mother with the simultaneous but unexpected question: 'Ma, when is Pa going away again?' which caused a horrified mother to exclaim, 'Hush, hush! You are a couple of very unkind boys. Poor father has only just come home and here you are already asking when he is going away. I am ashamed of you.'

My father possessed a good voice, and would 'pace the bridge' in the back garden for a full hour singing the songs that were being made currently popular by many of the

concert and variety artists of that time such as Charles Coburn, then a very young man, and the 'Great MacDowell,' particular favourites of which the only consecutive words I now remember being:

'Sitting on a balcony, smoking a cigar,
Talking to a pretty girl, heedless of her Pa',
and 'Up in a balloon, boys, up in a balloon.'

Once only did he raise his hand to me, but I have never forgotten the occasion because, child though I was, I felt that I had been treated unjustly. I should explain that, as in most Victorian homes, it was a law, as immutable as those of the Medes and Persians, that children should be seen but not heard, especially when visitors were present. Alas! on one occasion I forgot the rigidity of that law. I had been sitting quietly, occupied threading beads, whilst my father was holding an animated conversation with another shipmaster when I heard him remark 'they will have to call at Queenstown for the mails.' The feminist instinct must have been uppermost in me at that moment, for I blurted out, 'Why can't they call for the females as well?' A light box over the ears was the immediate answer to this enquiry, accompanied by a sharp rebuke. I confess that I had not been physically hurt, but it was the indignity, rather, which caused the tears and made it necessary a minute later for me to complain to my mother. 'Well, my dear,' she said in gentle admonishment, 'it was rude to interrupt a conversation of your elders.' Years later, in recalling the incident, my mother told me what real vexation my punishment had caused her, and that, for once, she had criticised my father's code of discipline. I am convinced that my father had no understanding of children, probably due to his having had but little experience of home life and family affections, for when very young he had lost his father at sea, a loss

followed shortly after by the death of his mother. Thus he was completely orphaned at the tender age of eight years, and only a few years later was voyaging in that hardest of hard schools of tough work and discipline, an American sailing ship of the eighteen-forties. Until he met my mother, who was fourteen years his junior, his life had been entirely devoid of affection. I often think he grudged, no doubt unconsciously, the love and affection my mother bestowed upon her family.

Father's idea of giving his children a treat was not always an unmixed pleasure, for although we felt proud and flattered to accompany father, we grew weary of the prescribed routine of these occasions, which always took place on Saturdays. We were taken via Windsor, Hope and Rodney Street to Islington, for we always went on foot, a circumstance which caused young Willie to whisper to me 'I hate these walking tours.' We generally walked in front of father, so that he might correct any tendency to slouch along. Shoulders back, head erect, and hands out of pockets were among a variety of orders to which strict attention had to be paid. First we would visit the Walker Art Gallery, in which, at least, interest among the members of the party was universal. Then our itinerary would take us into the Museum which, unlike our visit to the Art Gallery, always proved wearisome, and where it seemed that father spent a long time in front of each exhibit. Of course, it could not have been so, but we were tired, and from that time onward I have heartily disliked even the word museum. The examination of seemingly every case and exhibit of the Museum concluded, the next call was usually to Noblett's toffee-shop in London Road, to purchase a pound of Everton toffee (price sevenpence) to take home to mother, and half a pound of peardrops (price threepence) to be passed round once before leaving

the shop and then to be put away for future refreshment. Then on to Lime Street where, in front of Reynolds' Wax-works, we would watch with delight the old yet ever new performance of Punch and Judy; at the conclusion of which we undertook the long trek home, which I believe father really enjoyed. I am certain that he would have been astonished had someone suggested to him that his children must be tired.

Although he had received but little schooling, my father, by assiduous self-education over a number of years, had acquired no mean reputation as a scholar. He was well read and could have claimed to be an authority on the works of Shakespeare and Scott, from whose pages he was always ready to deliver himself of quotations apposite to every occurrence. My mother said that he proposed marriage to her on Richmond Hill with a quotation from the lips of Othello. Many a time, when some friend of mother's would call for a little chat, father would listen to the discussed topic and intervene with 'Scott says . . .' and here would follow a quotation in keeping with the conversation, followed not infrequently by a number of stanzas delivered unconscious of the apathy, the boredom and sometimes the real annoyance of his audience. Often I have seen mother go behind his back and, by the shaking of her head and the manipulation of her eyebrows, endeavour to command the forbearance and indulgence of her visitor. My father could fluently converse in Spanish, Portuguese, German and French, and, as a writer, was almost as facile at versification as in the writing of prose. He was also a clever seaman, and at the age of twenty-eight, was master of a well-known tea clipper, incidentally acquiring, during the course of his career, the rank of Commander in the R.N.R.

My first recollection of Christmas is of wearing a pink sash and a necklace of coral beads, and of being placed to look through a window whilst the baby, two years my junior, was being decked out in party attire. I was told that I was going to a tea-party. This new word evidently made so deep an impression upon me that during the following two years I always addressed baby brother John as 'Tea-party.'

This Christmas gathering was held at the Swan Inn, which at that time existed at the corner of Carter and Upper Hill Streets, the proprietor of which was a Mr. McIntyre who, I believe, had in some capacity once been connected with the sea. I have just faint recollections of this visit, but it has always been linked with something rather awesome and mysterious. When grown up I mentioned this impression to my mother, telling her this feeling seemed to be connected in some manner with pianos, and I wondered if it was because of it being the first time I had seen or heard this instrument. My mother was able to tell me that during the evening a clever pianist entertained the company with a selection of solos. He was, however, a dwarf. Although too young at the time to understand this (to me) phenomenon, I was yet aware of something unusual.

It was at this period that my father left sail for steam, and once more passed out of my life by departing for the China coast where for eighteen months he was trading between Hong Kong and Shanghai. What joy it gave me when a sailor delivered at our home a small chair, a beautiful specimen of Chinese art, and to find a label addressed to myself bearing the words, 'A gift to my little daughter on her fifth birthday, from Papa.' Shortly afterwards Papa returned, bringing many interesting articles of Chinese workmanship, a case of Chinese preserved

ginger; another of oranges in syrup, and quantities of tea. Little wonder, then, that we children looked upon him as a conjurer of good things.

CHAPTER IV

Some Recollections of the Eighteen-Eighties

Two Sea-faring Tragedies. We become Chapel-goers. Sunday School Anniversaries. Music—Indoor and Outdoor.

Among the seafaring communities of our great seaports there exists a strong bond of common interest, strengthened and held by the various tragedies which fall upon the families of the men who go down to the sea in ships. In the course of a life, already fairly long, I have been brought into contact with many such tragedies. A number have been on a very large scale such as attended the loss of great liners such as the *Naronic* in the early 'nineties; of the *Titanic* in 1912; and of the *Lusitania* in 1915, most of which, by reason of their scale, have become part of navigational history and therefore upon which much has already been written. But for each of these large-scale disasters which have fallen upon Liverpool seafaring families, perhaps scores have happened which have remained news items for a week or so and then have been quickly forgotten, sometimes because they were too soon succeeded by the news of some fresh marine loss. These have been the losses of the less well-known but much more numerous units of the city's fleets of freighters—sail and steam—with crews of two or three dozen or so, which have never returned and the nature of whose final end, even, has been obscure.

One of the first of these which in any way concerned me personally happened in the following circumstances. Among the older style houses in Nile Street, near the new Liverpool Cathedral, was one owned by a Captain May, of the sailing ship *Woolamaloo*, in the Australian trade, and occupied by his wife and five children.

One summer evening two gentlemen stood opposite this house, conversing, when they noticed a lady open a window on the third floor; close it within a few inches, and then draw a heavy curtain across. A few minutes later two little boys in night attire were seen to open the window to a wider extent and, between them, lift up to the open window a smaller child who, in great delight, leaned far out over the sill. The horrified spectators dashed over the road to ring the house bell, but reached the opposite pavement only in time to raise from the ground the shattered body of a baby child, and when Mrs. May opened the door it was to see the unconscious form of her little son in the arms of a stranger. The child was immediately taken to the Royal Southern Hospital, where he died shortly after admission. Mrs. May, who was a devoted mother, suffered greatly from the shock and grief of losing her baby in this tragic manner, and Captain May, who arrived home shortly after the sad event, decided that Mrs. May and her two younger children, Emily, a little girl of six, and a four-year-old son, should accompany them on his next voyage—to Australia—to bring back a cargo of wool.

So it was that I was taken by mother to the house in Nile street to say goodbye to the travellers. How well I remember that afternoon, and of being in the basement kitchen where stood a large new rocking-horse which would seat four juvenile equestrians. This had been bought by Captain May to amuse the children on the long

sea voyage. Never have I experienced such a sense of adventure as on that well-remembered afternoon, with one of the boys, I rose and fell to the motion of our cantering mount. Farewells were said, and in due course letters arrived from Australia to say that all was well; that the voyage had proved most beneficial to Mrs. May, and that they were all beginning to look forward to the homeward voyage and to being in Liverpool again in the spring. Alas! this vessel never returned, and her fate is numbered among the many unsolved mysteries of the sea which have so often involved Merseyside homes. But about the time she was due in the St. George's Channel the remains of a large rocking-horse, similar to the one belonging to Captain May's children, was washed up on the Cornish coast. Nothing else.

The two older boys, who had been left at home in the care of a grandmother, were shortly afterwards admitted to that noble institution in Newsham Park, the Liverpool Seamen's Orphanage.

This sad event was followed soon afterwards by another, and this time the tragedy fell upon our dear Mrs. Rom. How often, in later years, have I heard mother tell, with deep emotion, how one morning in answer to a knock she opened the door to a strange gentleman who stated that he had called from a certain shipping company to see Mrs. Robertson, but although he had both knocked and rung the bell, there was no reply. My mother was able to tell him that Mrs. Robertson had gone with her two children to New Brighton for the day. He said that he was the bearer of bad news and, entering our home, enquired if mother and Mrs. Robertson were acquainted. On being told that they were close friends, he asked my mother if she would undertake to break to Mrs. Robertson the news that wreckage and an upturned boat bearing the

name of her husband's ship had been found, and it was gravely feared that the ship had foundered with all hands, but within a day or two they would know with certainty, and if their fears were confirmed they would send a telegram to my mother and ask if she would break the sad news to her friend. Early that evening Mrs. Robertson and her two children returned in good spirits after spending a happy day on the sands. My mother decided it would be better to keep the bad news until the following day and to give her friend the opportunity of a night's rest which her condition at that time made so essential. Early next morning mother gave her the shipping company's report of the wreckage, and the morning passed with spirits alternating between hope and despair. The arrival during the afternoon of a telegram unhappily confirmed the loss of another fine Liverpool ship and the whole of her crew of brave seamen.

The manner of handling the occurrence by the shipping company, *vis-a-vis* the wife of one of its shipmasters, may strike the reader of today by its extreme casualness. But so it was, and it was accepted, rather as a Postmaster might politely notify, with the conventional expression of regret 'that a parcel had unfortunately been lost in transmission.' But certain Board of Trade regulations were not nearly so stringent in those days as they have since become, and in some such cases it might have been possible to trace a connection between the two circumstances.

What heroines, the women who were so bereaved, proved themselves, for not only were they robbed of partners who, almost without exception, were affectionate, devoted husbands and fathers, but also their only means of support, for at that time there was no form of compensation, nor pensions for widows and orphaned children. If the breadwinner was taken his dependants had to manage as best they could.

So it came to pass that three months later, following the birth of another daughter, who did not survive, our Mrs. Rom bravely and cheerfully took up her burden and, investing her meagre capital in the business of a little general store, strove to give to her two young daughters a few of the advantages which, at one time, it seemed would be easy to provide. She lived, although after years of struggle, to see her children well established in life, and the younger of the two, after a successful university career, to attain distinction in the scholastic world.

* * *

My father was a strict Sabbatarian. I have been told that aboard ship he would have only essential work undertaken on Sundays, and when at home he was a regular attendant at church service. Thus it was that on his return from China he took my brother Willie and me to the morning service at the parish church. Though he had taken sittings there for some years, they had been seldom occupied owing to his absence abroad and to my mother often being kept at home by the care of a young family. On this occasion my father, who carried a light walking-stick, placed this inside a small brass railing which had been fitted to the pew in front of his. He was much astonished, and I think hurt, when on the following day the verger called at our home to say that he had been instructed to ask Captain Cowper if he would please not use the umbrella rack placed at the end of the Misses M.'s pew, as it had been put there at their expense and they had complained that the occupant of the pew behind had made use of it. My father assured the verger that this liberty had been quite unintentional and that it would not be taken again. He evidently turned the matter over in his mind, for once or twice he reverted to it and said to mother, 'You know, I don't think it Christian-like to

complain of such a trivial thing; it does not fit in with that spirit of brotherhood which I have always regarded as the foundation and as of the essence of Christianity.' The following Sunday morning, at church-time, he went off alone, and on his return told how he felt out of harmony with the church he had always attended, and so had gone into a little chapel at the corner of Geraint Street where he had received a warm and Christian-like welcome. The following Sunday he again attended service there, but accompanied by his eldest son. Before sailing he received a visit from one of the elders who brought with him literature for father's interest whilst at sea; a kindly thought much appreciated. Soon afterwards both my parents became members of this community and remained faithful to it until their deaths. I, too, became a Sunday-school scholar at it, and in course of time the whole family consisting of seven sons and two daughters became members of both school and church. So trivial an incident had widespread effect. Both my father and mother were descendants of families who, for many generations had been strict adherents to the Anglican Church, in which, on my mother's side, several clergy were numbered among her forebears, including one who had held high office. During my youth all my interests were centred in the work and in the friends I made at this little chapel.

* * *

At the time of which I write, children had not the entertainments and indulgences which they enjoy today. Indeed, some very young people in our present time are apparently so satiated in this respect that I rather doubt if 'enjoy' can quite correctly be used. The Sunday-school anniversary and the midsummer Sunday-school excursion were two outstanding events of the year, the latter usually

partaking of a day spent at some near-by rural retreat such as Bidston Hill or New Ferry (Mills Gardens), both of which were then truly rural. January, the month of Sunday-school anniversary tea-parties and concerts, was observed by the practice of a number of little girls arriving at day-school with their hair twisted into tiers of small plaits, for they were to appear, in the near future, upon the platform in a service of song, or were to display their puny elocutionary gifts, as the writer often did, in such dramatic stories as 'The Wreck of the Hesperus' (always a certain 'hit' with a juvenile Liverpool audience), 'Somebody's Mother' (which might or might not go off at half-cock), and 'We are Seven' or 'The Graves of a Household' by Mrs. Hemans, herself a native of Liverpool.

On these occasions, and for the benefit of admiring friends and relatives at these public appearances, one had to be well frizzed. Although the preliminary training of the hair for this style of decoration was forbidden, nevertheless, during the month of January every school-mistress seemed able to find sanction for turning a blind eye to the array of plaits. It was usual for fully fifty per cent of the young reciters to 'dry up,' in the theatrical sense of the term, several times during their recitals; consequently the 'prompters' had an important function to fill. These functionaries were often the brothers or sisters of the reciters, who would throw them an appealing glance at the approach of the embarrassing moment of 'drying-up.' One or two of my own brothers had the provoking habit of allowing the book to fall to the floor at such crucial moments, especially if the reciter happened to be one of his own kin.

The same boy who chanced, early, to develop a precocious facility for lampooning 'once bribed a younger brother, billed to recite 'The Graves of a Household,' the

sum of threepence if he would, instead, deliver a highly parodical version of that exquisite poem. It was therefore an astonished and rather aggrieved Superintendent, but an amused audience, who heard a somewhat astounding recital for which the younger boy duly received his threepence. Later that evening, at home, both boys received some additional recognition from their mother in a form which could neither be bequeathed nor spent. Her right arm was not then by any means a weak one.

* * *

I do not believe that the child of today, who has the wealth of modern diversions upon which to draw, derives the amount of enjoyment from them that the youngster of two generations ago did from his fewer but more simple and spontaneous ones. Many young people of today have received the impression that life, for those of my childhood days, was dull and rather miserable. I deny it. The streets, lit by gas-light, were neither dull nor dark, for through the slats of venetian blinds there streamed forth beams of light, as in homes aspiring to gentility the girls of the family were taught to play the piano, and father and mother took care that practising was regularly undertaken. So, from many of the parlours overlooking the suburban streets, one could hear the strains of 'The Robin's Return,' 'Silvery Waves' and 'with almost the inevitability of fate, 'The Maiden's Prayer.' Among more advanced pupils, or those who presumed to stake some claim to a more cultivated musical taste, Brahms' waltzes, especially his No. 1 was distinctly favoured.

