

CHAPTER 15

To Australia

Irene Bald, walking back from the town one day with me, casually mentioned that a friend of hers who had I think something to do with the Colonial Office was very worried because an ADC who was going out with the new Governor to Queensland had become ill and could not now take on the job and he had to find someone to go almost at once.

"What about Neil?" I asked.

Irene was doubtful about a married ADC being wanted but she would put us in touch with the man at the Colonial Office.

I could not get home fast enough to tell Neil all about it. He of course was not at all enthusiastic, he did not know exactly where Australia was and he certainly had no idea where in Australia Queensland was, north, south, east or west, and why should I think he would like to go there?

"It's the country of 'The Man from the Snowy River'," I said.

It was the only book Neil possessed and the only one he was never parted from – he knew most of it by heart.

That made a difference. He would go and see this man about the job, though he did not think anything would come of it and though he did not say so, I could sense that he was rather bored with the aimless sort of life he was leading.

He interviewed the man in London; we both lunched (on approval) with Sir John and Lady Goodwin in London and luckily we were 'approved of'. Sir John would prefer a married man, instead of a very young man for ever falling in love, and he would like someone who was keen on riding and shooting.

So it was all fixed up and we had to leave in about a week. It was a busy time getting clothes together, goodbyes and all that, leaving for the other side of the world in a hurry means.

Goodbyes are always sad but my parents never did or said anything to persuade their children to stay close at home; they were too unselfish for that and always advised and encouraged us to go where we could and see what we could while we could; and they would look forward to our letters.

Violet helped me pack. She had her own way of so-called helping me. She liked to pack books; it consisted of sitting on the floor with the books and having a good look into them and giving a running commentary on them, and in the old newspapers I gave her to wrap them up she would find amusing bits to read out to me. When it came to packing clothes she knew far more about the country I was going to than I did, though she had never been there. Queensland would be hot, I wouldn't want this or that, I'd never wear that little hat or those coats or cardigans, and she would collect a nice pile of things that would be useful to her! We called this 'doing vulture'. She regaled me with romantic descriptions of Australia: all the men were long and lean

and brown, without an ounce of superfluous flesh; the country was one vast horizon, a small white cloud in the far distance turned out as it drew nearer to be millions and millions of sheep. So she would chatter on making me laugh.

Topper was to come with us but he could not go on the Orient ship with us for that line never took dogs.

Just before we sailed we went to say goodbye to Neil's solicitor and family friend, dear old Montagu Ellis. He asked me if there was anything he could do for me before I left. I told him the only thing I really wanted was for my dog to travel on the same ship as ourselves and but that not possible as dogs were not allowed on Orient Line boats.

"I'll arrange that for you. I know Sir Allen Anderson who is head of the Orient Line, very well."

How grateful I was to him. It was arranged and when we got on board Topper was there to welcome us.

Sir John and Lady Goodwin were quite charming. He, tall and good-looking, charming and amusing; she, a darling. We were indeed lucky to be on their staff.

Violet would expect a description of the other passengers, especially of the long, lean Australians who were returning to their mother country. Unfortunately none on the ship came up to Violet's glamorous idea of Australian manhood!

As usual after a day or so on board ship someone got busy trying to make everyone friendly. The way they do this is to get deck games going and to get everybody well mixed up, and to make quite sure that no one picks or chooses a partner, all the names are put in a hat and drawn for.

The organiser gets together a deck-games committee; he chooses kindred spirits and they have a whale of a time sitting around the bar, having drinks and organising what games to play and how many tournaments can be fitted in, and they strut about feeling very important.

The great thing is to get a tournament going soon and then the unfortunate people who have all drawn the only person they do not want as a partner can get 'matey' for they will have to practice, and the games committee will see that they do.

I have tried saying firmly that I do not wish to play deck games, that I do not wish my name to be put on the list. It's no good, a member of the committee comes up full of apologies and says he knows you will forgive him but he has put your name down as a player, it just made the numbers even and he knows you will be a sport.

When I found I had drawn the man travelling in Dents' gloves as my partner, I just crossed out my name – it would be more than I could stand! I was practically sharing a cabin with him as it was, in fact, the same bunk, except for the thin partition that separated us! He was short and revoltingly fat, he had a dent on the end of his bulbous nose, caused I suspected by his many falls when drunk. He used to come to his cabin very late, stumble about, crash would go his tooth glass, sick he would be, and probably not in the basin, and on very calm nights so I knew he was not sea-sick. Bump he would get into his bunk and in his efforts crash against the thin partition. He was a restless sleeper; I could hear him every time he heaved himself over and in doing so bumped the partition. He also snored. I definitely was not going to have

Dents' gloves as a partner, so I apologised to the committee for having crossed my name out and made some feeble excuse about having been ill.

The other important committee is the one that organises the sweepstake on the daily run of the ship. They are also composed of men who like to prop up the bar and take it in turns to go round and collect a shilling from everyone they can and then sit and drink till 12 o'clock, when the run is announced. They then sit and have drinks with the winner, if the winner is a 'good sport' and the winner, I gather is a loser for having won if he is a 'good sport'.

Five weeks and two days is a longish voyage and it took that time to get to Brisbane.

After Aden it was new ground, or rather new sea, to me.

Colombo was our next port of call. It was very hot and sticky but picturesque with swaying tall palms and heavy vegetation. Everyone from the ship collected at the Galle Face Hotel for a meal or drinks, or both, except for a few people who hired cars and drove up to the tea gardens. Some people left the ship at Colombo but most of the passengers were bound for Australia.