The main streets certainly presented a more animated appearance than they do today, for this was the time when the proprietors of suburban shops had good family businesses unassailed by and unabsorbed into the various multiple-shop trusts which became a later development of

commerce. Both the proprietors and their wives would be busily employed upon their premises (over which they usually lived) until closing time, which was nine o'clock, except on Saturdays when it was ten or eleven p.m. So each establishment was well lighted until late at night, making the streets bright and cheerful. During the winter months certain Liverpool thoroughfares were also brightened by well-lit carriages complete with coachmen and footmen which, once a week, carried the wives and daughters of Liverpool's shipping magnates and merchant princes to the concerts held in the old Philharmonic Hall. What a grand and stately procession they made as they drove from the outlying suburbs, into the city, to the rhythmic clip-clop of horses' hoofs, the bright interiors of the carriages giving to the onlookers glimpses of fair occupants in evening dress and opera cloak, and their equally immaculate escorts. I would often steal out to watch these evening processions and lose myself in admiration of these beautiful women in their lovely gowns, and later, would be lulled to sleep by the echoes of the homeward return of their carriages.

There was also the German band which exercised its musical talent in various thoroughfares of the south end and always in proximity to those shops engaged in the succulent industry of pork-butcherling, a business which was then almost monopolised by immigrant Germans among whom the names of Kerner, Yaag and Muller were prominent. This band always included in its recital certain well-known German folk and hymn tunes such as *Lorlei* and 'Ein feste Burg.' It also included, indeed it was the bandsman's *piece de resistance*, a plaintively lugubrious semi-hymn, semi-ballad known by the title 'Is there room for Mary there?'

For some reason, or lack of it, this band was traditionally the butt of any prank, practical joke, or form of annoyance which local boys could think up, from sucking lemons in front of the brass-instrumentalists to accompanying the bands, in their better-known numbers, on penny tin whistles pitched in a key quite different from that in which the band were playing. These antics frequently caused a temporary diminution of the playing strength of the band, as it would become necessary for one or two hefty Germans to detach themselves from it to give chase to the boys who, thanks to having a previously planned retreat and a complete knowledge of the geography of back entries, had no difficulty in evading capture.

At this time the now depressed and dismal-looking area of Great George Street and St. James' Place was a busy and prosperous neighbourhood, with a covered market on the site now occupied by the David Lewis Hostel, and many thriving businesses among which, in Great George Street, were Lewis's, the drapers and house furnishers (not to be confused with Lewis's of Ranelagh Street), Smith & Brownlow, dress and mantle-makers, Kings, the milliners and, close by, Thompson's, provision merchants and Pentony's boot and shoe emporium.

There will not now be many who remember the blind vendor of bootlaces who, all the year round, stood on the steps beneath the archway of a wall surrounding St. James' Church, and who in sepulchral tones repeated the incessant cry of 'Buy a pair'; 'buy a pair.' Gone is the archway, and also, long since, the vendor of bootlaces; yet in fancy I hear his cry and can recall his sallow, bearded face as plainly as I heard and beheld him more than sixty years ago. Then there was a blind musician who, with a small harmonium, established himself at the corner of Upper

Stanhope Street and St. James' Place, just outside Pentony's. He played and sang well, choosing always the hymns of Sankey and Moody. Passers-by would stop to join in and sing with gusto the choruses of 'Where is my boy tonight?' and 'When the roll is called up yonder,' etc. The singers were men of the working class, and these impromptu services of song were conducted in a reverent and orderly manner and often had the incidental material result of ensuring a plentiful harvest of coppers for the blind harmonium player.

CHAPTER V

Some Further Recollections of the Eighteen-Eighties

The Seamy Side. Liverpool Exhibition, 1885. Two Liverpool Characters. School Days. Spring-heeled Jack.

If life in Liverpool was, for many of its children, sunny, sheltered and safe, for others it was drab, dreary and sorrowful. Drink and degradation went hand in hand. There was a multiplicity of drink shops; along the main roads, including such lengthy roads as West Derby Road, one could be found at almost every side street corner. The important licensing legislation which was passed at the beginning of the twentieth century fortunately weeded a good many of them out. They spread and flourished like a green-bay tree. I recall how, coming from or going to school, we would frequently meet police officers frog-marching a man to the nearest bridewell, or sometimes pushing a handcart whilst two others would be endeavouring to hold up a struggling, screaming woman so drunk as to be incapable of walking even with the aid of two policemen.

Engraved upon my memory is one scene I shall never forget. I had spent the afternoon at the house of my god-mother in Hardy Street, and about seven in the evening was taken home. It was a raw winter night, and sleet was falling. As we passed the corner of Dexter Street and St. James' Place we saw a number of little children huddled together on the step of a public-house. They were barefooted and had scarcely enough clothing to cover their nakedness and crying so bitterly that they must have been suffering intensely from cold and hunger. None of the passers-by took heed of the little sufferers, possibly because it was a very common sight. I wonder if any of that little group survived their miserable suffering childhood, and in how many that night were sown seeds of disease. Poor innocent victims of a bestial traffic which had destroyed all sense of parenthood and responsibility in those who should have been their natural protectors.

Both in summer and winter many Liverpool streets swarmed with ill-clad, barefooted children, each one a specimen of abject misery, turned on to the streets to reap a few coppers from the miserable trade of match-selling or news vending. From their ranks were also recruited the young girl step-cleaners who earned a hard and precarious living by scrubbing the steps of houses in the suburbs, and those who went around, in excessive numbers, hawking bundles of firewood from door to door contained in large, heavy baskets which they carried balanced on their heads. What dreary tramps these young people usually had, and to what hard, rough work their emaciated bodies had to submit in order that they might eke out their wretched livelihood.

In 1905 a private society known as the 'Police Aid Society' was founded by the late Alderman Watts with the support of many of Liverpool's leading citizens, with the

object of relieving the ill-clad and uncared for children of the city. Work parties were formed at which the lady members of this society made numerous garments for distribution to necessitous children, conducted under the direction of the police, who took measures to ensure that no article of clothing or footwear could be diverted from its rightful recipient to the pawnshops. This noble work has been greatly blessed, for today it would be difficult to find a barefooted, underclad child on the streets of Liverpool.

When I was a child, children over eleven years of age were permitted to trade on the streets, but the Education Act of 1902 made it illegal for children under the age of fourteen to be so employed, and the Children and Young Persons Act of 1932 raised the age to sixteen years. So the lamps of humanity, education and reform, lighted and carried by the citizens on Merseyside, have brightened and ameliorated the lives of suffering, helpless children.

In the late 'eighties, petty thieving was prevalent to an extent comparable only to the volume of it which has developed during the period of relapse marked by the years of the recent Great War and those which have since ensued. Should a housewife, after dark, leave a sheet or tablecloth hanging in her backyard or back garden, it frequently disappeared. Another form of theft which had a distinct vogue of its own involved the enticement of small children into back entries for the purpose, on some pretext, of robbing them of their clothing. My brother, John, was thus victimised three times. My only experience of it evidently left its impression on me, for I remember clearly how, on leaving the infant school to which I had recently been sent, a young woman spoke to me saying, 'What a pretty coat you have. My little girl wants one like that; will you come into the entry and show it to her?'

And off I went with her, feeling pleased that my clothes were so much admired. Of course there was no child there. She then said, 'I will take its pattern; I shan't be long away and I'll bring you back some sweets, but don't move away from here until I come back.' It seemed to me that I remained there a very long time before some person asked me for what I was waiting and decided to accompany me home when informed.

* * *

The year 1885 was a memorable one for me, as it brought two outstanding events. Firstly, the Liverpool Exhibition and, later, the arrival of 'Timmy.'

The Exhibition, opened by Queen Victoria, gave an added interest to life. It was the most discussed topic of the time both at home and at school. Medals to mark the event were distributed to all school children. This was followed by the announcement that scholars aged ten and upwards were to be taken to see the Queen pass along Edge Lane to open the Exhibition. The singing of the national anthem was practised daily, and finally a large company, replete with medals and banners, set forth to march to Edge Lane, where we joined many other contingents of Liverpool's school-children and lined the long road, standing in packed formation. Rain began to fall, and during a heavy shower the signal was given for us to raise our voices in 'God save our Gracious Queen,' which we certainly sang with both heart and voice in the belief that the great moment was approaching. Several heavy funeral-like carriages passed quickly along, but still we waited. At last came the order 'Turn, March,' and the formation began to move. From all quarters came the question, 'When are we going to see the Queen?' and the answer was, 'She has gone; she was in one of those carriages which passed while you were singing.' Had

Victoria realised the great disappointment which so many of her younger subjects experienced on this occasion I think this gracious lady would at least have shown herself at the windows of her carriage. So, although I sought to make my debut before royalty this object was not achieved. The only thing I did achieve was to obtain a sharp attack of tonsillitis; probably induced by standing about in wet clothes.

The Exhibition was a source of great interest and pleasure. We wandered from stall to stall in search of free samples and attractive advertising matter, and to look upon strange objects which opened up many a new interest. In the grounds we shared in the excitement and thrill of Colonel Cody's 'Buffalo Bill' representation of life on the Western prairies, and his company's grand display of horsemanship. A local youth proudly boasted to his companions that the famous bucking pony could not dislodge him from his back, and to prove it he would put his horsemanship to the test on the following Saturday afternoon. On that day there was accordingly a large number of young people from the South-end to witness his performance. A band-wagon was set in the middle of the arena on which was mounted a brass band of a dozen instrumentalists who, however quaint it may now seem, all appeared in black frock-coats and tall silk hats. Rather to the delight of his young South-end acquaintances it took but a few seconds before their boastful acquaintance lay sprawling upon the tan from which he beat a hasty retreat a wiser and a rather more painful youth. However, the bucking pony, instead of putting him straightway upon the ground as was his custom with other riders, seemed to have an instinctive wish to enter into the fun of the thing more fully on this occasion. He did not immediately commence to buck when mounted, but took

about a dozen or so orderly trotting steps which made him undistinguishable from any mannerly and well behaved hack from a Richmond Park ladies' riding stable. These orderly steps were in the direction of the band-wagon when, approaching which, he gave one prodigious jerk of his hind quarters and landed his rider in the dead centre of the band-wagon personnel, the impact between whom and the rider also shot one euphonium player and one trombonist backward into the tan. Nobody was hurt beyond a shaking, fortunately, and several hundred Liverpool citizens went home that afternoon feeling that they had had more than full value for their entrance money.

Another juvenile interest in the Exhibition was the waffle-maker, but he did not commence business until the shades of evening had begun to fall, which for junior visitors was a decided disadvantage as our small amount of pocket-money would not last throughout the day. So when we gathered around him, to watch in amazement the rapid making and selling of these delectable dainties many of which he would dispose of gratis among the bystanders, we fondly hoped to be one of the lucky ones. Alas! these hopes were never realised, and now in these days of strict rationing I feel, when I recall those waffles thickly powdered with sugar, that there may be something, after all, in the phrase 'the good old days.'

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Two outstanding personalities were frequently to be seen in the streets of our city during the 'eighties. Though widely different in character and service, they were of equal interest to the younger generation. One was that favourite old lady 'Old Mother Noblett,' who took the air in an open carriage drawn by a pair of fine, high-stepping horses attended by both coachman and footman. I

remember her as a somewhat brawny type of old-ladyhood, clad in the dress of a generation bygone even in those days, but made familiar to us—especially the famous poke-bonnet—by the mural advertisements of the enterprising confectionery firm who promoted this turnout. While I am still doubtful whether Old Mother Noblett actually belonged to the female sex there is no doubt that 'she' succeeded in assuming an expression of surpassing dignity and benevolence as she leaned back and posed with an easy abandon as to the manner born. This advertisement-de-luxe drew much attention, especially from visitors to the city, as it passed through the then exclusive and fashionable Bold Street on its way to the suburbs and the branches of Messrs. Noblett.

Doctor Hugh Owen Thomas, Liverpool's eminent surgeon, was another who drew much attention as he drove around on his visits to his patients in an extremely high gig, with high-stepping horse, and 'Tiger,' who sat with folded arms across his chest and as immobile as a stone statue.

The doctor was always dressed in a navy-blue double-beasted coat which reached to his ankles; a navy-blue peaked cap of maritime design and deep gauntletted gloves; an ensemble which tended to convey the impression that he was an Admiral of the Queen's Navy and completely to disguise his true profession. Should this equipage turn from one of the main roads into a side-street and draw up at one of the houses therein, it would invariably be followed by a numerous knot of boys and girls who would stand at a respectful distance in excited expectation of hearing shrieks and groans from the patient, for rumour was rife among them that 'this always happened when bones are being set.' Meanwhile the boys, in hushed voices, would vie with one another in telling

the most bloodcurdling tales of broken limbs and miraculous cures, all redounding to the credit of the famous Dr. Thomas.

I think the tallest of these stories came from young Jimmy, whose father was an engineer in the service of Elder Dempster & Co. and who frequently voyaged to West Africa. Jimmy's story was that 'Once me father was in Africa and a big black savage came along and knocked me father's head clean off at the neck. Just then, Doctor Thomas came along and set it on again and me father was made alright.' One of the older boys broke in with, 'I don't believe it, because Doctor Thomas does not live in Africa.' For a moment Jimmy looked nonplussed. Then his face brightening, he replied, 'Well; the doctor had gone there for his holidays, Mr. Cleverstick'. This could not be refuted, but when Jimmy's mother heard, via Jimmy's sister, of this remarkable tale she was sufficiently disturbed by her son's capacity for romancing as to teach him that it would not pay to tell such fibs. She accordingly informed Jimmy that she had no idea that such dreadful savages lived in Africa, and that 'we must send some people to teach them to be different,' and, to this end, 'Jimmy must for the next four weeks put his Saturday Penny into the missionary box.' From that time Jimmy became a reformed story-teller. Doubtless no one would have been more surprised than the doctor himself had he heard some of these tales, or known what a halo of heroism and romance encircled his brow when he was regarded by the young citizens of Liverpool.

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Of my schooldays I have neither happy nor even pleasant memories. My brothers were sent to a Higher Grade School but I to a Church School in the near neighbourhood. The schoolrooms were small and dismal,

the latter characteristic being deepened in the case of certain schoolrooms which were beneath the street level and were reached by descending a flight of steps. Gas, which was the illuminant of that time, burned in these rooms throughout the day, and they were not even incandescent gas lights. During our lessons, particularly if it was one delivered whilst we stood, it was no uncommon occurrence for some of the scholars to faint. Strangely enough, it was the boys who were chiefly affected in this respect. When another window was added to admit more air this disturbance came to an end. I, being a strong child, was never so affected. All my miseries arose from the fact that I could not grasp the subtleties of arithmetic. Though I kept my place at the top of the class in two subjects they did not count. Looking back, I realise the reason of my failure. It was because the initial stages were not properly taught. There was but one trained teacher on the staff, and frequently girls from the elder classes gave, or purported to give, lessons. When we removed into a higher standard, a blackboard lesson, followed by a test, was given which dealt with figures slightly more involved than those previously learned, and those children possessed of a natural bent for figures were able to grasp their significance. Those not having this bent, and who should have received more tuition, were left to flounder helplessly with a subject which to them was a hopeless puzzle. This, to a child anxious to please, was bad enough, but there was also additional misery in the knowledge that at the end of the test, Nemesis, in the form of the headmistress equipped with what was known as a 'pointer' would appear and lay this symbol of authority across the shoulders of those who fell short of what must have been the modest examination standards of the establishment. This was veritable nightmare to me, and in consequence

of it I could not concentrate upon the lesson and would work myself into a state of acute nervousness. After a time I obeyed the instinct of self-preservation by always wearing, when at school, a cape which covered my shoulder-blades and so gave me a modicum of protection from the inevitable strokes of the chastening 'pointer.' At school I never surmounted the difficulties of arithmetic which, strangely enough, was deemed of far greater importance than that of English, for the majority of the girl pupils would become either dressmakers or milliners, as the day of the girl clerk and the stenographer had not yet dawned. How thankful I was when, at the age of fourteen years, my mother acceded to my earnest request that I might leave school. Doubtless a very good reason in granting it was that two months later my mother's ninth child, a little daughter, was born to her.

At this stage of my life I should have liked, very much, to do what most girls of my acquaintance seemed to do—go to business—which meant serving two years' apprenticeship in town. On broaching this wish to my parents I was told my place was in the home helping mother with the children and with household duties. I therefore settled to the 'daily round and common task' and was contented and happy in the companionship of my dear mother, seven tantalising, tiresome but lovable brothers, and a sweet baby sister.

Life for me was now opening out and full of new interests. It was at this period that there came to our chapel a young dental surgeon, Arthur Black, fresh from his professional examinations. He had come to Liverpool to practise his profession, and as both he and his family belonged, in London, to our own religious connexion, he took membership with us. He became a well-known figure in the religious life of our city and many will recall

his work and interest among young people. It was he who established our 'Band of Hope,' whose weekly meetings were well patronised by the youth of the locality.

To the present generation, accustomed to the many amenities which science has made common, it may seem strange to record, as an outstanding event, my first experience of the telephone. Two brothers and I were invited to a friend's house where we were given an opportunity to hear and to speak to someone at a distance simply by using, as I thought, a piece of wire. Four years elapsed before I used this instrument again, which had then come into more common use, though installations were still, in general, confined to the more important of business premises.

'And still the wonder grew'; soon after this we listened for the first time to the phonograph. It is true that this invention had been exhibited a few years previously in crude, experimental form at the Royal Institute, London, about 1879, but it was not until some years later, and well into the 'eighties, that it began to make its appearance as a product purchasable by the public. Its invention convinced many of us that the age of miracles had indeed arrived when we could listen, in our homes, to great singers like Adelina Patti and Christine Nilsson, whenever we liked and merely by putting a wax cylinder on a roller and turning a handle. My first recollection of a phonograph recording was that of a speech, or rather a one-minute extract of it, by Mr. W. E. Gladstone.

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After these wonders it is not surprising that belief was widely given to the story, circulating in the south-end of the city, which told of an uncanny visitant who, as darkness closed in, made his appearance. This creature was reputed to have springs attached to his heels which

enabled him to perform wonderful acrobatics; hence he was spoken of as 'Spring-heeled Jack.' Though his terrifying visitations were said to have been seen by numerous 'friends of friends' no actual victim was discovered. It was alleged that he had been seen to spring, among other places, from the top of the reservoir in High Park Street, over several high garden walls in the neighbourhood of St. Michael's-in-the-Hamlet and as far afield as Childwall Abbey. His technique of intimidation was reported to consist, chiefly, of jumping from some high wall or another, confronting a passer-by who was left in a fainting condition, and then, by a click of his heels, mount upon the roofs of the nearest houses. Later he was reported to be wearing a flowing white robe and to have a phosphorescent face. This wild rumour circulated for about a month, when its dissolution was as sudden as its creation. But what a scare it made.

CHAPTER VI

Family Excursions to New Brighton. Lewis's Sixty Years Ago. 'Judas.' Art does not always improve Nature.

Easter was usually soon followed by the merry month of May with its annual parade of horses, an event for which we mustered *en famille* on St. James' Road. I sometimes ask myself if the weather in those years was really more settled and dependable, and whether the sun did shine with a greater brilliance out of more serene and cloudless skies than it does in these later years, or is it that childhood accepts and remembers the good and has the happy faculty of dismissing and forgetting the unpleasant.

The outstanding event of each summer was the annual trip to New Brighton. This was always anticipated long and eagerly, and preparations for it began even a couple of weeks ahead. Two or three neighbouring or friendly families would unite for the occasion, which arrangement resulted in an assembly having the appearance of a miniature school.

As a rule we walked to 'The Flat Iron' at the corner of Upper Stanhope Street and St. James' Place where, for the payment of two pence per head, a bus would take us to the Pier Head. We filled the bus, and I remember on one of these occasions the conductor calling out to the driver that 'Toxteth Park appears to be a pretty prolific neighbourhood,' a remark which at that time I did not understand, but by reason of it raising a laugh from bystanders impressed itself upon my memory.

In fancy I see again the start of the expedition: my mother, looking overheated from exertions which preceded our parade, carrying a fat baby uncomfortable in numerous starched garments which were the fashion of that time. I, a tall girl of about ten years, clutching firmly the hands of two younger brothers dressed, as befitted the occasion, in white linen suits with sailor collars of blue, and large-brimmed straw hats with dark ribbons bearing the names 'H.M.S. Fearless' and 'H.M.S. Invincible.' These same young brothers would be doing their utmost to show distaste of sisterly care and to assert their right to freedom of perambulation. Willie and John, the two elder boys, at the rear carried the luncheon basket and a supply of buckets and spades. Mrs. T., from opposite, would make a still larger contribution, for she proudly numbered among her numerous offspring two sets of twins.

After arrival at the Pier Head, and the excitement of embarkation, we would yield ourselves for twenty-five

minutes to that unique panorama which, among all English rivers, the Mersey alone could provide in its fleets of liners and freighters arriving from and departing to each of the Seven Seas. Was it not natural that we young Merseysiders loved and revered our river even as the Romans of old revered their Tiber?

Our arrival at New Brighton ferry, and the ascent of the long pier, was always accompanied by an undercurrent of excitement because of a temporary but necessary parting of the ways, as children under six years of age were passed free of charge through a chain gateway. The air would resound with cries of protest from children refusing to be parted from their elders. Frequently a block in the human traffic line would occur, when a Cerebus-like official guarding the chain gate suspected that some child in it was more than six years of age. This often happened with members of my family, for we were all well-grown children above the average in height and weight. Looking back, I am compelled to feel some sympathy for this circumspect official, for usually any attempt on his part seriously to challenge any child's right to pass through free would bring mothers and neighbours to bear testimony that he was no judge of children's ages together with the suggestion that a married man with children of his own would be better qualified to occupy his position. Poor man! I learned a few years later that he did, indeed, have ten of his own!

When negotiations were satisfactorily completed we were free to make our way to the shore. After shedding a veritable load of footgear, we revelled and frolicked in the waters of the Mersey. What if the loss of a shoe brought a reproach from mother, followed by a visit to a local shop to buy a new pair of plimsolls. It served but to add zest to our day's adventure.

At midday lunch was served. Big squares of bread pudding, home-made scones and ham sandwiches disappearing as if by magic, and though these delicacies frequently became garnished with sea-shore sand, the vigour of our appetites was in no way affected. Each of us was allowed one swing, one donkey ride and one turn on the hobby horses, but the latter was often repeated by an indulgent mother. The white pony which drew the horses around was of greater interest and pleasure to us than the steam and internal combustion engines which have long since succeeded him as a prime mover. The 'Ham and Egg Parade' had to be patrolled several times during the day, and although the modern promenade may, architecturally and aesthetically be a great improvement, yet, with the departure of the old parade, much of the joy and glamour also vanished. Well might 'Ichabod' be inscribed upon the walls which block out the grand view we once had of the mouth of the river.

More paddling, more building of sand castles, and then my mother's voice would be heard calling 'Nancie; come and mind the baby; it's nearly tea-time,' and mother, accompanied by another mother, would depart for Victoria Road, there to purchase bread and butter, cakes and shrimps. This latter article of diet was, in those days, considered something of a delicacy and certainly an essential item in a New Brighton bill of fare, whatever degree of eclipse, in the former respect, it may have since suffered. Soon after, we would all assemble at Taker's tea-rooms upon the old promenade. As children we knew nothing whatever of cafes; indeed the word was unknown to us, but never did patrons of the Ritz or Savoy feel more important than did we children as we took our allotted table in these tea-rooms where, for a few pence per head, provision was made for hot water

with the inclusion of all tea-table requisites. During the meal a pianist would arrive and render a selection of popular tunes for which he would collect a few coppers from each table and then disappear into an adjoining tea-room to repeat the performance. After this, time passed all too quickly and preparations for the homeward journey would require to commence some time in advance of the scheduled hour for re-embarkation, as a great deal of coaxing and even threatening was often necessary to bring the children away from the water and to array them in shoes and stockings again.

It was a much more subdued party that passed through turnstile and chain gate for embarkation upon the homeward journey than the one which arrived from Liverpool earlier in the day.

Reaching Liverpool, we came to the grand finale of our outing; two or three cabs would be chartered to convey the party home. The cost of this mode of travel was very little more than if the journey had been taken by tramcars, and by this time the adults of the party were much too tired to strive with the task of packing their charges into tramcars for which there was keen competition to secure places. So the long anticipated day drew to a close, and as we lay in our little white beds in the dear home nest, secure in the care of a tender and loving mother, free from life's ambitions and strivings, and untouched by sorrow and separation, we dwelt for a few moments upon the joys of the departing day until the angel of sleep crept in and took possession.

Poor, patient, long-suffering mothers! We children did not realise the thought and care you gave to provide this treat. How tired you must have been from the day's exertions, which began for you in the early morn, we children quite believing that you enjoyed yourselves as

much as we did. Now, as elderly men and women, we understand and appreciate the love and thought you gave so freely to the making of a childhood red-letter day, the memory of which still lingers, and we would fain echo the poet's desire :—

'Backward, turn backward, O Time, in your flight!
Make me a child again, just for to-night!'

* * *

To the younger citizens of Liverpool Lewis's held a place of special importance, forming as it did an almost integral part of their childhood. Lewis's was the Mecca of hopes and desires. Christmas could not pass without a visit to Lewis's, there to stand enthralled before the spacious windows with their mechanised figures posturing beneath the beams of a thousand fairy lamps and before a mountainous background of Christmas fare.

So it was that three young brothers and I set out 'to see Lewis's' one Christmas Eve in the mid 'eighties. From the suburbs of the old town it involved a goodish trek on Shanks' Pony because to pay threepence per head, which was the fare on the old horse-trams, was an outlay not to be contemplated. We started off, each the proud possessor of one penny, but on the journey into town the spendthrift of the party succumbed to the fascination of treacle toffee, in which he invested one-half of his capital and of which we all partook. After arriving at our destination, taking possession of each window in turn and deciding what we would buy when we were grown up, we discovered that a special Christmas Exhibition was being held in the basement at which each visitor would receive a gift, the inclusive charge being one penny per head! To enter and explore its attractions became our immediate and common desire. But what a dilemma was ours, for four of us with a combined fund of threepence-halfpenny

to undertake a fourpenny transaction. Loyalty forbade our leaving the prodigal out of it, for had we not shared in the proceeds of his prodigality? A long and wordy discussion upon the tactics to be adopted to meet the situation resulted in the decision that Freddie, the curly-headed spendthrift, should approach the door-keeper, a person who enjoyed no small measure of local fame as 'Lewis's Giant.' From him he was politely to enquire 'if four might be admitted for threepence-halfpenny please?' To this request a sympathetic if non-committal reception was given but, in response to an uplifted finger of 'the giant' there quickly appeared one who, to us children, was a very exalted person who undertook, with well simulated gravity, to give the problem consideration. 'Well,' said he, 'and why do you think that four should claim admittance for threepence-halfpenny?' Freddie's reply was a prompt one. 'Cos we've only got threepence-halfpenny and penny cakes are all four for threepence-halfpenny,' an answer which appeared to amuse and satisfy for, with a pat on the head, and 'You'll do little man,' we passed into an Alladin's Cave, a fascinating tour which was completed by the receipt of a simple gift. For years I cherished my memento of this occasion, which was a small box containing a tortoise 'trained' to move its legs whenever the box was handled.

Other memories of red-letter days are of the thrilling visit paid to Lewis's Zoo where, for the first time, we beheld real, live lions and heard their mighty roar, which was sufficient to satisfy and test the courage of all young visitors. It was at this time that a disastrous fire occurred which burned down a large part of Lewis's building. The animals were, happily, all rescued and they then toured the country their fame greatly enhanced because of their remarkable escape from fire.

A few years later a source of great pleasure was found in 'Lewis's Penny Readings.' After homework was finished we were allowed an hour's reading before going to bed. Willie usually read aloud to us, and how we revelled in the tales told by Will Carlton and George Sims. I often think it was these readings which fostered in us a love of literature and poetry. Whenever one of our elders went to town the unanimous request would be, 'Do see if there is any new Penny Reading out!' Yes; Lewis's played a big part in the lives of children in the 'eighties.

Eastertide, also, brought its own particular thrill, for on Good Friday it was then a custom in Liverpool for the boys to rise at daybreak and, with an effigy of Judas Iscariot supported on a clothes-prop, arouse householders by hoisting the effigy to the bedroom windows, calling, 'Remember Judas, a penny short for his breakfast.' I do not believe the boys often received coppers, for the householders resented being disturbed from their slumbers at this early hour. At 8 a.m. Judas was taken and burnt at the stake, much to the delight of a large audience of boys and girls, a number of whom would keep a sharp lookout for police officers who, given the opportunity, would have no compunction in dragging Judas to the nearest bride-well. At one such celebration it fell to the lot of my brothers to provide the effigy, and all went well until it was discovered that Judas was short of a pair of trousers. Frank B., who had but recently come to the city, was delighted to complete the tailoring of Judas as, when told of the shortage of nether garments he immediately offered to obtain a pair of his dad's. Being a stranger, he was unaware of the form of execution which the effigy would ultimately suffer, and was not himself present at the cremation. During the Good Friday afternoon he therefore called at the house to take back and carry home his

father's pants, and it was a very crestfallen Frank who heard of their destruction. A few days later his father enquired for them, and then confession had to be made and punishment taken.

Many years later one of my brothers unexpectedly encountered Frank upon the same political platform and, turning around, whispered to him, 'Remember Judas?' Frank did, and said, 'Whenever I think of him I have a strange tingling sensation in a certain part of my anatomy.'

The 18th of October, 1885, was the date of Timmy's advent. His father, who arrived home from sea the following day, was duly introduced to his sixth son and was heard to exclaim, 'Well, this is a queer little specimen! Look at him doubling up his fists at me; he's different from all the others.' And so he was. Registered as 'Henry,' he was for many years known in the family circle as Timmy: this because mother once spoke of him as 'Turbulent Timmy.'

My mother had her hands fully employed with the care of seven children, the eldest being but fourteen years of age, and she was thankful to have my assistance with the young ones. So with the exception of school hours, my time was fully occupied in looking after this restless little brother who insisted upon being constantly nursed and amused. Often, having escaped to one of my companions, I would hear my mother's voice calling, 'Nancie, baby's awake,' which was the signal for me to return to my guardianship.

When Timmy was twelve months old we removed to a house on the outskirts of Princes Park which had better accommodation than the one we were then occupying. This was an advantage, as we were now close to Princes Park, an ideal place in those days for nursery parade. I made friends with Mary who lived in the next house.

Mary rejoiced in the possession of a baby sister of the same age as Timmy. Little Emmie, for that was her name, had for her accommodation one of the new-style bassinets, and when she and Timmy had arrived at the mature age of eighteen months we put them facing each other in the bassinet and went on parade. Emmie was the prettiest child imaginable. Her head was covered with brown curls; she had delicate cheeks and a pair of large, bright blue eyes. Wherever we went people stopped to admire Emmie. But they never took any notice of Timmy, which to me was a sore disappointment.

I must admit that as a baby Timmy was not a beauty. He was a pale, thin-faced baby, and though we were a curly-headed family, Timmy just happened to be the exception, for his hair was as straight as tallow candles. His one good feature was a pair of large hazel eyes which held a fearless and even defiant expression. I was very anxious to obtain for him some of the admiration so freely lavished upon Emmie, and when a quantity of yellow ribbon came into my possession it suggested a step towards the fulfilment of my desire. Surreptitiously obtaining one of his little frocks I set to work to adorn it, and eagerly awaited an opportunity to introduce Timmy as a perfect beauty. At last this opportunity came. Mother had a little business in town which took her from home for a couple of hours. Mary, whom I summoned to my aid, was despatched to buy a pair of curling-tongs, and between us we managed to array Timmy in his smart frock and to crimp his straight locks. But what a task it was, for Timmy squirmed and kicked with a violence greater than he had ever displayed, this being his only way of demonstrating his objection to feminine furbelows. When it came to using the curling-tongs I had to hold his head while Mary manipulated them. At last our task was

completed, and Timmy was transformed into what I thought a beauty. A mass of yellow ribbon adorned his shoulders, neck, sleeves and waist, while his hair stood stiffly out in a grand set of crimp. I placed him in his old-fashioned pram and went with him to meet mother at the tram terminus. His appearance drew an amount of attention which filled me with sisterly pride, but when mother stepped from the tram she looked for a moment completely horrified, but then broke into a laugh and said, 'What on earth have you done to the child? Poor little fellow; let us take him the back way home.'

So ended my one and only attempt to make my much loved Timmy into a thing of beauty. Years later, when his hair was growing thin, he would laughingly say, 'You, Nancie, are responsible for this; it is the result of those curling-irons you used so unsuccessfully on me.'

Timmy was ever a great giver throughout his life, but to an extent in his childhood which was not always beneficial to his family. I recollect that an Italian organ-grinder came each Friday morning and played a selection of tunes for which he duly collected a copper or two from each house in the vicinity, and from ours, always handed to him by the youngest member of the family. On his last appearance he played for a very short time and did not knock for his copper, which caused my mother to remark upon it. Timmy at once looked up and said, 'Me gave moogy man penny,' which led to the discovery that the little fellow had gone upstairs, climbed a chair, and from a box on a dressing-table had taken a sovereign, which had been bestowed upon this son of Italy. I need hardly record that our district knew him no more. This incident caused Timmy to be known as 'that awful child,' though, as mother said, 'He is not to blame; the fault is mine for leaving money within his reach. He is too young to understand.'

There is no doubt that Timmy's mischief was the outcome of a quick brain. In his childhood he would immediately act upon a mere suggestion. Proof of this is to be found in the following incident. At school, scholars had obtained from the 'Window Garden Association' plants which were to be returned in three months, when they were to be judged and prizes awarded for those showing the best growth and finest blooms. I was very enthusiastic and gave unlimited attention to my plant, a double geranium. On being informed that it would thrive if I gave it plenty of (h)air and water, I promptly cut off one of my long ringlets for the purpose of carrying out this advice! The plant flourished excellently, its blooms being of a particularly fine type. From its stand in a front room it was much admired by passers-by. The day previous to its return for judgment, the local curate, making a periodical call, remarked upon the beauty of the plant he had noticed through the window. Mother told him it belonged to her daughter, and how it had been obtained, saying, 'Tomorrow it is to go back to be judged.' As he was about to depart she threw open the door of the room containing the plant and asked if he would care to see it at close range. Judge of their amazement to find it denuded of every flower, and there, keeping guard over a heap of broken blossoms was Timmy, who, when mother in her distress commenced to chide him, lisped, 'Dey Nannie's fowers; not go back,' which proved that this specimen of his mischief was the result of a childish loyalty to an absent sister. Mother feared that I should be very annoyed and disappointed, but was somewhat relieved when the only expression of my feelings was delivered in the laconic remark, 'Isn't he an awful child!'