On the morning that I knew we should sight Perth, I got up very early for I wanted to get my first glimpse of Australia. Before one actually sees land one sees long horizontal stretches of silver shining in the sun. These gradually showed themselves to be huge corrugated tin sheds and the rising sun shining on the roofs was dazzling. As the ship got nearer I could see the word 'WOOL' painted on them in gigantic black letters. Big traders and companies had their wool stored here ready for shipment, and in addition to the word 'Wool' were painted the names of the many different companies.

We spent the day at Perth at Government House and were driven round and shown various places, including the Botanical Gardens and the Town Hall.

Adelaide was much the same and we spent much the same sort of day, entertained at Government House with a drive round to see the Botanical Gardens and the Town Hall!

Melbourne was different. It was a huge, ugly, cold, windy town, like any other town except that it had nothing old about it and neither was it modern. There were buses and trams; shops and big hotels. I think we spent a couple of days there and were entertained by the Victoria League for 'morning tea' (in other words a glorified elevenses) at one of the big hotels, very ornate and heavily Edwardian. All the ladies were dressed in black satin and artificial pearls; at least that was my impression.

Then came Sydney, quite different and far more beautiful with its wonderful harbour. The famous bridge had not been built then – not completed, anyhow. It was beautiful country and Sydney a very attractive town. It all looked fresh and clean, flourishing, happy, sunny and gay. The ship was several days in Sydney and we were entertained by the Governor General at Government House and the Governor at Admiralty House and of course we were taken for drives to be shown the Town Hall and the Botanical Gardens! We had of course seen these in Melbourne as well!

Now it only remained for us to get to Brisbane, our destination. Not many passengers by this time were left. We had dropped most of them at Perth, Adelaide,

Melbourne and Sydney.

The ship tied up fairly low down in the Brisbane River and on got the Mayor and Mayoress of Brisbane and various members of the Government to welcome and make a speech to their new Governor. The ship moved on with the welcoming party on board. Finally we tied up for good. Here were more people to welcome the Governor, speeches to be made, press photos to be taken.

We disembarked and were driven through the town, the Botanical Gardens where pointed out to us, and eventually we arrived at the Town Hall. There were more welcomes and more speeches, Sir John's speeches were short, to the point and excellent. Neil made a good ADC and was always in the correct place at the right moment. It seemed a long time before we got away from the Town Hall and all the speeches, but it did come to an end at last and we were driven to Government House.

My impression of Brisbane was that, except for the Town Hall, a few brick buildings and shops, it was a sea of wooden houses on stilts with corrugated tin roofs and very ugly. It was early winter there (the beginning of our summer) and a chill wind was blowing.

The day after our arrival in Brisbane Sir John was sworn in at the Town Hall. He took the oath as the King's representative and much speechifying took place. He shook hands with thousands of people; his hand was badly swollen as a result, for Australians give a bone crunching hand-shake. Sir John Goodwin was now His Excellency. If he stood, we stood, and did not sit down until he sat down. As we had practised this on board ship it came quite easily.

Now followed many days of welcoming His Excellency and Lady Goodwin. The Victoria League, the Country Women's Association, the Fire Brigade, the Mothers' Union (mostly spinsters with no children, for mothers with children were too busy), the schools, the theatres, the orphanages, all and every association had prepared a 'welcome party' – at all of which were speeches, and speeches had to be replied to – and food had to be eaten.

Government House was on the outskirts, and not attractive outskirts. It was an ugly building rather like many of those villas one sees in the South of France, built during an ugly and ornate period, and it was ugly inside as well. It was a house that would be very difficult to alter without spending a lot of money on it.

That Government House and its grounds were so unattractive was not the fault of the Government nor the Governors. The original Government House was a stone building opposite the Botanical Gardens. It was decided to build a bigger and better one. A beautiful piece of park-like ground was chosen and plans drawn up for the house. In the meantime the old one was taken over for Government buildings and the present one (built by some man with no taste) was bought as a temporary place to live till the new one was built. Then money became short and the new building was postponed. I suppose it was considered an unnecessary expense and was postponed, and postponed and never got further than the plans. I saw the plans and the site of ground and they were charming.

So Governor after Governor made do with what he had and it looked as if no one had taken any interest in it or loved it in any way. I believe a following Governor did

improve it. He may have had enough personal income to spend on it or persuaded the Government to spend money. Sir John Goodwin had no private means and neither did he wish the Government (while he was there) to go to any extra expense.

Later, when I made a more extensive exploration of Government House and grounds, they filled me with gloom for they were completely uninspiring and lacking in charm.

A couple of hundred yards or so of immaculate gravel drive led steeply up to this ugly and ornate villa. On each side of the drive at regular intervals were tall palms – each one an exact replica – and between each palm was a round bed with a stiff arrangement of bedding-out plants. These were not lovely Australian ones, suitable to the climate, but plants trying to be as English as possible. It might have been the approach to any well-kept soulless hotel in a residential seaside town in England or the Riviera.

The grounds in front of the house sloped steeply down to the road and were of short dry grass with still more artificial-looking beds of plants.

On the further side of the house, below the garages and out buildings, was an expanse of straight-terraced kitchen gardens. Each terrace was of the same length and breadth with the same space between each.

Behind Government House were twenty acres or more of uncultivated ground. Here the ground also fell steeply away from the house. The short, thin, yellow grass was slippery with dryness, and small stones rolled away from under my feet as I scrambled down the slope for there were no paths.

Even my untutored eye for Queensland soil told me that this was remarkably poor and unsympathetic land; even the gum trees (and the land was only thinly forested and only with gums) were half-starved miserable-looking specimens with no grand giants amongst them.

But still I thought something better should be made of these grounds. Alas! I was not the Governor. When I tried to enthuse him with my ideas, he listened kindly to what I had to say, admitting that paths would be an improvement, but asking what was the object in trying to do a great deal when we should be there only for five years.

"Five years is an awful long time to me," I replied, "and much could be done in far less time than that; think how quickly things grow and think how much future Governors might appreciate it all."