With all his mischief Timmy was always the little gentleman in his attitude towards his playmates, judging

from the numerous juveniles who sought his company, many of whose parents adopted, as a means of quelling incipient disobedience in their offspring the threat that 'If you are not good, you shall not play with Timmy.'

CHAPTER VII

How a 'Pier Head' Jump was taken. An Exotic Pet.

When Willie was fourteen years of age he became restless and anxious to leave school; to get out into the world; to work and earn. It was my father's intention that, in another twelve months, he should be apprenticed with one of the Liverpool sailing-ship companies, for my father maintained that the best seamen were the product of sailing ships. In the meantime, if Willie was insistent to earn, he could take any suitable temporary employment he cared for pending his preparing himself for the sea. He therefore straightway took, at the wage of five shillings per week, a job as a junior assistant in the Liverpool Free Lending Library at the bottom of Upper Parliament Street where, I believe, a dispensary now stands.

On his first pay-day he asked me to meet him outside the library as he wanted my help in a jolly good scheme. I was there fully an hour before the appointed time, but this soon passed for I found great interest in watching the trace boys mount their horses and meet the outgoing trams, when the horses they rode would be hitched to the regular teams to help in drawing the trams up the incline as far as Upper Warwick Street, when they would return to repeat a similar task again and again. I looked upon these boys as heroes. To me it seemed very brave to ride

unattended and unafraid. There was also the vendor of boiled green peas, who shouted, 'Green peas, three plates full for one penny.' The plates, in size, were similar to those in a doll's tea-set. As this was in the days prior to 'fish and chip' shops, the small cart, replete with a fire and steaming saucepans, did not lack patrons though these were confined to young lads in their early 'teens.

At last the doors of the library closed, and in a few minutes out came Willie, very proud and pleased to show me his first earnings consisting of two half-crowns. Then he imparted to me his big idea, which was to change the two coins into smaller ones and finally into halfpennies; and this was where I came in. Many were the shops we visited before our task was completed, and when it was, Croesus himself might well have envied us, for to possess one hundred and twenty halfpennies, and to know that this wealth would be renewed every seven days was almost inconceivable.

On arriving home Willie presented his cap containing the treasure. Mother, with an air of mock seriousness, appeared overcome with this great addition to her income, and I know both Willie and I wondered how she would be able to spend so much wealth. We were quite certain that from this time onward any desire which money could satisfy would not go ungratified.

Although Willie liked his work at the library and was happy to be among books, for which he had a great love, he never lost an opportunity of expressing his determination of becoming a sailor. His entrance into that vocation was destined to be somewhat sudden as we shall see.

* * *

It was late September when Albert, a schoolfriend of Willie's, was to start his apprenticeship on a Liverpool

barque due to sail the next morning from the Wapping Dock and bound for South America. Willie was there to see him away and bid farewell to his chum. It happened that some of the crew had not turned up, and Willie, ever anxious to display his knowledge—or perhaps I should say his aptitude for seamanship—performed some trivial service which drew upon him the attention of the overseer who asked, 'Have you been to sea?' Willie eagerly replied, 'Yes; I have already taken a voyage to America in my father's ship,' conveniently forgetting to mention that this voyage had been taken when he was two years of age. 'Would you care to go on this voyage?' was the next question, and Willie, then aged fourteen and a half years, readily consented, and in doing so undertook what was known as a 'Pier Head Jump.' Later in the day, when my mother was informed of this, she rushed to the nearest outfitter and purchased several sets of warm garments and a suit of oilskins in the hope that they might reach the ship as she lay in the Mersey. But, alas, they were returned, for the ship had left the river to proceed on her voyage and was even then down by the Formby lightship in tow of the *Andrew Jolliffe*, and Willie had gone to face the severity of an Atlantic crossing and a winter's rounding of Cape Horn with a wardrobe consisting only of the garments he stood up in plus whatever he might be able to obtain from the ship's slop chest.

My father at once approached the owners of the ship, the then well-known firm of Singlehurst & Co., to arrange the necessary debenture to provide that Willie should, as from the commencement of the voyage, enter into an apprenticeship.

Letters were subsequently received from Callao and Iquique which made light of hardships and dangers, and finally, some ten months after his precipitate departure,

one came from Antwerp saying, 'I shall be home in a few days.'

It was on a Sunday afternoon in July when the door was opened, and mother, who was busily engaged in the kitchen, was seized and hugged by a tall young man whose clothing was literally in rags. He had walked from the docks by devious routes which included a number of back entries in order to avoid the possibility of his being seen and recognised by anyone who knew him. His first action was a typical one; he held out his hand in which were his scanty earnings and said, 'Here's my money, Mother.' When I returned from Sunday-school that afternoon mother sent me into a sitting-room on some pretext, and from behind the door sprang Willie. Oh, the joy of that reunion! How pleased he was to give, and I to receive, a miniature pair of wooden shoes he had bought for me in Antwerp. I still have them, and sometimes when I take them from a cabinet which contains so many mementoes of childhood and youth, I live again in memory that Sunday evening when we gathered together and listened spell-bound as our hero related the perils, hardships and pleasures of his first voyage. The following morning Willie visited Lewis's tailoring department from whence, much to the delight of an admiring mother and sister, he emerged clad in the glory of navy serge, brass buttons, and a cap bearing the house-badge of his shipping company.

After a few weeks, which sped all too quickly, Willie was away on a second voyage, again bound for South America. He had gone but a few days when a letter was received from him telling that he had met with an accident to his eyelid; had been landed at the Isle of Wight, and was now a patient at the Ryde Infirmary. Further, that as his ship had continued upon her voyage, he would return home to join another of the same company.

This was followed by a letter from the matron of the infirmary saying she much regretted to inform the parents of William Cowper that their son had lost the sight of his right eye. This was a heavy blow. My mother was greatly distressed to know that her bright, happy boy, on the threshold of manhood, should be the victim of so dire a calamity. We shared her distress, for we dearly loved our eldest brother.

The rearing and keeping of birds and animals as domestic pets, if not exclusively an Anglo-Saxon custom, is one much more developed in those countries which represent our race than in any others, and this affection for, and sense of companionship with, the domestic pet is one which for fully five centuries has been shared by all classes among us. It has, however, been possibly developed to its fullest degree among seafaring men, and this for reasons which it would not be difficult to trace and explain.

Birds appear to represent a class of creature from which a reasonably wide variety of types and species, including exotic ones, may be adopted as permissible domestic pets. I am afraid it is not so in the case of animals, even the smallest of them, and that the sovereignty, as domestic pets, jointly shared in this country by the dog and the cat, is unlikely ever to be seriously challenged. Certain events which followed a voyage taken a few years later by my brother served firmly to convince me of this.

After an absence of eight months Willie was expected home. His ship had arrived at the London docks and he wired the time of his arrival by train in Liverpool. Two of the boys at home had gone to Lime Street Station to meet him, whilst the rest of the family joyfully awaited his coming. We were gathered around a bright fire and the

table was laid for the evening meal. At the first sound of footsteps the door was opened and mother was welcoming her much loved eldest son. I heard him say, 'Mother, I've got a present for you here,' and, opening his coat, something jumped out and made a spring on to a plateshelf which happened to be laden, among other things, with a rather brightly coloured china tea-service. In a matter of moments, several cups belonging to it were hurled to the ground and destroyed before Willie recovered the mischievous culprit, and it is not surprising that mother regarded, with mingled feelings, her latest present—a small Indian monkey from Chittagong, about the size of a cat, who answered to the name of Toby. He was but a few weeks old when he came into Willie's possession, and was even then full of amusing tricks.

On the voyage home he had eaten a quantity of green paint and became most dangerously ill. Willie attended to him, and when he had completed his watches on deck would spend a large part of his time in poulticing and physicking his new pet, who made a wonderful recovery and thereafter became his devoted companion. In the morning he would steal into his sleeping quarters and very gently lift the sleeper's eyelids, which was a strong hint that he wanted attention of the sleeper.

This little creature soon settled into his new surroundings and became the pet and plaything of the family. Mother was anxious to keep her boys at home during the winter evenings and to this end gave them the use of the basement. Here, two of the younger brothers, with several other boys, held a weekly band practice, for they were all members of the 14th Company Liverpool Boys' Brigade under the command of Captain Robert Kerr. One of these brothers played the euphonium which, despite the etymology of its name, vied with other

instruments in sending forth a series of nerve-racking noises. Toby sat in their midst and appeared thoroughly to enjoy the noise and chatter. He was friendly to all the boys. Each would bring him a biscuit, nut or sweetmeat, keeping it in his pocket for the fun of seeing Toby turn it inside out. He would not be satisfied until, from each boy, he had extracted some tribute. Sometimes the boys would wrap a small stone in paper, and Toby, with a grunt of satisfaction, would seize upon it but, finding it a sham, would send it hurtling through the air and then renew his search. He had many funny tricks. If anyone said, 'Toby is a dead monkey,' then wherever he happened to be he would fall to the ground, stiff and inanimate, and remain so until word was given to him to arise. If you said, 'Toby is a good Moslem' he would immediately assume the attitude of a Moslem at prayer.

During the summer he lived at the back of the house where it was bright and sunny. He was attached to a strong staple in the wall by a long length of thin rope which gave him a certain amount of freedom of movement and the opportunity to chase the cats of the neighbourhood along the back walls. He would quietly await their coming and then, with a spring, leap quickly after them. It was a case of which could move the quickest for the first few yards, as Toby's leash would only allow him a limited pursuit, but usually he was the winner. He would tweak the cats' tails and then return in a state of great glee giving forth grunts of satisfaction. It was purely impish mischief that made him pursue the cats, for he never attempted to harm them.

When the cat at the next house had kittens, Toby soon discovered the fact, for two or three times a day he would disappear over the wall and return with one of the kittens safely encircled in the crook of his arm. He would nurse

and play with it, and then carefully return it to its parent with whom Toby must have had a mutual understanding, for, strangely enough, Mrs. Puss never raised an objection to this encroachment upon her family circle.

It must be admitted that Toby was a thief, and an artful one. Several strange disappearances from the pantry and tea-table could not be accounted for, and we did not suspect Toby as his bonds would not give him sufficient freedom to reach the house. But Willie knew his Toby, so one day, making a pretence of laying the tea-table, he placed on it a small dish containing jam, and then feigned to be asleep. He was not surprised to see Toby peer cautiously into the room, jump upon the table, seize the dish of jam, and with it, climb by way of the drainpipe on to the house roof as quickly as the proverbial streak of lightning. His feast ended, he brought down the empty dish and replaced it on the exact spot from which he had removed it. It was discovered that the clever little rascal had learned how to unfasten and to refasten the buckle which attached the cord to his body, and having for a time obtained his liberty, he would replace his fastenings and so avoid suspicion. After this a small padlock put an end to Toby's peregrinations. Whether he resented this or not I cannot say, but from that time Toby became spiteful to everyone except my mother and Willie. After he had bitten three of us it was felt that there was but one course to take and that was to place Toby in safe custody where he could do no further harm. In answer to a letter addressed to the keeper of the zoo which was at that time maintained on a fairly considerable scale as part of the attractions of New Brighton Tower and its pleasure-grounds, there arrived at our home a negro who promptly took possession of our little playfellow. We were grieved to see him depart, and it was a very subdued company

which met at the family supper-table that evening, for we had become deeply attached to the audacious little Toby.

Three years later mother and I visited this zoo in the hope of catching sight of our former pet. Mother turned to me remarking that it would be quite impossible to identify Toby among so many of the same species. Suddenly one of them began to scream loudly and created such a commotion in the cage as to bring a keeper quickly to the spot who demanded to know what we had done to create the disturbance. Mother assured him we had done nothing whatever, but explained that three years previously she had presented a pet monkey to the zoo and, happening to be in New Brighton, we had come to see if we could catch sight of him. The keeper said that, without doubt it would be Toby who had caused the disturbance, and explained that monkeys could not recognise faces but never forgot voices, and that Toby had remembered hers, adding, 'That monkey has been the most tiresome it has been my job to look after.' After this we beat a hasty retreat and never saw or heard anything of Toby again.

CHAPTER VIII

Captain Olsen's Adventure. The loss of my father's ship with all hands. The Liverpool Seamen's Orphanage.

Christmas, 1894, stands out in clear relief from all others in my memory, for it was the first Christmas my father had spent at home in fourteen years. It also marked an epoch in our lives, as, with the exception of my brother Willie, who was due from Buenos Ayres a week later, we were all at home. Father entered fully into the spirit of

Christmas. He ordered a Christmas-tree and gave me a generous sum of money to decorate it and provide its branches with a heavy crop of presents. On Christmas Eve the younger children had gone to bed before their usual time, for they wanted to wake early the next morning to see what Santa Claus had brought for their stockings. We had gathered around the fire when Captain Olsen, a friend of my father's, called to wish him and my mother a Happy Christmas. After mutual congratulations on their good fortune at being home for Christmas Day, the conversation turned upon the different places and ways in which these two mariners had spent some previous Christmases. Captain Olsen remarked, 'Well, the strangest one I ever spent I have no recollection of.' I suppose father sensed in his boys' faces the eager anticipation of a story, for, turning to Captain Olsen, he said, 'I think you had better tell it to the young folk.' Then we listened to a thrilling tale of the sea, comparable to anything in reality or fiction. Briefly, for I cannot remember the minor details, here was his story:

'When I was a young man of twenty-two, I left my native Norway on a sailing ship bound for New Zealand. When crossing the South Pacific a terrible hurricane suddenly arose which completely wrecked our vessel. The crew had to take to the boats in one of which were ten men, including myself, and the ship's dog. We were able to ship with us only a very small quantity of food and water. For many days, with the tropical sun beating down on us, we rowed on hoping to sight land. Our hunger and thirst became unbearable. The dog had to be killed, his flesh eaten and his blood drunk. After this the men, consumed by thirst, drank sea-water and lost their reason. Many jumped overboard and put an end to their sufferings. Another few days passed after which life became a

blank. Returning consciousness, when it came, made me aware of many dark-skinned people, some of whom were placing me on a bed of smouldering leaves. The thought crossed my mind that I was about to be roasted alive. This did not trouble me, as I was too weak to care what happened. Some time later I learned that I had been washed up on the beach of a small island, and that the bed of smouldering leaves was used by the natives in their method of restoring life to the apparently drowned. They treated me well, but not understanding their language, life was very dreary. Three months later I was taken off on a small Australian vessel and eventually worked my way back to Norway, the sole survivor of an ill-fated voyage. It was proved that on Christmas Day I had been lying unconscious in a ship's boat upon the vast waters of the Pacific Ocean.'

With my brothers, Captain Olsen was ever afterwards ranked as a first-class hero.

Much to our regret, my father had to leave us at 9 o'clock on the Christmas evening of 1894, as he was sailing on the midnight tide. Next morning we were awakened by the sound of a strong wind, which arose suddenly and appeared to be the forerunner of a gale of great intensity such as we often have round our coast at this time of the year. My mother was very anxious, for she knew my father would be caught in it. Two days later a telegram put her fears to rest. This was soon followed by a letter telling how it had become necessary to put into Holyhead harbour. He told how a certain vessel had failed to reach this harbour and was a total wreck outside of it. Lifeboats from the Welsh coast, as well as a boat from his own ship, had made valiant but vain attempts to rescue the crew who had climbed into the rigging of their ship. For two days their calls for help could be heard, yet although so near,

it was impossible to help them. Father said it was heart-breaking experience and his crew had been completely upset because of their inability to aid them. Finally the cries of the poor fellows ceased, for all of them had succumbed to exposure and fatigue and had been washed away.

It was the beginning of March when father next arrived home, and whether it was this sea tragedy that had brought to him a realisation or premonition of his own possible fate or not, I cannot say, but on the eve of sailing, father asked for my brother John to be sent to him, requesting that they should not be disturbed. After a few minutes John returned looking rather serious, and told Freddie that his father wished to speak to him. This was repeated until four of his boys had been interviewed. I wanted to be in this, for I felt that I was truly 'a woman of no importance,' so, opening the door of the room, asked father if I was wanted, too. 'No,' was his reply, 'you and your mother are practically one, and the cautionary word I have to express is essentially one for your brothers.' Later, I learned that after a few minutes' serious conversation with each boy, father asked for his solemn promise that, in the event of any unlooked-for happening to himself, mother should be his first consideration.

On the evening of 22nd April, 1895, I attended a monthly social meeting in connection with our chapel, from which I arrived home at 10 o'clock and retired immediately. For the first time in my life I dreamed of my father. It was an extraordinary dream. In it I was walking on the shore at Waterloo, looking across the mouth of the river, when a steamer appeared bearing the name of my father's ship. Suddenly she commenced to sink, and as she disappeared beneath the waters I knew that my father was on board. With a cry I awakened my mother, with

whom I was sleeping, and told her of the horror of my dream. She dismissed it as a nightmare, attributing it jokingly to too late a supper, and bidding me to get off to sleep again as the clock was even then striking three. But I could not rid myself of the horror and lay awake until it was time to rise for the day. At the breakfast table I referred to it, but the family treated it as a joke.

Two days later, while mother was making preparation for father's homecoming, which was expected any time, a newspaper-boy passed the house shouting, 'Supposed loss of a Liverpool steamer with all hands.' Mother turned to me, saying, 'Oh, dear, there's trouble for some poor souls; run after the boy and get me a paper.' Before I could do so, a hansom-cab drove up and, alighting from it, a gentleman ran up the steps of the house. As mother came forward he asked, 'Are you Mrs. Cowper? Have you seen the paper? A vessel bearing the name of the—— has been lost near the Lizard, but there are two ships of that name, and it may be the other one that has been lost.'

The following day our worst fears were confirmed. The ship, during dense fog, had foundered at the Manacles and had sunk immediately. Later a number of bodies were washed ashore at various points along the coast, but not that of my father. There were no survivors, and thus my father passed on in the same way, and in similar circumstances, as his father and grandfather, completing a sequence of three generations whom the sea had claimed.

Liverpool families have, in the past, known so many comparable catastrophes that the nature of the grief and distress which was the first consequence of this one need not be dwelt upon. My mother had lost an affectionate and faithful husband, and her children a father who although not an indulgent one, looked well after his

family both morally and physically, and who, by both precept and example, taught them to lead honourable and upright lives. As time passed he had mellowed and allowed the younger members of his family a much wider latitude than had been accorded to his elder children.

In addition to grievous loss and distress there was, for my mother, the care and responsibility of a large family left with very small means for its maintenance. Like many families of which the breadwinner had been taken, there remained only indigence and bitter anxiety. My father's salary was paid up to the hour of his death, at which point of time the concern of his employers ended.

After the death of my father, mother found that his various investments had, to put it mildly, been most injudicious ones, with the result that they were, to her dismay, of such small realisable value that, after meeting his financial liabilities, the residue with what she would require to face the world was of the order of about eighty pounds, against which she would have to offset the upbringing of three boy apprentices, five school-children and a dependent daughter. Mother met the situation bravely. Telling her elder children her circumstances and responsibilities, she said that grave privation lay before us all, but if we pulled together and could get through the next four years, the situation would then get better. Willie cheered us by saying he was about to take his first 'ticket' which would obtain for him a third mate's position. In twelve months' time he would take his chief's ticket, and then mother would not want for anything. I felt sure of obtaining employment and at once made a start to seek it.

A few days later Willie set out with high hopes of obtaining his second mate's certificate. He returned looking very dispirited, and told how, after passing in all

subjects with ease, he had failed in the sight test applied to the eye which had been injured when he was an apprentice and, much to the regret of the Examining Officer, had been turned down. This was, to Willie, a terrible blow, for he now knew that all hope of his making a successful career at sea was now extinct. It was painful to see his happy, cheerful nature crushed and suffering. I knew my mother shared his distress, for though she dearly loved all her children I am sure that Willie, her first-born, who had passed with her through many perils, was her dearest. They had so much in common, bound by strong sympathy and mutual understanding. After a few weeks he signed on as an able seaman on a sailing ship, the *Sierra Pedrosa*, of Messrs. Thompson, Anderson and Co., bound for Chile and Peru. Though he never complained it must have caused him pain to leave apprentice quarters for those of the fo'castle, and with no prospect beyond it. He again wrote cheerfully to us, but said when a fitting opportunity came he would leave the sea as it now held no future for him.

* * *

The Committee of the Liverpool Seamen's Orphanage offered to take one of the children into the orphanage, and, as Harry (Timmy) was the right age for admittance, the offer was gratefully accepted for him. To have one of the five young dependants educated, clothed, fed and given a start in life was a great relief to my mother. Harry, like the average boy, was pleased at the prospect of change, and departed in good spirits. On the following Sunday several of my family attended afternoon service at the orphanage church. We were impressed by the sight of the orphan children as, accompanied by their teachers, they slow-marched up the aisle to their seats in the chancel, all of them, boys and girls, wearing nautical

uniform. As they returned down the aisle at the close of the service, we received a smile of recognition from Harry, and though his lips quivered as he passed us, he held his head high like the brave little boy he was.

During the following four years part of the family attended the service each Sunday, and in all that time my youngest brother, then aged eight, only missed doing so on three occasions. It was not a light task to walk from our home to Newsham Park and back again, a distance of seven miles, especially for a child who, throughout the period, was a delicate one.

On the first visiting day, early in the New Year, Harry made his appearance with a large doll tucked inside his sailor blouse, which he handed to mother, saying, 'This is for Dorothy; I got it for her at the Christmas party.' Later, Mrs. Postance, the matron, told mother how very amused they had been when Harry made a request for 'something off the girls' tree' and intimated that he would like a doll. They teased him about it until they discovered that he wanted it for his little sister. She added, 'We think him very unselfish.' This generous characteristic was one which he maintained throughout life.

Once only while at school did he get into trouble, and I was the unconscious cause of it. One summer afternoon I attended the service as usual, and waited with many other friends and relatives on the path outside the dining-hall in the hope of seeing 'ours' appear at the window for a brief moment. I was wearing a white dress and admit to thinking that I looked very smart in it. Harry must have thought so, too, for, catching sight of me, he said to the boy standing next to him, 'See that girl in the white dress; she's my sister.' 'What! that ugly looking thing?' replied the boy. The next moment Harry's fists collided with the boy's face and a black eye was registered.

Shortly afterwards Harry was summoned to appear before Mr. Mylie, the headmaster, who said, 'Well, Cowper, I am told you have given a black eye to one of the boys. Is this true?' 'Yes, sir,' was the answer. 'And what caused you to commit this outrage?' enquired the Head. 'Because he called my sister "an ugly-looking thing"' replied Harry. 'Oh, did he? Well, Cowper, you had great provocation; you may go.' As Harry reached the door, the voice of the master called him back, and said, 'Cowper, never do things by half. Should the offence be repeated, double the punishment.'

In later years Harry would say, 'I know you folks at home felt sorry for me, but there was no need for you to have done so, for we were all very happy. I am quite as proud of being brought up in the Liverpool Seamen's Orphanage as I would had I been sent to one of the great public schools. My fellow-orphans were as splendid a set of boys and girls as could be found anywhere, while in Robert Mylie they had a headmaster whose sympathy with his charges and, in particular, his sound, sane management and leadership of boys was outstanding.'

CHAPTER IX

Shop Life Fifty Years Ago. Church Parade.

My own attempts to obtain employment, following the loss of my father, met with repeated failure and disappointment. In my ignorance I had thought that many would be ready to accept my proffered services and that I should be able to pick and choose whom I would serve, but this delusion was quickly dispelled. After seeking

advice from my friends I found that the only medium through which I might find work was the 'Persons Wanted' columns of the *Liverpool Mercury* (later acquired by and incorporated in the *Liverpool Daily Post*, I believe). How much better off are young people today who have the advantages and help of Labour Exchanges, not to mention the even greater advantages of the various vocational training schemes which have been made available. They know nothing of the weary walks into the city to apply for some advertised post; of the long queues of applicants, or the long periods of waiting which frequently ended in the display of a printed poster bearing the words, 'We are suited, thank you.' After a month or two of this daily round, and when I had almost given up hope of obtaining employment, I came across an advertisement for 'A young lady assistant in the Glass and China Department; experience not necessary. Apply——' naming a well-known store in the city. I started off in great haste, fearful of being late and thereby missing what appeared to me to be a great opportunity. I expended one of my few pennies on a fare in one of Mason's horse 'buses which ran from Princes Road to the Pier Head and was known locally, though unofficially, as 'the penny jogger.'

And so I arrived early at the advertised address and this time met with success. I was engaged to start work the following day at a wage of eight shillings a week, plus a commission of threepence in the pound on all sales I made, plus dinner and tea. This was very satisfactory to me and, eager and enthusiastic, I was launched upon my business career. I arranged to give mother my weekly wage of eight shillings and to keep myself in dress, etc., on the commission which I thought would be easy to earn. On this point I was soon to be disillusioned. There were two saleswomen in the department, a young person known

in the department as the 'first sales' and myself. If there was but one customer it was 'first sales' who had the privilege of serving. If two customers came at the same time, then I, too, came forward; but if my customer wanted something of higher value than that required by the customer to whom 'first sales' was attending, and this was noticed by her, she would side up to me and say, 'I will take over. You can attend to the lady over there who requires a pudding-basin' or some other such inexpensive item. My only opportunity to make a good sale was during her absence at meal-times, and often when I had just persuaded a customer into buying a tea or dinner service, and it remained only to take the address and make out the bill, Miss 'First Sales' would appear and rob me of my harvest. She was not to blame. She was a good-natured girl, and we were the best of friends. She was fighting to retain her position, and to do so was obliged to show a larger number of sales than her colleague.

At first I suffered from fatigue, for I was unaccustomed to stand for a number of hours without a break. A chair stood in the department and, on the first day of my service, feeling tired, I sat upon it, but was promptly informed that it was placed there for the use of customers. It would not do for me to be seen sitting during business hours, but if I was very tired I could go behind one of the fixtures and sit on the floor for a few minutes—a hint I was thankful to take until I had become used to standing for many hours. This was fifty years ago, when the lot of a shop-assistant was not an enviable one. I am told that the Shops Act of 1912 removed this and other similar unnecessary hardships.

A cause of discontent, and one which was deeply resented by the assistants of those days, was the fining

system, which was frequently unjustly applied. For instance, I recollect that on one occasion an Irish maid-servant purchased kitchen crockery from me, and on my asking for the address for their delivery, she replied in a strong brogue, 'Number — Highland Road, Garston.' The porter in the packing-room fortunately knew this should be 'Island Road.' Nevertheless, for this slight slip I was fined sixpence, which represented the commission I had earned on the sale of a considerable number of small articles. The astute porter would receive a percentage of the fine.

It frequently happened that customers who bought goods as presents to be sent direct to the recipient would make a slight mistake in the number of the house, or the thoroughfare, e.g., Newsham Avenue instead of Newsham Drive, and for this the assistant was fined. With apologies to Jonathan Swift for presuming to vary his famous lines slightly, the economic alignment of the personnel within this establishment, and which prevailed in many other similar establishments at the time, is reflected in the couplet:

'The little fleas had bigger fleas, on their backs to bite 'em,

All because they lacked the means to turn around and fight 'em.'

This worked to the detriment of employer and employee for it repressed enthusiasm and initiative, especially in newcomers, making them into mere automatons. My conviction is that had one been predisposed to acquire a first-class inferiority complex, twelve months' servitude in such a place would have been quite sufficient to ensure its complete development.

I had been employed about eighteen months in a Liverpool departmental store when there came into my

department two women accompanied by a man who asked to be served with a lemon-squeezer, priced fivepence-halfpenny. I attended to them and they watched me make out the bill. They then said, 'We will pay on delivery.' 'Mine not to reason why.' The bill passed through the prescribed procedure. Two days later I was sent for by one of the firm, who said, 'You sent a lemon-squeezer, made payable on delivery to —— (naming a certain address). The customer says that he paid for it at the time of purchasing.' I was most emphatic in asserting this to be untrue and dismissed the matter from my mind. The following week I was told that my services were no longer required. As there were many and frequent changes in the staff I failed to realise the reason for my discharge and so was spared the humiliation of knowing that I was not trusted. It was years later, after much business experience, that I understood the reason for my dismissal. Those three people will have passed on, and I think the balance of their account with the rest of humanity will weigh heavily on the debit side because, for the sake of a few pence, they wilfully sought to soil the character of a young girl. If I have any understanding of physiognomy, that lemon-squeezer was to be used in the mixing of a potation stronger than lemonade.

How thankful I am to fate for taking me away from shop life, for the time spent therein is the least pleasant and most unsatisfactory of my career.

* * *

In Britain, the age of Victoria, as every historian and sociologist will I think agree, was essentially an age of stability. The British Empire, among all the political entities of the world, was the most powerful and steadfast. So also were its various buttresses in the spheres of finance, commerce, arms and political institutions. But a

nation is merely an aggregation, no matter how large, of its various citizens, and their representative institutions and the degree or stability or instability, as the case may be, of a nation as a whole is invariably derived from, and is symptomatic of, its various parts.

The strength and security of family life in Victorian days was fortified by many influences which have since weakened or disappeared. No doubt the weakening process was inevitable to some extent. The large families of the Victorians; the economic security of the nation; and, compared with the present times, the much smaller range of commercialised objective entertainment caused the circle of the family, in those days, to be a much more definite unit, and to be, much more, a moral and social influence.

One of the manifestations of corporate family life in Victorian days was the regular and organised attendance of families at Sunday-morning church service. It is not my purpose to consider if, and to what extent, the virtual disappearance of this practice is to be deplored, though this would not be a difficult task, but rather to recall that noteworthy accompaniment of Victorian family church attendance—the Church Parade.

The Church Parade was not a manifestation exclusive to Liverpool. It was not unknown, in some form or another, in most sizeable cities. That part of Hyde Park adjacent to the Achilles statue was the scene of it, for example, as was also the purlieu of the Meadow, in Edinburgh. I think, however, that it developed more fully in Liverpool than in any other large city with which I was familiar in my girlhood.

The custom contained a certain element of innocent and even commendable vanity. I hold this view for the reason that it was always prone to flourish in those cities which

were affluent and in addition were fashion-conscious. I have not moved around Britain so very much during the past thirty years as to enable me to say whether there are any noticeable differences in the dress standards of the inhabitants of different leading cities. I exclude London from such a possible comparison for obvious reasons. I can, however, assert with every confidence that in the later Victorian years Liverpool, among the large cities of the United Kingdom, enjoyed a high reputation for its dress shops and for the general dress standards of its people of various classes, income groups, and of both sexes. It became, indeed, a commonplace that one could tell a Liverpool business man from those of any other place in the provinces merely by the way he dressed.

Church Parades in Liverpool had more than one location among the suburbs of the city, but the most prominent and firmly established of them was that whose circuit was roughly defined by the Princes Boulevard, Croxteth and Ullet Roads, and the outer road of Princes Park from Windermere Terrace to Princes Gate.

There were good reasons why Liverpool's chief church parade should be so located. Princes Road contained more churches and chapels than any other thoroughfare of comparable length throughout the city, both in respect of the actual number of places of worship and of the variety of denominations represented among them. It included, as I believe it still does, those of the Catholic and Jewish faiths, as well as the Church of England, Calvinists, Welsh Wesleyans, Scottish Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Primitive Methodists and Baptists. The whole adjacent area was, moreover, thanks to the leasing restrictions of the ground landlord, entirely free from public-houses and therefore of any of the squalor which these establishments seemed to induce sooner or later.

The congregations of these churches, their devotions concluded, dispersed on to a highway which, at that time, formed a mute but impelling appeal to the instinct to promenade. Princes Road Boulevard, if my memory serves me, was completed in either 1883 or 1884, and was a strikingly handsome place for about the next twenty years. It commenced to deteriorate, or to be neglected in its upkeep, soon after the construction of the first electric tramway in the city at the end of 1898 when it was laid as far as Princes Gate. During the intervening years the imposing houses of Princes Road and Princes Avenue, which flank it on either side, were maintained as family residences by prosperous Liverpool commercial and professional people. The Boulevard itself was maintained in respect of care, cultivation and general upkeep, to a standard which makes the same thoroughfare look by comparison today decidedly woebegone, as do also some of the others I have mentioned as having formed part of the circuit of the Church Parade of South Liverpool.

Yes; it gave a really good opportunity to see and be seen in those years, now a memory, when people worked harder, were in general less harassed and less sophisticated perhaps, but who, though they had their vulgarities, had not yet learned to acclaim and patronise vulgarity for its own sake.

What a colourful pageant was provided by that double procession, passing in opposite directions along the church parade route any fine Sunday noon in spring or summer. It may well be the case that women today are more sensibly dressed, if by that term comfort, freedom of movement and some hygienic considerations are connoted. But if this much be conceded it is also surely true that the 'grandes toilettes' of the later Victorian and early

Edwardian years were much more colourful, and displayed to a much greater extent the resources of the modiste's craftsmanship. I received a rather interesting and independent confirmation of this opinion when on a recent visit to London. Outside a certain fashion establishment I found some dozen or so young women monopolising the windows and adjacent pavement. I concluded, rather rashly, that the centre of attraction was this fashionable modiste's latest revelations of the 'New Look'; but not a bit of it. I found that the attraction which commanded, as indeed it did, so much enthusiastic admiration was a display of ladies' costumes of the period 1895, which had been used in the production of the film of the Oscar Wilde play 'An Ideal Husband.'

How it stimulated the memory of that period; and the recollection of those Sunday promenades, of ladies in their gaily toned gowns and artistic parasols, bowing with Victorian elegance as they passed by on the arms of their attendant cavaliers. For let me not forget to recall the contemporary men-folk in the same connection who, in their more sombre colours, yet vied with their ladies in at least, the dignity of their dress and, in their own masculine styles, with the gracefulness of their consorts.