After some time I was able to organise a few improvements; paths and a few clearings and plantings were made, but I was up against the Head Gardner, a dour Scot, who was set against any change. There never had been changes during the time of all the Governors he had served under, and there never would be, if he could help it. The same beds had been bedded out with the same plants year after year, and what was good enough for one Governor was good for them all. Chrysanthemums were his hobby and the bigger the better; great mop-heads were his idea of beauty. Later, by bribery, namely sending to England for a consignment of new Mop-head chrysanthemums (which to me were hidiosities!) He grudgingly allowed one or two of his under-men to do a little construction work under my orders.

When I saw some of the gardens in Brisbane and realised what there was in the

way of tropical, semitropical and English trees, shrubs and plants, I knew what might be grown in those Government House grounds. Such things as the many kinds of eucalyptus (blue-gum) of which I think over forty different species are indigenous to Queensland, the *E. Citriodora* (citron-scented gum), *globulus*, *gunnii* and *renisifera*; the latter growing to an immense height and having a truly noble trunk. There was also the lovely, sweet-scented red flowering gum, the name of which I have forgotten. There was not a jacaranda tree in those grounds and yet there were beautiful specimens in many gardens, their bluebell-blue the laburnum-like flowers covering the trees to the exclusion of leaves, and the ground beneath them became blue with fallen petals.

Bougainvilleas grew rampantly and besides the well-known puce colour, there were delightful shades of copper and a very pale pink. *Begonia grandiflora* was almost uncontrollable in its growth and the blaze of its copper-orange flowers was the gayest thing in the world. Well-placed and intermingling with the dark green leaves of the passionfruit vine and the palest of pink bougainvilleas that would have been a satisfying combination.

One of the most artificial-looking shrubs, the poinsettia, was grown at Government House – it would be! – also oleanders, but even they were very badly placed.

Bottle-bush shrubs were amusing and there were many queer shaped trees, such as the bottle-tree the trunk of which was just the shape of a fat black bottle! *Cannas* did well, growing most lusciously, and such things as *cineraria*, grown out of doors, grew into big bushes and branched out in all directions. *Zinnias* flourished in the same way, and seeing them in English gardens when I came home made me wonder why people took the trouble to grow the stiff plants. In Queensland they grow wildly, spraying out most happily; one could pick and pick the flowers and the more one picked the more they grew.

There were many different kinds of wattle (*Mimosa*) but its hard yellow flowers never attracted me, although its blue-grey foliage was good.

How much of the vegetation was indigenous to Australia I have but a vague idea. I do know that the flora of South Africa and also much of India, Ceylon and other countries, naturalised extremely well, including those from Europe. Some, as is well known, became a plague and a curse.

Roses were better than I have seen in England, but perhaps that was because of their prodigious growth and their long and free flowering season, and one could say the same about many other plants.

Everything did remarkably well, except sweet peas the seeds of which had been sent from England, for they behaved in a peculiar way. No flowers, just greenery which grew into a hedge of remarkable thickness. The cause I believe was something to do with the seeds not having been acclimatised. Everything else was successful and grew amazingly fast. I was astounded at the rate things grow. *Delphinium* seed sown in the open border was four feet high and flowering freely a month or so after sowing, and everything else grew at the same speed.

My own little patch of garden I soon made gay; wooden steps led down to it from

our quarters. I had admired a flowering almond tree in someone's garden and she cut great branches of it for me. I was rather horrified at the reckless way she cut it and begged her to stop for almond trees are such slow growers.

"Not at all," she said, "I'll give you a seedling for your garden and next year you will be able to cut it as much as you like."

She pulled up one of the many seedlings that were beneath her tree, a little thing about six inches high. I carefully planted it in my own garden, wondering if I would see it flower before our five years in Queensland was up. It grew like Jack's beanstalk and the next year it was ten feet high, and true enough I was picking great branches of it.

I was longing to see the country outside Brisbane, the country of Violet's description. (*Plate 14*)

Neil had bought a car. H.E. expressed a wish that he buy British and not American and so he bought an Armstrong, about the only serviceable English car to be bought then. It was strong and reliable but without charm; slow in the pick-up and without much elasticity for rough roads. American cars were really more suitable for the country but we got attached to the dull Armstrong, the way one does with most cars one owns.

The first time we got outside Brisbane was when we accompanied H.E. and Lady Goodwin on a visit to Toowoomba a small town about eighty miles away. They were in the Government House Daimler, and we were in our car. It was considered a good road. I was delighted to find that the further we got away from Brisbane, how far from good the road was turning out to be! I should have been most disappointed if it had been a smooth tarmac road.

At the first stop H.E. asked me how I was feeling and commented on how different good roads in England were to good roads out here. I was feeling fine, thank you, and the rougher it got the happier would I feel, and so I did. I was thrilled with everything I saw, and sniffed in with joy the smell of Queensland. (*Plate 12b*)

If only I had kept a diary, I could have referred to it for many details that have now escaped my memory. I can remember so vividly so much, but mostly the impression I got of a place, the colouring of the country, the shapes of the trees, the quick change from daylight to night, the scents and sounds, the new calls of birds I had never heard before, the smell of dust (if the wind was towards one) long before one heard the sound of a mob of cattle, a grumbling sound and the cracks of stock whips; those things and so much more I can never forget. My memory however is so bad for the names of people and places, and whether we did this or that on that visit, or on another. I cannot remember if on that visit to Toowoomba we stayed at a hotel or with the Ernest Whites. We did stay with them on more than one occasion. They had a delightful house. The whole of one end of the sitting room was one piece of plate glass. It looked as if the room was open and from it one had a lovely view of rolling down-like country. Ernest was charming and so good-looking; Maud tall, elegant and beautiful. A most attractive couple. They had a station up north with the romantic name of 'Blue Lagoon' or was it 'Alice Springs'? Bother my bad memory! But I believe both those watering sounding places were subject to terrible droughts.