Differing only in degree, this was true of all the male church-going promenaders, from the more wealthy commercial and professional men to the comparatively struggling suburban tradesmen or those who worked at a desk. It is sometimes observed that, in the matter of dress, it is difficult today to determine whether a particular man is likely to be a surgeon or a stevedore. If it is true I should be the last person to deplore it so far as it could be shown to be due to a process of 'levelling-up.' What I suspect, and am disposed to deplore, is the likelihood that it is a consequence of the reverse process of 'levelling-down.'

CHAPTER X

Shadows

The Boer War commences and brings "The Gordons" through Liverpool Letters from South Africa. The Liverpool Irish return. Emigrations to Canada.

Unlike some of its rival ports in the South of England, Liverpool has not always, in times of war, especially prior to the Great War of 1914-18, figured prominently as a port of embarkation for combatant troops. Perhaps the occasions when it has been the scene of such events stand out the more conspicuously for that reason.

The recollection of one such occasion will always remain a vivid memory. It was a grey morning in October, 1899, and Britain had lately declared war on the Republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State. It is outside the purpose of these recollections to hark back upon the political background of that conflict or upon the acute division of political opinion which was provoked in some quarters of Great Britain at that time in regard to the justification of the Boer War. Rather would one recall, with gratitude, the political wisdom, as to which there can be no division of opinion, which was so soon to bring unity and prosperity to South Africa and to convert an enemy state into a sturdy and powerful member of the British Commonwealth of Nations in whose own battles, both in the first and second world wars, she has since played so valorous a part.

On the day preceding that October morning the news filtered through that a famous British regiment would arrive in Liverpool from the North and proceed to embark

at the Harrington Dock for South Africa. That regiment was the Gordon Highlanders, famous in song and story, whose tartan has surged across a hundred battlefields wherever Britain has had cause to defend or a score to settle. 'The Gordons' have always been surrounded by a certain air of romanticism, dating from the days of the raising of the first regiment, the 75th of Foot, when the fair Duchess of Gordon, wife of the founder of the regiment, bestowed a kiss on each recruit; and through the days of Napoleon and Waterloo on the field of which they charged the French, gripping the stirrup leathers of their comrades and kinsmen in the 'Greys,' an incident immortalised pictorially by the art of the late Lady Butler in her 'Scotland for Ever.' But at the time to which I refer, another notable episode in the history of this famous regiment had recently gripped the imagination of the British public by its storming the heights of Dargai on the North-West Indian frontier of India in 1897, at which Piper Findlater, though shot through both legs, had propped himself against a boulder and continued to pipe his comrades into action to the skirl of the regimental march 'Cock o' the North,' an instance of devotion to duty which earned for him the Victoria Cross.

Despite the early hour of arrival and the chilliness of the weather, South Liverpool turned out in thousands to greet and cheer 'The Gordons' as they detrained at Brunswick Dock Station and marched along the dock road in South African field service kit to embark on the Bibby liner *Cheshire* for Cape Town. How fit, resolute and efficient they looked! Even if they had been a battalion of 'The King's,' Liverpool could not have offered them a warmer send-off. Yet there was one among them whose figure and personality, for some unaccountable reason, impressed itself photographically upon my mind, and the

recollection of whose features, expression and soldierly bearing as he quickly marched by, is even now, after forty-nine years, as clear as it was after as many seconds. A few months had passed when there was flashed through the news of Magersfontein and the heroism and endurance of the Highland Brigade, a name commemorated later in that of a well-known Liverpool liner. But heroism in battle is not infrequently sustained at the cost of grievous casualties, and that at Magersfontein was, unhappily, no exception. The Gordons, who had passed through Liverpool so recently, paid heavily in casualties, even though, as always, they had added fresh lustre to their record of valour. Many decorations were earned by them on that blood-stained field, including the highest of all by a notable officer who was totally blinded during the execution of the feat by which he gained it. Soon after the name of this hero was on every lip. It was Captain Ernest (later Sir Ernest) Beechcroft Towse, upon whose breast our late Queen Victoria last pinned the Victoria Cross. It was also by the publication of this distinguished officer that I learned the identity of the one whose personality had so impressed itself on me as the Gordons marched through Liverpool. It is gratifying to recollect that his invincible spirit enabled Sir Ernest, despite his great affliction, to live continuously a life of remarkable accomplishment including an active part—though naturally not as a combatant—in the Great War of 1914-1918, and subsequently for many years in giving his outstanding services to those similarly afflicted by his work for the British Institute for the Blind and for the British Legion. This life, so rich in heroism, in public service, and in duty accomplished, drew to a close but a few weeks ago.

Four months after the Gordons passed through Liverpool we said goodbye to my dear brother Willie,

who thought that in South Africa he would, after the war, find the opportunity for which he had waited. He was anxious to reach Cape Town so that he would be able to go up-country 'at the flood' after the cessation of hostilities. We felt that his decision was a wise one. The only anxiety he expressed was as to his ability to assist mother financially until his plans had matured, for mother had always been his first consideration. Though I knew that my mother's heart ached as she watched him, her best-loved, depart on the Houston liner *Hilarius*, she bade him a fond and bright farewell. As he and a bosom friend left the ship on its arrival at Cape Town he was hailed by a voice calling, 'Hi, Billie! Hi, Billy Cowper!' and there stood a young fellow from the South end of Liverpool, together with a former school chum, who told them that if they should be looking out for a job the Cape Town Metropolitan Fire Brigade had all enlisted with the South African irregular forces and that if they made application they would be sure to be taken on, if only because they were experienced seamen accustomed to climbing their way aloft. They accordingly made application and were immediately engaged.

There followed for my brother a period of security and contentment. The following extracts from his letters show that he had found a measure of that happiness which had so long eluded him.

Cape Town,
22nd May, 1900.

My Dear Mother,

Thank you for your letters and for the Liverpool papers, all of which have given me great pleasure. I am glad to tell you that I am in splendid health and, so far, I am doing very well. This is a first-class berth; in fact I have never known one so good. It is the best and most comfortable I have ever had. I suppose that you at home spent Mafeking Day in great style. Thank God we have not lost a town. We have had great times here, as the public went frantic with joy and Baden-Powell is simply worshipped. We held 'Mafeking Day' here yesterday and

it was a public holiday. Ten of us from the station were detailed to attend Church Parade in full uniform—brass helmets, belt, axe and life-line. We formed the Lord Mayor's escort and marched five on each side of him, preceded by the mace-bearer and followed by the Councillors in procession, first to the Town Hall and thence to the Church where a great thanksgiving service was held, to the accompaniment of a fine choir. Afterwards we marched back to the Town Hall where addresses were delivered by several notabilities including Sir Alfred Milner. The whole town was decorated and, at night, illuminated, and from early morn to late night Cape Town re-echoed the strains of "God Save the Queen" and "Rule Britannia."

This is a lovely climate and my decision to emigrate to South Africa was the best one I have made during my life. I have a bank account, lead the life of a gentleman and, as such, am treated. Wages are good; one's quarters are fit for a prince, and it is possible to keep one's-self as clean as a new pin. If I had remained in Liverpool a life-time I should never have found a berth to equal this. I have lost that haggard appearance that I was developing. Life is in every respect brighter and I believe that before long I shall send you more money than you ever thought I could earn. There are wonderful opportunities up-country for steady and capable men. I hope, my dear mother, to put you into a house of your own, in which you will never again know the want of a few pounds. I believe that fortune has changed for me . . .

Cape Town,
1st October, 1900.

My dear Brothers and Sister,

I have just received your very welcome letters and am glad to know that all is well at home. My thoughts are ever with you all and I am happy to think that the war is almost finished. The Canadians came down from Pretoria today and after detraining went straight aboard the "Idaho." The City Imperial Volunteers leave this week by the "Aurania" and most of the Colonial South African troops are being disbanded. Lord Roberts will arrive here next week to be presented with a sword of honour when he is also certain to be warmly feted.

Last Sunday was my leave day, so I went out to Groot Schur, Cecil Rhodes' residence at Wynburg, and wandered all over the grounds which lie on the mountain side. The house, itself, is not of pretentious appearance, but the land which surrounds it is very lovely. It has no gardens attached to it but it stands in the midst of dense forest land abounding in walks of just that delightful type which you and I enjoy. They would not, however, be walks which mother would care to tackle as they constitute one continual climb up steep paths, through rocky kloofs and defiles of dense, though beautiful, trees; through glens where wild flowers and ferns make a tempting couch whereon to lie, to smoke, and to ruminate, with the awful grandeur of Table Mountain frowning down in cloud-capped majesty overhead. One walks through glens in which the foliage is so abundant that the sudden taking of a bend obliterates the direction from whence one came. At the extreme summit of the estate is a large cage containing a magnificent lion and lioness, and, in an adjoining compartment, the finest leopard I have ever seen. From this point the view is entrancing in its unique beauty for, thirty miles away, one can discern

Simonstown Bay, and the warships within it, and the intervening plateau, though actually miles away, appears to lie at one's feet. The serpentine course of the Salt River can also be seen looking, against the surrounding background, like a silver ribbon hastily thrown down. Its course can be traced even to the point where it meets the sea and the white South African sand mingles with the breakers of the blue ocean. In another direction one can see Cape Town and Table Bay and, behind them, the towering perpendicular form of Table Mountain with the Devil's Peak and Lion's Head. Beyond it the ocean, flashing in the sunlight just as it did when, centuries ago, old Van Riebeeck first came ashore and chased the Kaffirs back to the interior. And beyond, also, the mountain; sombre, grand and awe-inspiring, yet beautiful and unchanging as destiny; unchanged from the beginning of time. As the Creator made them, so will they remain until "the stars shall fade away; the sun himself grow dim with age." I expect you will be tired of all this, but I love the beautiful in nature and as I lay gazing around on her many charms, in the domain of probably one of the richest men of today, in the home of the "Diamond King" of South Africa, I forget the man in admiration of the beauties that a bountiful Creator has fashioned.

Well, this a thousand per cent. better berth than any I had previously held. I sometimes feel that fortune has been very kind to me in leading me here. When I look back upon the old struggling times I am constrained to regard them as some horrid nightmare from which I have now pleasantly awakened. I have lost that hopeless feeling and believe that the clouds which have hung so heavily over my life are now dispersed and reveal for me a bright and happy future . . .

On the 15th December, 1900, my dear brother, after thirteen days of acute suffering, passed away in his twenty-ninth year, at the New Somerset Hospital, Cape Town. His sudden illness, which had necessitated an operation, had resulted from a vain attempt to save the life of another from drowning. Thus ended, so prematurely, a life which had met frustration at every turn. The overwhelming nature of the pain and grief which assailed us will be understood by those who, at the call of an ever-inscrutable fate, are suddenly required to surrender those, in the flower of their youth, who lie nearest to their hearts.

* * *

But to return to Liverpool. Another episode connected with the South African War concerns myself. It was late afternoon on a beautiful sunny day when I passed down

Bold Street and noticed that all the shops in that thoroughfare were closed and that the windows of most of them were barricaded. From one of the small groups of people gathered here and there I enquired the reason, and was answered by a genial elderly man. 'Sure, and didn't ye know it's the Irish regiment are comin' home an' will be here in a few minutes, God bless thim!' I made up my mind to stay and see these gallant volunteers but thought it strange that there should be so few to welcome them. Soon the mounted police arrived and formed a cordon across Bold Street from the Central Station into Seel Street. A few moments later, at the top of narrow Bold Street came a large procession numbering many hundreds of people headed by a band. They were members of the many local Irish Societies organised for the occasion to give their compatriots a warm Irish welcome. Down the street they came, making for the station entrance, but as the street at this end was closed the oncoming procession rapidly resolved itself into a surging mass of humanity. I was swept off the pavement and carried to and fro in a veritable human tidal wave. I was more terrified than I have ever been in my life. After what seemed to be an hour but was probably only a few minutes, I began to feel my strength departing. Backwards and forwards I was borne, my head held back as I gasped for breath. Then, just as a cloud of darkness appeared to be enveloping me I was conscious that a tall, broad figure had placed itself in front of me, and another behind me, forming a barrier between myself and the mob, and that I was being gently led out of that turbulent crowd and into the haven of Wood's the confectioners and restaurateurs, where I was accommodated with a chair and a glass of water. Not a word had been spoken, and I had only time before my rescuers disappeared to gasp out, 'Thank you; oh, thank

you,' and to notice that they were dressed in Highland costume. I was joined by a lady who said, 'Don't cry, you are safe now; but you were in a dangerous position. I, with others, was watching from the dining-room windows and noticed you struggling. We thought that in a moment or two you would faint. These two Highlanders volunteered to go to your aid.' Messrs. Wood had obligingly opened their door while this took place and I was conducted a few minutes later, via the back entrance, into the quietude of Wood Street. From that time onwards I have had a horror of crowds; a veneration for the kilt, and a sense of gratitude to my two big rescuers. I might add that I neither saw nor heard the homecoming of the Irish Battalion of the King's Liverpool Regiment, one of those units which had so recently been spoken of as 'My brave Irish' when, in recognition of their very fine service in South Africa, Queen Victoria accorded them the right to wear the shamrock on parade on St. Patrick's Day.

* * *

In the closing months of the South African War the small events of life occurred with quickening frequency in our family circle. My brother Harry returned home to us after completing his schooldays at the Liverpool Seamen's Orphanage. Twelve months later he was apprenticed to the mercantile marine when he signed indentures with one of the smaller but well-known firms of Liverpool sailing-ship owners, Messrs. J. B. Walmsley & Co., of Chapel Street.

His first voyage in that firm's service was in their ship *Wray Castle* to South America via Cape Horn, or, to use a vernacularism of Liverpool seafarers of those days, 'Cape Stiff.' We were very proud of our young sailor brother who had grown into a tall, bronzed, healthy lad with a

strong athletic figure on which his new smart uniform showed to advantage. It would have been difficult to recognise in him the one-time 'Timmy' for whose sake I had, in my girlhood, been so anxious to earn a little admiration. There was now no longer any need for artifices. It has been said that all women admire a uniform, and in the case of Harry it was certainly confirmed by the glances which were bestowed upon him by the eyes of the younger adolescent females of Toxteth Park.

A few days after the formalities of Harry's apprenticeship had been completed, Ernest (brother number five) returned home one day and, throwing a shilling upon the table, remarked, 'Perhaps, Mother, you would like to have this mounted and made into a brooch for, by accepting it, I am now a soldier of the King.' This was a great surprise as Ernest's amicable and ease-loving nature was hardly in keeping with that of the alert and well-disciplined British tommy. Three times he had been apprenticed to different trades and three times had been sent home with the terse intimation that his services were no longer required. The only real enthusiasm he had ever displayed was for music. I had known him frequently to return home and request that he might be served with a meal immediately as he had to leave in a few minutes. Whilst the meal was being prepared he would seat himself at the piano and remain there for a couple of hours harmonising and improvising, oblivious of both the meal and the urgent appointment, to keep which the former had been hastily prepared. I have never yet succeeded in understanding why he enlisted for he was the least martially minded of all my brothers. He was, at this time, nineteen years of age and, whether by accident or design, was posted on enlistment to the first battalion of the Wiltshire Regiment, formerly the 62nd Foot,

which regiment had, many years previously, been commanded by his maternal grandfather who, in that capacity, had been killed during the Crimean War at the storming of the quarries, at Sebastopol. A similar fate was not destined to be shared by Ernest for, on reaching Cape Town, after little more than a few weeks' training, his draft straightway entrained and reached the veldt just as peace was proclaimed. In a few months he returned to England and, after three years finished his service with the colours during which he had given satisfaction and earned promotion.

There is no doubt that a period of service in the regular Army, or Navy, can be of incalculable benefit to a young man who, otherwise sound and straight, is disposed to be aimless, irresponsible or lackadaisical. Both my brothers who served in the army have admitted to me their special debt to it in that their periods of service, so far from being lost years were, even from the possible narrow standpoint of their own ultimate material interests, years spent to the highest advantage as service life had lessons to teach which no other school could provide and which, if assimilated, could greatly enhance a man's personal value and efficiency in his subsequent civilian career. It was certainly so in Ernest's case for after his discharge he set out to seek his fortune in Canada where his musical abilities soon attracted attention. Eventually he was appointed musical critic to a well-known chain of American newspapers and, incidentally, became recognised as a brilliant pianist.

In deciding to emigrate to Canada he followed his elder brother John who had preceded him to that Dominion some five years before. In the year 1897 John had finished his apprenticeship in the city, an event eagerly anticipated by mother as journeyman's wages would

permit him to relieve her of many anxieties which, at that time, were inevitable to one responsible for the upbringing of a young family bereft of its breadwinner. It was with some consternation that four years later, during two of which he had successfully been in business on his own account, we were informed by him that he did not care for his trade and felt that he could do much better in some different sphere of employment. He was something of a natural orator, and despite his youth, was already in constant demand as a speaker. He was hopeful that this aptitude would be serviceable to him in a new and different kind of career. We were told that he had booked his passage to Canada and would require to take leave of us within a fortnight. We knew it would be useless to attempt to dissuade him from taking any course upon which he had set his mind, for John's chief characteristics, already evinced even in childhood, were determination, self-reliance and optimism. I ventured to remind him of the promise he had given to his father always to make his mother his first consideration. This, he declared, was his chief reason for taking the step to which he was now committed, for, he said, 'I hope very soon to be in a position to render help to my mother which will remove all financial difficulties from her and give, to my younger brothers and sister, opportunities which have been denied to you and me.'