At Toowoomba we went to a dance, my first dance in Queensland. Government House party always arrived at the fourth dance, by which time of course people's programmes were filled up. After we had arrived Aileen Bell (who I had met before just once in Brisbane for a few minutes) came up to me and told me she had filled up my programme for me, and she had, and with all the most attractive men there, her brothers and her friends, and so I met for the first time the type of Australian that Violet had described to me!

It made a great impression on me that a girl would go to all that trouble to make sure that a married woman should enjoy herself! and she made sure that I met my partners before she danced herself.

She later became, and still is, one of my greatest friends. She has the art of friendship and has more friends than anyone I have ever known. In all countries, of every age, rich and poor, once her friend it is for life. She has great loyalty; never have I heard her criticise anyone but always sees, finds out and brings out the best.

Aileen Bell, her sisters, her mother and their home were to mean a tremendous lot to me while I was in Queensland and before very long a visit was arranged. H.E., Lady Goodwin, Neil and myself motored up there to stay for a few days.

'Coochin-Coochin' is the name of the Bell's house. It means Black Swans. Coochin just means one Black Swan but Coochin-Coochin means more than one in the language of the aboriginals. In the early days the creek used to have wild black swans on it, but as civilisation grew so they diminished.

As soon as I saw Coochin and the country round, I loved it and have done ever since. The country was beautiful; mountains, valleys and there was a creek running through the wide open valley in front of and below the homestead. The land through which the creek flowed was vivid green, the soil was black and very fertile and many crops of lucerne were cut each year. There were big grass paddocks, green at certain times of the year, brown at others (depending on the season and the rain), with cattle and horses grazing on them.

The house itself looked on to all this and the mountains beyond. It was one of the oldest homes in Queensland and dated from the time of the early settlers, the days when land was cheap and could be had almost for the asking. But there was an art in choosing not only very good land but a lovely position and settling in a place like Coochin.

The house was long and low, part of it (the oldest) had been built from cedar wood. The hall was of cedar with an open fireplace (on winter evenings a fire was very welcome) and over the fireplace were hung guns. In the early days, guns had to be kept handy; these were still kept there.

It was a bungalow type of house. As the family grew it was enlarged by adding a wing here and there (never, thank goodness, pulled down and a grand stone house built). It retained all its old original charm and the additions had in no way spoiled it. I find it difficult to describe it adequately. It was a home, was loved and lived in, gave out friendly hospitality and a warm welcome, and I think everyone who had stayed there wanted to come again.

Old Mrs Bell was a darling. I can see her now, her smooth white hair with its neat

little bun at the back, her black full length high neck dress with its little white widow's tucker at the neck and a black alpaca apron. In the evenings she changed into a black silk dress of the same style. Her face was keen, clever, kind and wise. She had great character. Una, Doll and Aileen lived with their mother at Coochin; two of her married sons had built homes on the estate and farmed their land.

The garden round the house, which was enclosed with white painted fencing, was Mrs Bell's pride and joy and how the dear little soul worked away in it and how adorable she kept it. Also in the garden were various trees planted by distinguished visitors, which were labelled with name and date of planting. Everyone of importance came to stay at Coochin and also many people who were not important or distinguished; just friends of the Bells, friends of friends of theirs, people they had met and liked, people who were sad or lonely, people they had been asked to be kind to, and so on. I do not suppose that Coochin was ever without people staying there, and who were happy to be there.

I was very lucky in being taken with H.E. and Lady Goodwin when Neil, as ADC accompanied them, and I saw a great deal of the country and stayed with delightful people. Sometimes I would be dropped off to stay with some friends and then picked up on the return journey.

How grand it was to be able to arrange a picnic party knowing that the moon would be full and that it would not rain; to be able to wear thin dresses and not be cold. For nine months of the year it was like a perfect English summer, for three months even better and warmer, really hot in fact. At the hottest time of the year, Neil got a couple of months' leave and we used to take a bungalow by the sea and for those months we were able to lead our own unofficial carefree simple life.

Naturally we made our own friends and at times enjoyed informal parties, such as spontaneous moonlight picnics, or a few days at Southport.

The warm balmy evenings were conducive to the making of happy friendships. Why did we enjoy them so much? Just because we did! The atmosphere, the friends we made, and one thing and another just did add up to happiness.

Southport was the name of the place by the sea, and anything more unlike the English Southport it was hard to imagine. Why people did not stick to the old and pretty aboriginal names, or name places anew and in keeping with the locality, I could never understand. It always annoyed me!

Sometimes one would come across a little wayside railway station, a rough wooden platform and tin shed, hundreds of miles out north-west, nothing to be seen as far as the eye could see and further, quite uninhabited. It would have the name of the station painted in large letters: LIVERPOOL!

Now Southport was by the sea and that was its only connection with the English Southport, but what a different sea! Even in those days although only fifty miles from Brisbane it took many hours to get there by car. The first few miles were good and after that it was just a nice wild rough bush road.

At Southport there was one small hotel partly built of wood. 'The Surfers Paradise', and quite well named; a few odd shops, mostly provision shops, and the usual Dago shop. A Dago shop is most convenient. It is usually run by Italians and

sells anything and keeps open late at night. At hotels and restaurants meals are not served after 6:30 pm but Italians do not come under those rules and can so please themselves as to what hours they keep, so a very good late meal can be had at a Dago shop.

The hotel, few shops and about six or eight bungalows, that was all Southport consisted of¹. There were sand dunes and sea and in places the scrub came almost down to the water's edge.

What a lovely sea! Very blue, huge rolling waves and so warm. (*Plates 15a & 16*) We bathed from our bungalow. It was too hot for me except in the early morning and evening. Even at those times the air was so warm and the sea so refreshingly cool that one longed to get into the cool sea. One could stay in it for as long as one had the energy to battle with trying to surf bathe, or got tired of lying with waves lapping over one. I never got beyond surfing with the aid of a board and that was exhilarating enough for me. The experts scorned a board. They breasted a wave and got carried in on it. It was a fine sight to see a really good surf bather by skill and strength and perfect timing, mount with a few powerful strokes of swimming a huge incoming roller just at the critical moment of its breaking and be carried right up the beach.

Nobody bathes except at the place on the beach marked out by two posts between which was a high wooden platform. Someone was always posted on that, on the lookout for sharks and there was always a team of voluntary lifesavers at hand to rescue anyone who got into trouble. The greatest danger apart from sharks was people going too far out and getting into the under-current. The first time I bathed and was happily walking into the sea to have a swim, I was called back and told never to get out of my depth; hip high was all that was safe except for a very powerful swimmer.

It was a wonderful sight to see the 'lifesavers' give a demonstration They were men of powerful physique and their team work was excellent. It was 'not done' to do anything foolhardy or risky, brave men would have to risk their lives and perhaps lose them in an effort to rescue. When the bell was rung from the lookout platform everyone left the sea and made for dry land as quickly as they could; it was the signal that a shark had been seen. Sometimes it was a false alarm and was only a porpoise.

I only bathed once when the beach was empty. It was at 4 am. Neil and some other men had been playing poker all night and I had been watching them, for it is the most thrilling card game to play or watch, but at 4 am I had had enough and so had one of the players. He suggested a bathe and knowing he was a strong and expert swimmer I happily went in with him. Dawn was breaking and the sea a lovely opal colour. We did not stay in long or venture out far. We rolled about happily with the waves breaking over us and came in feeling much refreshed. But it was rather creepy in the dawn, a deserted beach and perhaps a shark not so far off.

We had many of our friends to stay with us in our bungalow and had great fun. A bungalow with its verandahs is such an accommodating place. People can always sleep on verandahs; it is so elastic, always room for one more visitor.

¹ The population at the 2011 census was over 28,000.

There were very many sides to our life in Queensland. The official one at Government House with many official functions to attend. Neil always was on duty for the sporting events! – the race meetings once a week, watching cricket and the big shows.

The Private Secretary who had come out with us soon had to leave and on Neil's recommendation a new one came, a friend of Neil's who had been in his regiment. He was a great success and such a dear. He obligingly did all the jobs that bored Neil and the Goodwins became devoted to him. He didn't care for sporting events and Neil did, so it worked out very well.

Show week, the big one once a year, was the event in Brisbane, much like the Royal Show in England but bigger and, I might almost say, better. Agriculture, farming, food, fruit and flowers, products of every sort, cattle, sheep, horses and other livestock, the prizewinners proudly led round the ring, events and competitions of various sorts, but what thrilled me most and what one did not see in England, where the buck jumping competitions. How some of the competitors stuck on their horses' backs was incredible. A horse would buck front-ways, back-ways, sideways with all four feet in the air, would corkscrew, roll on the ground and the rider would slide round its belly and be in the saddle again.

Another event was the tree felling competition. Huge poles were fixed in the ground, the men (they were the finest specimens of mankind I had ever seen) stood by their poles and what fascinated me was the way they put the finishing touches to their sharpened axes and tested them by gently shaving off the hairs on their arms and backs of their hands. At the given signal they drove iron wedges (foot rests) as they went up the poles and when the correct height had been reached, fixed a safety belt round themselves and with a few strokes of their axes, the poles had been felled. I wish I could remember the record winning time that I saw, it was a question of minutes from start to finish and had to be seen to be believed.

The show was on all the week and every evening there were dances, dinner parties before and supper parties after.

For this week everyone in Queensland who could possibly get away flocked into town. Everyone was out to enjoy themselves and everyone did. Queenslanders work as hard as it is possible to work and when they are out to enjoy life, throw themselves into it heart and soul.

In the country, picnic race meetings are held. They were tremendous fun and people came from far and wide to them and to the dance that would be held in the local small township. Once I was staying on a station and it was decided that six of us would motor to the picnic race dance that was being held 120 miles away, 120 miles over rough bush tracks!

An early start was made and when we had gone about halfway, a car spring broke. Did it matter? Not a bit! "You girls boil the billy, while we men mend the spring. See which gets done first."

It doesn't take long to boil a billy and make tea. The bark from the gum trees is full of resin and will burn brightly even if wet. Very soon the billy can is boiling, the tea in a canvas bag put into it and poured into the quart pot. No tea has ever tasted

better than billy tea!

The car spring was soon mended. A couple of the men took off their belts of plaited kangaroo hide and 'fixed' it. Tea was drunk and we were on our way again. We changed at a hospitable house near the dance hall and went to the dance. The hall was an empty wool shearing shed. The band played with much noise and enthusiasm. The floor had many splinters and cracks, but how we all enjoyed ourselves.

"Bloody good band considering everything," said one of my partners.

"Bloody good floor considering everything," said another as I tripped over a splinter. "Give a man a chance to hold a girl up, better than a polished floor when a girl is apt to slip away from one. You'll find I won't let you down over rough ground."

He certainly was not the type to let a girl down; very attractive he was and I thought there were certain advantages in a rough floor when dancing with a man who reminded me of 'the Virginian'.

"Bloody good dance," for one reason or another said all my partners.

Some of them had ridden in fifty or more miles and would ride back to their stations after the dance was over and miss a night's sleep; it was, "Bloody well worth it."

How soon I got used to that word – how cheerful it sounded!