On the evening of John's arrival in Toronto an important public meeting was taking place in the city and, having nothing particular to do, he turned into it and, growing interested in the subject matter before the meeting—imperial relations—rose and asked if he might be permitted to express the view of one who had lately arrived in Canada from England. Before leaving the meeting he was approached by two gentlemen who asked

him to call upon them the following morning at an address which proved to be that of a leading Canadian newspaper. He did so and before leaving their office had been engaged to conduct a two years' lecture tour throughout Canada. In course of time he became a member of the British Columbia Legislative Assembly and the proprietor of Western Canadian newspapers. He faithfully fulfilled the promise given to his father and was ever a devoted son.

CHAPTER XI

Joining the enterprise of Lever Brothers Ltd. The attractions of Port Sunlight. The humour of life in a library.

It was in June, 1905, and I was on holiday with a girl friend, spending the week in daily excursions to places of local interest. It was my friend who suggested a visit to Port Sunlight, and as I had never been there I gladly agreed to her proposal. Upon arrival I was astonished to find a village of great beauty, with wide open spaces, tree-lined avenues containing rows of pretty cottages each differing in style of architecture and replete with many amenities to cheer and help its inhabitants. It appeared strange, and, indeed, almost unbelievable to find that all this was possible instead of the dismal surroundings, narrow streets and general drabness which at that time was accepted as the inevitable environment of factory life as developed in Lancashire and elsewhere. A tour through the spacious offices and model factory, with its large, clean, and airy departments induced in me an ardent wish to exchange my back-room office in a depres-

sing part of central Liverpool for employment in these beautiful surroundings. The offices looked so imposing that, for a moment, I stood aghast at my own audacity in imagining that I could qualify for a position that would enable this desire to be fulfilled. At school, as a child, I must have assimilated the precept which, at the head of my copy-book commended me, in the event of my not at first succeeding, to try, try, try again, for, after obeying this injunction in a series of applications for a place on the staff of Messrs. Lever Brothers Limited, my efforts were finally successful, for on the 13th February, 1906, I was appointed to a position, albeit a modest one, in the Head Office, then at Port Sunlight. My friends thought me foolish to give up employment in Liverpool for a berth which would necessitate a long tram—boat—foot journey, especially as my commencing salary would be no higher, save for free tickets for the Mersey ferry service. But I would not take their advice. Hitherto circumstances had compelled me to accept any post I could secure, but now, freed from certain duties to the home, I was determined to exercise my own judgment.

For the first two years my work required me to be in attendance at 8 a.m., but after that period, at 8-30 a.m. Each morning, on reaching the Liverpool Pier Head in time to board the 7-15 steamer to New Ferry, I experienced a pleasurable sense of adventure. In summer it was delightful to walk the deck with a congenial companion whose destination was also mine, and, in the freshness of the early morning, to meet that swelling tide with its tang of the sea breathing the varied maritime interests which serve to ennoble the Mersey. And in winter, to gather in the warm saloon, there to be tossed about by the strength of a heavy gale; then to land at New Ferry and struggle up the long pier in the teeth of a strong

sou'-wester, a stimulus which produced a feeling of exhilaration, and provided a tonic for the demands of the day. My work was interesting and although we were subject to strict but not severe discipline, we were free from irksome restraint and petty control. Each had his or her particular tasks and if these were discharged satisfactorily work proceeded with a freedom which stimulated all to give of their best. After five years of happy employment I was made a Co-partner, receiving from the hands of our Chairman, the first Lord Leverhulme, my first shares in the Company. I felt very proud of this and did not fail to impress its importance upon the family and friends. The annual distribution of co-partnership shares was ever a delight to me for on these occasions we were addressed by our Chairman. His words always impressed upon me the sense of my importance to the firm despite my relatively humble grade in it for he had the power to instill in his employees of all grades a conviction of their responsibility to an undertaking which was as much their business as his and to fill them with the inspiring belief that 'it all depends on you.'

Industrial advancement in respect of improvement and uplift of the people, housing reform, and security for the worker are popular counters with which, in these days, politicians and sociologists of all creeds delight to play. Let it therefore not be forgotten that, sixty years ago, William Hesketh Lever not only had already the vision to conceive almost everything of substance in current programmes and policies for the advancement of the workers but, what is more to the point, he had already, over fifty years ago, on the banks of the Mersey, translated that vision into an accomplished and actively functioning reality, evolved and sustained without the help of a single penny from public funds but entirely from wealth

earned by the shrewd but enlightened employment of capital in a business in which the respective rights and interests of capital and labour were rightly regarded as collateral rather than contrary.

During my daily journeys to and from the headquarters of Messrs. Lever Brothers Limited I had never failed to admire both the genius which had conceived the development of Port Sunlight itself and the industrial vision and enterprise of which it was the progeny though without contemplating any personal severance, in any way, from Liverpool to which I was endeared. During 1916 my youngest brother had come home from France, on leave, and had married, while at Christmas in the same year my sister Dorothy also married and with the remainder of my brothers being either settled abroad or at sea it meant that my mother was alone all day for, as war-time travelling facilities decreased, I was unable to reach home, in Aigburth, before 8 p.m. at the earliest. Finally I asked mother if she would be willing to live in Port Sunlight if I obtained a suitable house there. 'Yes,' she replied, 'I would because it will be much better for you. I am growing old (she was sixty-five) and it does not matter where I live if we can be together. You have taken a long journey for a number of years and as things are we cannot be together as much as I should like.' The following day my request for a house in the village was put forward to which a reply was received from the late Lord Leverhulme to the effect that I was to be allowed to take my choice from any houses that became vacant. And that is how we came to reside at Port Sunlight.

A long time afterwards I learned what a hard wrench it had been for my mother to leave her friends, her church, and her familiar surroundings to live among strangers.

A week later she met me at the door, her dear face beaming with pleasure as she said 'Nancie, I am going to be very happy here, I was afraid that I might not be, but I love the open spaces, the beautiful trees, and my pretty home and garden. In a few weeks' time when Spring is here I know it will be lovely.'

Soon we had callers and much kindness shown to us. Although it was war-time there were many activities in the village both of a social and constructive character in which we were invited to take part. But that which gave mother the greatest pleasure and satisfaction was when Hulme Hall was turned into a military hospital thus enabling her, twice a week, to give hospitality to some of the convalescents. How those boys enjoyed gathering round the fire, and how quickly home-made pastries and scones disappeared, to my mother's perfect delight.

One afternoon the circle was incomplete for there was one vacant place. On enquiring the reason for this she was told, 'Oh, it's R——, the V.C.' 'He asked us to tell you that he is detained but will be along in half-an-hour. Please don't tell him that it was we who let the cat out of the bag.' When he arrived mother told him how surprised she had been on hearing that she had the honour of entertaining a V.C. He looked rather bashful and said, 'Those fellows have too much tongue; they are forever giving me away.' He was, in truth, a most modest hero.

My mother had always been a great reader. My grandmother once told me how mother, as a child, would sit in the porch of her home at Winchester, always reading, and that one day a footman called at the house and delivered a parcel, sent by his lady, for the little girl reader she had so frequently noticed when driving past. Children, in those days, were not the subjects of so much indulgence and consideration as now and it is not sur-

prising that the little reader was greatly delighted with this new treasure, a copy of Peter Parley's *Christmas Annual*.

How pleased I was to be able to take to her the works of both old and new authors, and how delightful were the winter evenings when, the day's work over, I would arrive home within a few minutes and we could settle down to a long evening, I to tackle a piece of sewing whilst mother read aloud. She would read for three to four hours without a break, and very beautifully, too, never slurring nor stumbling, and with a cadency and expression which made it a joy to listen to her.

Another source of happiness was the kindly thought of many colleagues, or members of their families, which expressed itself in gifts of beautiful flowers from their gardens, nearly always accompanied by a little message hoping mother would be pleased to accept them. And mother did, for she was a sincere lover of nature. I here include a paragraph taken from an article written by her on the evening of her seventieth birthday under the title 'A Summer Idyll' :

My Garden. How much I love it ! No empress with a casket of jewels ever derived the wealth of pleasure from her precious gems that nature's jewels provide for me. Yet in the opinion of some, no doubt, this unpretentious patch would scarce be called a garden. Let me describe it. A plot of ground, some thirty feet by twenty enclosed by four walls : the south wall a mass of ivy adjoining an eastern wall hidden by Virginia creeper, while the western one is formed by the gable end of a tall house covered with ivy in which so many sparrows have found a home that I call it my aviary. The remaining wall is covered with creeper which climbs to the roof and hangs in long graceful festoons over my window, and beneath it is my garden which presently is a blaze of colour. Nasturtiums, roses, and canary creeper run riot, climbing the wall, clinging lovingly to the ivy, and peeping in at the window ; scarlet, yellow and pink all intertwined. The dear little yellow flowers of canary creeper push their saucy faces through the rose bush. A cluster of pink roses embraces the ivy while everywhere, on wall and ground, masses of gay nasturtiums of varied hue add life and beauty to my garden. With slender necks and graceful heads are giant balsams of lavender hue that bow and sway with every breeze and make me think of dainty ladies in a ballroom.

Oh, how I love my garden! The white marguerites which grow so abundantly and look so pure, speak to me of God's bounty and goodness, enriching the earth with His precious gifts.

Yet with the joy they offer comes also the thought that soon they must fade and my farewell must be taken of them. I shall not grieve for them, but await the certainty of their resurrection next summer, for have I not God's word that 'While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease'.

Not long after I had settled down in my new home in Port Sunlight I was asked by the firm if I would care to consider myself a candidate for the position of Librarian. I had no hesitation in assenting. A few days later I was given charge of the Lever Library which is part of the elaborate and far-reaching organisation which the firm had evolved in the social interests of its many employees. Available both to actual employees and members of their families it has a large membership embracing all grades from senior managers to the youngest apprentices, and caters for a wide range of aims, ideas, and tastes.

As the human element has been and always will be the most interesting study on this planet it gave to my work a fascination which, with every respect, I had never known in the world of ledgers, files, and typewriters. It has been a source of contentment to have spent the best years of my life in a type of activity which has brought me into direct contact with a variety of people.

Young factory workers, in the main, are an intelligent and discriminating class of people who, not infrequently, have quite a sound knowledge of good literature. At the same time there are some who need judicious guidance, and are really most grateful for it. In my early days at the library I remember a certain girl worker looking undecidedly at the contents of the shelves, and in response to my proffered help in making a choice for her she said, 'I want a book about a Duchess or a Countess.' She then

confided to me that, 'I would not think of reading a book with anyone less than a titled lady in it.' Although one may smile at such naivete it was merely the unconscious expression of a desire to know life from an angle different from her own. I managed to accommodate her and gradually induced her interest in progressively higher standards of literature. Years later she achieved an exceptionally discriminating literary taste and would sometimes refer, with a smile, to the time when, as she expressed it, 'I associated with the nobility.'

Then there was the dear old lady who, week after week and month after month, selected only books by Annie Swan. Having read every work of that authoress which the library contained she would start the sequence over again. One day she remarked to me of the book she was taking out that she had read it a dozen times. I introduced her to the books of David Lyall, explaining that David Lyall and Annie Swan were one and the same person. Rather grudgingly she consented to try one by David Lyall but the next day she was back again and, as she laid the book on the counter, exclaimed in tones of marked contempt, 'This one can't write; give me one by Annie Swan.' For several years afterwards this old loyalist continued to read and re-read books written by the same authoress and to refuse those by David Lyall, contesting in this way the opinion of Juliet that 'that which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet.'

The juvenile section of the library was well supplied with books covering a wide range of interests suited to the requirements of the younger generation. Its resources were at all times adequately taxed by a large following of young people aged from eight to fourteen.

An incident, the humour of which I learned to appreciate, even if not at the time of its occurrence, was associated

with this department. It was a fine summer evening and near the closing hour of 6 p.m. My assistants had already left and I was preparing to do so when I heard an unusual noise which came from the back of one of the tall book stands. In another moment this noise developed into a lusty cry and there, lying in a bassinette which had been brought in covertly, was a young child about six months old. I lifted it from the pram and searched its clothing for any indication as to whom it belonged, but utterly failed to find one. I brought in several passing youngsters to see if they could identify the babe, but all to no purpose. The conviction was forced upon me that the child was abandoned and had been planted on me. In the meantime, how that baby screamed!

I thought it must be hungry, and decided to take it to the Cottage Hospital to be fed, while I reported the incident to the police. I proceeded to put this plan into action, accompanied by a rearguard of boys and girls who had grasped the situation and who appeared to be greatly interested in the spectacle of the librarian pushing a bassinette containing an abandoned screaming infant, when suddenly I was confronted by a panting, breathless girl of about fifteen who could only gasp out, 'The baby, the baby.' It turned out she was the child's eldest sister. She had called at the library and taken out a book. Unwisely, as subsequent events established, she decided to sample just the first page before leaving the library and starting off home. Believe it or not, she became so enthralled that she proceeded home—two miles away—reading it. Only on arrival home, when two anxious but irate parents had asked, 'Where's the baby?' did this earnest young reader remember her charge. How delighted I was to see her. The injunction that 'Tis more blessed to give than to receive' acquired, for me, an added significance.

Many notable people, making visits to Port Sunlight, called at the library. In this way I had the privilege of meeting Hall Caine, Harold Begbie, Emil Cammaerts and Admiral Jellicoe among many others. One afternoon I noticed an elderly gentleman looking around the book cases, and thinking that he was searching for some particular volume, I asked if I could assist him. 'Thank you' he replied, 'I am looking to see if you have in the library any of Richard Whiting's books.' I showed him a list of those we had, remarking that there were two or three at present in circulation among the members, but, should the one he required be among these I would undertake that it should be retained for him. He thanked me again but said, 'No. I do not require any of them. I only wish to know if they are still read. I am pleased to know they are for I am Richard Whiting.'

CHAPTER XII

The First Great World War breaks out. Sinking of the 'Lusitania'

It was the summer of 1914, and in July of that year mother, Dorothy (fully established in the teaching profession) and I spent a holiday in Devon, making Plymouth our headquarters. We greatly enjoyed the beauty of the Devon countryside, the large-hearted hospitality of its people, and the daily excursions they arranged for us which embraced trips to the moors, Mount Edgecombe, Cawsand and many other beauty spots. We also sailed up the river Yealm to visit the lovely church at the junction of the twin villages of Noss Mayo and Newton

Ferrers. In the churchyards of these villages many of the sailors belonging to my father's ship had been laid to rest for their bodies had been washed up at different points along the coast and some were brought there for interment. My father's body was never found and he lies in the sea he loved so well.

At this time echoes of Continental political intrigues were frequently heard though no definite shadow of war could be discerned, and the thought that even such an event as this could affect our country was generally dismissed as impossible. During the last week of our stay we witnessed an imposing sight. The Grand Fleet had just lately been reviewed and its units were now dispersing to their various depots at Portsmouth, Chatham and Plymouth, prior to demobilisation. This circumstance provided a unique opportunity to observe the whole of that part of the fleet attached to Plymouth as its thirty-six vessels lay at anchor in the Hamoaze, a sight warranted to quicken the pulse of the most phlegmatic Briton. Often, when recalling these events, I have been constrained to conjecture whether the holding of the review at this particular time was the result of chance or design.

We were due to return home on the Friday and, on the previous evening went out for our customary stroll along the Hoe only to find this usually gaily illuminated parade was in darkness and that the band of the Middlesex Regiment, which had been performing there throughout the week, was no longer to be seen or heard. In the small hours of the following morning we were roused from sleep by a bugle call which came from the streets in the surrounding district. This was followed by the excited, high-pitched voices of women and the hasty footsteps of men hurriedly leaving their homes to obey the summons

of the bugle for it had sounded the call to mobilise, and, hearing that call, we realised that Britain was on the alert and that war was imminent.

We left Plymouth next morning, and, after a journey in which we were several times held up, reached Liverpool and home. Two days later Britain declared war on Germany.

After the first excitement had passed we began to experience some of the minor discomforts of a nation at war. Rationing of some commodities was introduced and the formation of queues gradually became familiar. Blackout also came into being though this was not nearly so stringent in character as that experienced in the second war with Germany. Soon, very soon after, came gaps in our family and business lives, for our young men would not wait for compulsory enrolment but rushed to the nearest recruiting office to offer themselves in the service of King and Country.

In the factory and offices at Port Sunlight, as elsewhere, each day saw another vacant desk, or some familiar face missing. Alas! for the numbers of these young men who left in the joy and strength of early manhood who did not return. The beautiful war memorial which stands in the centre of the village and bears their names, testifies to the large but ever-honoured company of colleagues who made the great sacrifice.

From my own family circle, one brother who held an engineering appointment in the Cunard Line was with his ship, the *Carmania* when she was transformed into an auxiliary cruiser. He was serving in her when, on the 14th September, 1914, she engaged and sank the German armed merchant-cruiser *Cap Trafalgar*. There were many casualties aboard the *Carmania* but my brother escaped injury.

Another brother ('Timmy') was also at sea throughout the war voyaging between Liverpool and New York in various ships, including the *Saxonia*, *Ausonia* and *Celtic* and although many times in contact with the enemy came through each time without mishap.

Herbert, the youngest of the seven boys, relinquished his duties in the service of a well-known firm of Liverpool chartered accountants and enlisted at Rathbone Road, Wavertree, as a gunner in the 4th West Lancashire Brigade of the Royal Field Artillery, in whose ranks he later went overseas to France as one of the gallant 55th Division. After serving in France and Belgium continuously until the Armistice we had the good fortune to welcome him back early in 1919, in health and strength apart from some minor battle scars, ready and eager to resume his career which had been interrupted by over four years' service.

* * *

Not long after the outbreak of war came the glad news that Ernest would visit us. He had been in Canada during the preceding ten years and though he had reported on 5th August, 1914, for re-embodiment in the Wiltshire Regiment, had been rejected because of a certain medical defect. He was now about to come over to Britain, and thence to France with the proprietor of the Toronto newspaper in the service of which he was employed. It was their intention to follow the Canadian Forces and thus obtain first-hand copy of the war of direct Canadian interest. He had written that he expected to arrive in Liverpool and would spend a week with us before crossing to France. Finally, on May Day, 1915, he cabled 'Leaving on Lusitania, due home on eighth.' Great preparations were soon afoot, and although the fatted calf was missing, it being war-time, we certainly

succeeded in preparing a right royal welcome. Our young maid became imbued with the general spirit and, from the time the cable arrived, would at the first sound from knocker or bell, make a dash for the door, her face beaming with the spirit of expectation; much to the surprise of each caller.

At last the great day arrived. I recall that it was a Friday; that I was detained at the office until seven p.m., and that as I was on my way to the station I was overtaken by a young man on a bicycle who alighted and walked along the road with me telling me that the *Lusitania* had been torpedoed, 'but' he added, 'you need not upset yourself for everyone on board is saved. At the office we heard of it this afternoon, but thought it best not to inform you. You will hear about it when you reach Birkenhead, but I think you should be told of it before you reach there.'

On arriving at Birkenhead a scene of unusual activity presented itself. Newspaper boys, bearing the latest news placards before them were dashing up and down the platforms selling their papers while knots of people stood eagerly scanning the lists of survivors reported therein; others were loudly denouncing the nation that had designed and carried into practice so vile a plot against helpless and innocent people. The ferry steamer was unusually crowded with passengers of every description who, on disembarking at Liverpool, proceeded, almost without exception, direct to the Cunard offices, then in Water Street. I joined this company for I wanted to take home the latest reports. The offices were besieged with anxious enquirers, for everyone in that throng had somebody for whom they cared on board the *Lusitania* either as passenger or, as in the majority of cases, member of the crew. Members of this great gathering were very

orderly and subdued as they worked their way into the enquiry room. They appeared to be stunned by the immensity of the crime and although a few received glad tidings of those dear to them, the great majority turned sadly away to await further news. I was informed there was no word yet of my brother or his travelling companion. Heavy-hearted I reached home. My mother was sitting alone and as I entered the room she looked up and sadly exclaimed, 'Nancie, history repeats itself.' My mind was instantly thrown back to that memorable day, twenty years previously, when news came of my father's loss at sea.

We did not retire, for sleep would have been impossible. We were doing our best to convince each other that the morrow would bring good news when, at one a.m., came a ring at the bell, and mother cried, 'Thank God, he is safe.' And sure enough, there in the doorway stood a telegraph messenger holding the familiar orange-coloured envelope which held the message, 'Saved, Ernest.' A short time ago I had occasion to search among my mother's papers and found this telegram put carefully away. It was evidently one of her family treasures.

On the following morning I arrived at the Dingle Station of the Overhead Railway, where it came as a great surprise to me to be confronted with the large newspaper placard of a well-known pictorial daily bearing a picture of my brother Ernest holding a small child whom, as I later learned from the paper, he had been instrumental in saving from the wreck. Later in the day another telegram arrived, saying, 'Will arrive Sunday five-fifteen Woodside Station.'

So it was that on a beautiful Sabbath afternoon I witnessed, as regards the home-coming of its survivors, the final scene of that great sea crime, the sinking of the

Lusitania. Although the train from Holyhead, bringing the last of the survivors, was not due until five-fifteen I knew no rest and actually arrived on the platform with the clock hands at four-thirty. Early as I was, others were earlier, including some who, with little children, had kept an all-night vigil on one of our Liverpool stations where two trains had arrived, one in the early hours of the morning and one at mid-day. Although each had brought a little company of survivors, no familiar face had gladdened the hearts of these weary watchers. Though no message of promise had reached them they had heard that the last of the saved would arrive at Woodside Station at five-fifteen, and Hope, sometimes so cruel, bade them forget their fatigue and the weary watches of the night, and led them, dragging and carrying little children, to resume their watch at Woodside.

Memory has engraved, deeply, that scene, so tragic, so pitiful, and yet so inevitable a sequel to such inhumanity. I recall the little group seated upon luggage trucks which a kindly porter had placed for their accommodation; young women with tiny children in their arms, and others clinging to their skirts, blissfully unconscious of the tragedy and crime of the previous Friday afternoon. All this little group, humble women, chiefly wives of the heroic 'black squad,' whilst bravely endeavouring to comfort and sustain each other, were, save for the ministering services of a Salvation Army Officer, left conspicuously isolated during their dramatic watch. One young woman, nursing an infant, looked faint and ill, and I watched with interest the kindly ministration of the Salvationist who, abandoning his post for a few minutes, returned with a cup of tea for her, standing by until, cheered by the beverage, she had somewhat recovered.

At last the train was signalled; a silence, weird and awesome, fell upon us broken only by the voice of a little child calling, 'Want to go home mummy, want to go home.' I saw the Salvationist relieve the woman of her infant; and then the train came steaming in. Oh! the mingled joy and agony of the next few seconds as carriage doors were flung open giving back, as from the dead, a few, but alas, for that tragic group, not one. Then a woman's voice was heard calling, 'Has no one seen my Jim?' The returned survivors were greeted in silence by their friends who, in the face of so much stark sorrow, seemed to realise that audible expressions of their own great joy would be hardly less than an outrage. My brother was caught and held by women who eagerly accosted him with such questions as, 'Mister, did you see a big tall man anywhere; my husband?'

The train soon emptied of its comparatively few survivor occupants among whom the members of that poor, stricken group of women sought in vain for even one familiar face. At this moment an official of the Cunard Company was observed by them and was implored to say when and where the next batch of survivors would arrive. I found myself straining anxiously for the reply. The official hesitated but finally, with an effort, braced himself to say, 'No more; no more. It is much better for you to know the truth; there are no more to come, not one.' Then a low chorus of moans arose from the tortured watchers who at last realised that nevermore would they behold the loved form of husband, father or son.

Such was one of the more intimate scenes of that great Liverpool tragedy, the sinking of the *Lusitania* which, perhaps more than any other event in the Great War of 1914-1918, marked both a definite break with past traditions of honourable combat at sea, and the

inauguration of all those Teutonic enormities specifically directed at the non-combatant which are connoted by the term 'total warfare.'

Though, during the subsequent phases of that war, and throughout the second world war, mass murder on the high seas became increasingly a manifestation of German 'Kultur,' that involving the destruction of the *Lusitania* and its, mainly, Liverpool crew is likely, for the reason I have stated, to become an event of historical importance.

We, the dwellers on Merseyside, remember with gratitude and respect, those who through man's inhumanity passed from our midst. Proudly we cherish the knowledge that, in their passing, the noblest and most heroic traditions of the mercantile marine were upheld. In our hearts we remember and honour

'The brave!—

The brave that are no more!

All sunk beneath the wave,

Fast by their native shore!

Late that evening, in the Scotland Road district of Liverpool severe anti-German riots broke out, led by seamen and dockers who had lost relatives or friends, and by others who had worked aboard 'Lusie,' the pride of the port, and whose dastardly end they were determined to avenge. So an infuriated mob set out and proceeded to sack and destroy premises occupied by Germans and Austrians. Windows were smashed, furniture destroyed and stocks were flung into the streets. The city police with mounted constabulary made an effort to cope with the situation, but the mob successfully continued its trail of destruction for several hours. As is so often the case, the innocent, in many instances, suffered for the guilty, for many of the victims of the attack had been

citizens of Liverpool for the better part of their lives, living peaceably and industriously among its people. Several of them had sons serving in the British forces. No personal injury was inflicted, for the occupants had previously left their premises.

Ernest stayed with us for three weeks before he received instructions to return to Toronto. The body of his chief, and fellow-traveller, was not found. When last seen he was standing calmly on the deck with a young child in his arms and another clinging to him.

* * *

Suddenly after four years of hoping, yearning, watching and waiting, came the end of the war. Joy bells rang out as word went quickly around telling us the great German war machine had collapsed and the leaders of the self-named 'invincible' German Army had sued for an armistice. Universal joy and thanksgiving were shadowed by the recollection of those who had paid the great price to save their country and kinsmen from defeat. Many of us poor simpletons found consolation for these great sacrifices in the readily accepted postulation that 'there will never be another war, for this one has been fought to end war,' little knowing that even then the concept, if not indeed the outline plan, was already envisaged by Germany's war-mongers to wage another conflict on a much more dreadful scale.

Very soon after this our men returned and we settled down to the peaceful occupations and harmless distractions of pre-war days. I count among the happiest times of my life those immediate post-war years when the blissful reactions of peace after war could be more intensely felt. Between my mother and myself there had always existed a strong bond of affection and understanding which was strengthened and deepened in those days when we two

remained together and were able so freely to give to each other mutual love and care.

CHAPTER XIII

*Shadows Again. The 'Reaper with his Sickle Keen.'
Eventide.*

During the war years of 1914-1918 we had not taken any holiday, but, with the ending of the war, our pre-war excursions were resumed. First to the lovely Channel Islands, where some new beauty was discovered at every turn. Later to Devon, North Wales, the Lake District, Surrey and Anglesey. It was at the last mentioned place that I first noticed my mother had lost a great part of her energy. She soon grew tired; did not take the same interest, as formerly, in the small happenings of the day, and appeared pleased when the time came to return home. A few days later I thought she was not looking so well as usual and, on my questioning her, she admitted that of late she had been subjected to attacks of pain to which, however, she had refrained from referring because of the possibility of it causing me alarm. I was, indeed, alarmed and immediately sought the best medical advice. There followed two years of intense suffering before her brave, loving spirit was released, to return to God whom she had striven so faithfully to serve. We laid her to rest towards the close of the year 1930.

After the death of my mother I had to gather up the broken threads of life, a task which was not easy, and one which called for much adjustment. But Father Time,

regarded by some as an enemy, is really a friend and benefactor, for he lays his hand upon the aching wound and silently but gently heals it. I had my work and my home to attend to and many little duties which prior to mother's illness had been her constant care, now devolved upon me. Among these were the weekly letters to the 'boys,' a generic term applied by mother to all my brothers even when they happened to be well advanced into middle age.

For several years my brother Harry was accustomed to leave Liverpool for New York immediately before Christmas and, after voyaging on world cruises, would return early in the following June. His home-comings became the great events of my life, prepared for and looked forward to several weeks in advance. He would travel down from London arriving in the late evening. Tea would be awaiting him and a bright fire burning, for, no matter what the weather may be, a sailor always seems to appreciate the cheery glow of a good fire. Soon I would hear his light, quick step upon the garden path and then I was enfolded in a bear-like embrace. Just behind him would follow a porter from the local station wheeling a truck laden with sea-chest, portmanteau and a variety of other goods. These, having been deposited, would then be unpacked and no amount of persuasion, or hinting that the meal was ready for serving, would be heeded. Those boxes would first have to be unpacked. And what treasures they contained. Carved elephants from Colombo, butterfly wing trays from Rio, carvings from China and Bali, embroidered silks from Japan and many other beautiful and interesting mementoes of his voyage. How his face beamed with pleasure as he handled the goods with, 'Here; this is for you; and this.' And, 'Oh! you had better take charge of this thing.' He was a great giver

and, in that capacity, he derived as much pleasure as the recipient.

I was always full of regret at having to leave him alone in the house during the day whilst I attended to my business for I knew that, accustomed as he was to a ship's company, he would feel the solitude; not that he stayed indoors for any length of time for he had many friends to visit from whom he was assured of a very warm welcome. On my return, towards evening, I was always glad if, from my window, there streamed forth a light for this told me he was at home. In a few weeks time he would commence a series of three or four short trips to the U.S.A., and then, away for another world cruise.

So the years slipped by and once again the muttering and threats of war were heard. These had but little effect upon us. Had we not striven for peace and, as the gauge of our own sincerity in all these strivings, committed ourselves to an unparalleled act of disarmament? Had we not supported the League of Nations? Had we not, in European politics, been almost quixotically chivalrous to our recently defeated foe? Had we not forborne to press for our indemnities and, indeed, had we not advanced great loans, already, to that foe? What ground, therefore, was there for us to apprehend another world, or even another European conflict? Munich, and certain events of September, 1938, were destined rudely to shake these complacent reflections.

On the 1st January, 1939, I received a letter from my brother Ernest in Vancouver. It was a bright and happy one telling me that, on that particular day, he was booked to give a pianoforte recital in Seattle. It was a letter full of high hopes and kindly greetings. The following day a cable arrived informing me that he had passed away on New Year's eve after a few hours illness.

In March of the same year I received notice of my retirement. My firm, with their invariable consideration, gave me three months' notice of the event, saying I was at liberty to come and go as I wished so far as my daily duties were concerned, for such gradual slackening off would make the severance from work less abrupt.

Probably many people experience a feeling of mingled pleasure and regret at the thought of their retirement. Though the forthcoming days of leisure may be anticipated with satisfaction, the thought is apt to occur that, also the interests associated with one's employment and one's colleagues will cease, and that what one has looked upon for so long as one's special charge must now pass into the care and keeping of others. This 'mixed feeling' is likely to be particularly acute when the occupation has been both congenial and satisfying.

I hastened, by letter, to impart the news of my retirement to my brother Harry and, in his reply, he said how pleased he was to learn it as I should now have more leisure. He, too, was about to make a change. What did I think of his retiring from the sea and taking a cottage in Devon, on the sea coast? He had now a ready market for all the seascapes he could find time to paint. I must here explain that, by the courtesy of his shipping firm he was able to hold an exhibition of his pictures—all seascapes and marine subjects—on each world cruise. He added 'I shall soon be home, when we can talk it over, but the decision must rest with you.' This letter I received early in April. It was on the morning of the 27th, in answer to a knock I opened the door and a gentleman, a stranger to me, enquired if I was Miss Cowper. He said, 'I had better come inside, as I wish to talk with you.' Something in his manner caused me to say, 'Have you brought me bad news?' He bowed his head and then broke to me the

news that my much loved brother had been taken suddenly ill with a deadly tropical complaint and was, even that day, being laid to rest at Suva, in the far-off Fiji Islands.

* * *

Nine years have passed since that melancholy morning, including six years of war and devastation, of suffering and sacrifice, forced upon us by a nation intoxicated with lust for war and which, turning from the one true God, gave itself body and soul to serve the god Mars; this nation which, while greeting our emissary of peace with simulated delight and goodwill, hailed with fanatical frenzy the boast of their chosen dictator that he would raze the cities of Britain to the ground, but keep Germany immune from a solitary enemy bomb. History will record how, under this man's demented leadership, the monuments of his people's boasted culture found expression in hecatombs of tortured innocents throughout every European country which came under his temporary domination.

We, on Merseyside, in common with the inhabitants of other seaports, have suffered from the venom of this monster and his satellites. Now Nemesis has overtaken this guilty nation and has imposed upon it a part of the tribulation it had so joyfully planned to descend on others. The British nation's endurance has been rewarded with complete and overwhelming victory. Truly we may exclaim, 'The Lord has done great things for us.'

I have taken a backward glance over the long road I have travelled and in doing so, if only inferentially, the milestones of reform and progress which have marked my way. Liverpool, once known as the 'black spot on the Mersey' might now, despite her war scars, be re-named the 'pride of the Mersey.' Those war scars are deep and ugly, to be sure, and reflect the intensity of the onslaught

sustained by her civilian population with the same unflinching valour as that sustained by her sea-faring population on every sea in the unrelenting fight of the British Mercantile Marine against the German U-boat menace, which, after all, was the supreme individual contest of the whole war, as it was that of 1914-1918.

Those war scars will disappear, and though I shall not live to see it, I am certain that from those sad but honourable heaps of rubble and waste spaces which lie about the centre of our city, and which mark the trail of the beast, a greater and regenerated part of Liverpool will rise consonant with her position among the great mercantile cities of the world.

Now it is eventide; the shadows are lengthening and the sun is declining. Like a ship nearing the end of her voyage, I draw nigh to the home port, where so many loved ones await my arrival.

My voyage has taken me through both stormy seas and calm waters, yet, looking back, I can say with sincerity, truth and with deep thankfulness that 'goodness and mercy hath followed me all the days of my life' and that 'I hope to see my Pilot face to face when I have crossed the bar.'