Some of the expressions which I heard used to describe a person's character intrigued me, but one I heard more than once rather horrified me.

Once when staying with some friends on a cattle-station I had ridden with Jean Mac. **, to an appointed meeting place on a creek to meet her brother and some other chaps who were on their way back from a mustering job. After our picnic meal everyone relaxed, smoking, dosing or engaging in a little desultory conversation. I lay on my tummy, resting my head sideways on my crossed arms, memorising dreamily as I often liked to do.

Then I heard one man say to another: "How is young so-and-so shaping?"

The reply was: "He! He's as much good as an Englishman!"

Jean perhaps said something to him, for he turned round to me with an apology, saying: "Sorry, that must have sounded sort of rude to you, but I forgot that you were English. You seem like one of us – an Australian, I mean."

He meant it as a compliment. I looked with affection (and I will admit with a secret admiration) at my blackened billy-can and my by now no longer new-looking saddlebag. My gaze then travelled to my well-worn elastic-sided boots, and knowing that my bush-shirt was washed out and faded I thought may be I did look like one of them.

However, I asked for an explanation, saying: "What exactly do you mean by, "As much good as an Englishman."

From one man: "Oh! just a chap who expects everything to be done for him. His horse caught and when he does so it is ten to one that it gets away from him. He then can't find a saddle, unless he is told where to look for it, because he lacks the power of observation. He has to be told everything a half-a-dozen times and has very little,

if any, initiative."

Another joined in with: "His knife is blunt, or he has left it behind – more likely he has lost it and so expects another chap to cut his damper for him. He is forever making what he hopes are plausible excuses for what he has or has not done" – and so on and so on.

Jean and I were laughing now and telling the men that the more they said, the worse it must sound to me.

"I guess," said the first spokesman, "that term came into use because of a few unfortunate specimens of your great countrymen who came out here. People are apt to judge a mob of first-rate cattle by the few old scruffy ones which should have been 'cut out'."

Yes, that was indeed true. I had had in the past the experience of disparaging remarks made by persons, looking at my flock of hens, just because one or two were not up to the standard of the majority.

"And," said another man, "we've overheard people saying – 'What! an OSSTRAYLIAN' and then with a shudder 'descended from a convict, of course they all are. I don't wish him to be introduced to my daughter'. But I reckon," he continued, "they don't think that of all Australians. Still, it's not exactly a compliment when it is used, so – we retaliate!"

There were things said on both sides which would have been better left unsaid, but on the whole I thought that it was a fair exchange.

We all rode back to the homestead, the greatest of friends. The man I rode back with, on saying goodbye, told me that he had a great fondness for the English, and his last remark was: "I feel as low as a snake's hips at the thought of your leaving tomorrow."

I've always liked that 'expressive' term.

There were many traits in the average Australian's character that struck me rather forcibly as differing from that of the average Englishman. I think I noticed the difference more on my return to England than when I was in Australia.

One of these was, the Australian seemed to lack completely – or at least show – any sign of frustration and never to complain of lack of opportunity, or of 'never having had the chance, or the luck' which if he had had would have enabled him to be, or do, this or that.

To him it was a free country and he was free to make or mar his life or to lead a life of little consequence. It was nobody's fault but his own if he had had a bloody good chance and had been a bloody fool not to take it, or had been a bloody 'cow' not to make a chance if one had not come his way. But never did he blame outside influence or causes. Rarely did he even blame and never excuse himself. "It's my life and that's the way I make it," was his theory.

If a prolonged drought, bushfire, or something of that sort which was no fault of his and which he had to endure occurred, still his outlook appeared cheerful and he would say in answer to one's sympathy – "Thanks, you are right, it's a bit of a setback but better times are coming – so here's hoping."

Soon after I got back to England and was waiting in the Bath Club for a Queensland friend who was going to take me out, I overheard a man saying to the girl with him: "I suppose we had better go to a theatre or do something, you've seen all the shows I expect, pretty poor lot."

"Yes, they are all boring."

"Still one must do something we can go on afterwards to supper and dance."

"The bands are so feeble and the floors lousy but one must do something, I suppose."

They drifted away.

I thought of the picnic race dances, of bad floors, poor bands, of how everyone had been happy and gay and no one was bored.

My friend came in, gave me a warm hug, was 'bloody glad to see me', had got tickets for the best show in London, everything was grand. He gave out the warm friendliness of Queensland.

Is it the climate I wondered? Do the many dark, wet, cold days of England eventually depress people? Does the warmth and sun of Queensland keep people cheerful? They never seem to grumble and yet look at what they have to put up with at times. Years of drought, loss of their cattle and sheep, floods, bush-fires, loss of their fortunes; true enough many of them make fortunes again when times get better but they do not grumble when times are bad.

I liked to think that this is because they are descended from English stock, from the men who had a cheerful, brave outlook on life, who felt they could cope with adventures and hardships and so went out to the colonies to make a life for themselves in a new country fearlessly.

Courage and loyalty, I could feel it in Queensland. It was in the air. When miles away in open country or in bush or scrub I could feel the spirit of brave men who had been the first to explore, who had gone out beyond not knowing if they would find water or hostile blacks, death, or succeed in finding suitable country and laying the foundation of a family and fortune.

It was still a death penalty when I was out there for anyone to steal a man's horse or his gun, for without them he might starve to death. It was equivalent to murder.

A man cut off his thumb to save his life. I met him the day after it happened. He was motoring alone on his way to some small township, had a puncture, jacked up the car and somehow the jack slipped and caught his thumb. He was in such a position that he could not reach any of the necessary tools to extricate himself. It was a lonely track he was on, very little chance of anyone coming that way for days or longer. He would die of thirst or be eaten to death by white ants before that happened, so he tied a tourniquet with his handkerchief round his wrist and with his knife (trust an Australian to have a good sharp knife on his belt) he cut off his thumb at the joint, bandaged it up as best he could and when he had succeeded in changing the tyre, motored the long distance to the nearest little town and had it 'fixed' at the hospital. He was cheerful and gay when I met him, couldn't get over his luck that it was the left thumb. If it had been the right, it wouldn't have been so easy for him to have 'fixed' things.

Such was the Australian way of looking at the bright side.

When men are brave, women are also. A very pretty young girl, Lorna Brook, ran her own sheep station after her father died. She lived on it with her very delicate mother. Wool was then at rock bottom prices and they were having a hard time and couldn't afford to have a man to help. If a sheep had to be killed for food, Lorna had to kill it. To look at her you would never think she could do a thing like that, quiet and gentle with smooth long, dark hair coiled at the nape of her neck and a very lovely serene face.

She must have been about nineteen when I went to stay with her. One day while we were riding together on her land she suddenly jumped off her horse and threw me the reins. In a second she had darted to a fallen tree trunk and quick as a terrier after a rat she had seized the tail of a snake just as it was disappearing. Out she pulled the snake, at once cracked it like a stock whip and broke its back just below its head. It was a tiger-snake eight feet long and deadly poisonous. Not to have killed it meant death to many of her sheep. Now it is not an easy thing to crack a stock whip, let alone a snake, successfully; more than one man has been bitten in trying to do so. It needed exceptional strength, skill and nerve for a young girl to do it.

When we had made sure the snake was dead, luckily having my camera I took a photo of Lorna holding up the snake by its tail, her arms stretched up high above her head.

In the evenings Lorna would sing to us. She had a beautiful voice and sometimes her young man would ride over from his sheep station to court her. They married, and I am sure very happily and I hope, if they are still 'in wool' with the price it is now, they are rich as well. Lorna deserved to be both.

That was typical of a visit to a sheep station, a small one. Typical of a visit to a cattle station, and a large one was Camtoon, the Bell's North-West Queensland property and run by Aileen's brother, Victor. He and his delightful wife, Gwendo, asked Neil and I to stay, an unofficial visit, i.e. on our own and not accompanying the Governor.

It was a long train journey and I loved every minute of it, getting further and further into the North-West and into the heart of Queensland.

Camtoon had once been about 300 square miles, now it was not so large, but still mighty big to me and still cattle were counted by the thousand, between 7,000 and 8,000 I think there were, Hereford's mostly.

Neil loved his visits to Camtoon; he took part in mustering the cattle, was trusted to bring his mob of cattle in. There was a big muster while we were there. Gwendo and I walked out to see them coming. Long before we could see them, we could smell the dust, hear the 'running fire of stock whips and the fiery run of hooves', of Banjo Patterson's poetry.

Then they came in sight. The huge mob of wild cattle, Victor, Neil, stockmen, half-blacks and black fellows and they were driven into the stock yards. Neil blissfully happy – he was leading the life of 'The Man from Snowy River' at last.

I could listen enthralled to anyone who would tell me tales of the early and

present days, realising at the time that when I was old, young people might envy me, say how lucky I had been to be in Queensland when I was. I was indeed lucky. I even met a man who had come in contact with Starlight of 'Robbery Under Arms'. Old Mr Ross Munro, when he had been a young man, alone on a station way out beyond, told me that: –

"Late one evening just as it was getting dark a stranger rode up to the homestead, tall, good-looking and riding a beautiful horse. He asked me for hospitality for the night. He told me he had lost his mob of horses and as night was coming on he must give up the search till next morning. I was delighted to have his company and very good company he was too. We passed a most agreeable evening together.

"He was up at the crack of dawn, thanked me in the most charming way for the kindness I had shown him and was off to look for his mob of horses, firmly and politely refusing my offers of help.

"Later that day, a number of men arrived asking the if I had seen anything of the gentlemen bush-ranger. He had been tracked to the district with a mob of stolen horses, they were after him and I must help. I had to, it was an written law. So armed and mounted we rode off, found the place where the horses had been camped for the night and tracked them. With a black fellow tracker we were making more pace than they and finally got sight of them. A couple of men, as well as Starlight, were with the horses. We were to shoot as soon as we got within range."

He stopped talking and sat for some time; evidently living over that time again when he had been a young man now he was over eighty.

"Did you shoot?" I finally asked him.

"Yes, I was a good shot in those days. I told the men I was with to have a crack at the others and leave Starlight to me. I shot – wide – I ought to have killed him but I just couldn't after the evening we'd had together. He got away and the men with him. The sudden darkness came and we had to give up the chase."

"What was he like? Do describe him to me."

"My dear, you would have fallen in love with him."

So ended his story of Starlight.

Aileen Bell motored me down to Sydney once, over 500 miles. We went out of our way to go through the Bushrangers' country, very rocky and mountainous, deep gullies where stolen mobs of horses or cattle could be hidden.

At that time there were a number of 'swaggies' (tramps) on the roads who had a very bad name for robbery with violence, men who were going from station to station looking for work. We had been warned about them and told on no account to give anyone who asked for it a lift. They were apt to hit people on the head and rob them. We gaily promised, but by going out of our way, missing the road etc. we found that we were running out of petrol and it was getting dark, soon quite dark. The car was dying on us and finally stopped. Nothing for it, we supposed, but to spend the night in the car and wait till morning, when to our joy we saw the light of a campfire not far off and going up to it found two swaggies. We forgot all about the warnings, so pleased were we to find two other human beings and they turned out to

be such nice men and most helpful. One was an ex-rating, British Navy. He sent his pal of to a farm about a mile away to see if he could get petrol and assured us that if he couldn't we would be welcome to share their camp fire for the night and eat their food with them.

After a long delay, the farmer came out in his car to see if the swaggies' story that we had run out of petrol was true. On finding out that it was and going back to his farm to fetch the petrol, we got on our way again and were quite sorry to part from our kind 'swaggie' friends who refused to take any money for the help they had given us. We warmly shook hands with them and went on our way with that nice feeling that meeting kind friends on a road gives one. (*Plate 15b*)

Sydney was bright and gay and great fun to stay for a week or ten days. Melbourne I did not want to visit, not liking the impression it gave me on our way out, so when the chance came to go there with the G.H. party for the Melbourne Cup Race week, I refused and went instead to stay at Coochin. Aileen had promised me a night's camping out in the scrub and this was far more my idea of bliss than an ultra-smart race week.

When I first went to the country and heard the words 'bush' and 'scrub' (I had read of them of course but not properly visualised them) I got muddled up as to which was which, neither name seemed in the least to describe the type of country to which they applied. 'Bush' was cattle and sheep country, big open spaces, sometimes treeless, sometimes sparsely and sometimes more thickly covered with gum trees and other trees, but mostly different kinds of gum. The grazing was very sparse cream-coloured thin grass. I can hear an Australian saying: –

"You should see it after good rains and how green it all is."

But my impression was of dry hay-coloured grass. The colouring in the evening was lovely, the blue of the gums, the blue of their shadows on the pale ground and the blue distance. To me it had great charm and great beauty, the Queensland bush and so had the scrub.

'Scrub' I had thought of as dry, barren country and anything that grew on it was poor and prickly, low straggly grey bushes and things like that, but not at all. Huge forest trees of all kinds grew there, some with lovely flowers, wild vines hanging from them, dense green undergrowth, tangled, tropical, exotic. It was the kind of country that was impossible unless a pathway had been cut through it.

This 'Scrub' (what an ugly name for so much beauty) was found high up on the ranges, where there was plenty of water, rain would be caught in the mountain tops. There was no lack of springs and streams.

Aileen and I rode from Coochin to this lonely range of scrub country for our night's camping, taking blankets, strapped on the backs of our horses, and in our saddlebags, billy cans and what food we needed. We also took Fred.

Fred was a most useful young man, good-looking, kind, capable and good-natured. On his return from the 1914 war and when at Southport, he had done a wonderfully brave rescue. A woman and three children while bathing had ventured too far out and at a time when the 'life savers' were not on duty. Fred saw their

difficulties; they were being swept by the under-current out and under. He went to their help and succeeded in bringing ashore two of the children and then the woman (none of them could swim). For the third child he searched for a long time in vain, diving again and again into the dangerous undertow and beyond into the 'shark water'; but sharks had evidently got the child for they had been seen from the shore and Fred eventually had to give up the search.

Fred was willing to do anything except work. He was willing to rescue those in danger, to drive people's cars for them, to pour out their drinks for them, to help at their parties, to catch and saddle their horses, to light the chip heater for their baths, to stay with them for any length of time and willing to come with us camping.

We found a delicious place for camp, right in the heart of the scrub, a small open clearing of green grass, water handy, and all around us this magnificent untamed virgin forest.

Camp was soon made, horses tethered, fire lit and Fred cooked us an excellent supper of fried steak and after sitting round the campfire and drinking billy tea we settled down for the night. Our saddles were our pillows and I, having camped many times in different countries and knowing how cold it can get even in a hot country during the night, had taken two extra horse blankets with me. I was snug and comfy, warm and happy, watching the glow from our campfire, and after it had died down the fireflies.

During the night Aileen felt cold, so she came under my additional rugs. Towards dawn Fred got chilly and came under them too, we lay and talked, watched the dawn break, and the flights of vividly coloured parrots and parakeets as they flew with raucous cries over the trees; listened to the strange birds, the bell birds (just like the tinkling bells of an oxen team), the stock whip bird (a perfect imitation of the whistling crack of a stock whip), and all the sounds of a very early morning.

What a heavenly night's camping it had been, how much happier I was than if I had gone to the Melbourne Cup!

After a delicious breakfast cooked by Fred, horses saddled by him and camp struck we rode back to Coochin. We had also won the money on the Melbourne Cup for Neil had telephoned us a good tip.

Back in Brisbane I gave Lady Goodwin a glowing description of our night's camping. She was far more country-minded than town-minded. It was just what she would have loved to have done when she had been younger. She envied me and longed to get away from official life for a few days, so it was arranged that I would motor her to Coochin for a short visit and the Bells would show her more of the country.

A picnic was arranged by cars to a beautiful spot on another part of the ranges, not as wild as where we had camped, for it had to be where we could get by road.

Off we started, Bert Bell, one of Aileen's attractive brothers took me and the lunch in his car and led the way. Another car followed with Lady Goodwin, Aileen and other members of the Bell family. For some time I could see the other car following us but as we drove further and higher into the mountains, I could no longer see it. Several times I suggested we ought to stop or slow down for the car to catch

up with us, but Bert would have none of that; the further ahead we got the less of our dust they would have and the more popular we should be – they knew the way all right, so on we went and I forgot the vague feeling of responsibility I had for Lady Goodwin. When we reached the prearranged picnic place, I unpacked the food and we waited, I must admit, quite happily, for Bert was an amusing and gay companion. We got hungry and ate our share of the lunch, laying contentedly in the shade of trees, and time slipped by. Then the other car arrived. We were not at all popular! They had had a puncture and there was no jack in the car. Someone had had to walk miles to a farm to get the loan of a jack. We should have come back and looked for them when we found out their car was not following us; they were hungry and tired but soon recovered their good tempers when they had eaten, and Lady Goodwin adored the place.

For the homeward journey, the car with lady Goodwin in it went on ahead and we followed. They took great care that we were not left behind, slowed down if we slowed down and covered us with their dust!

On our return to Coochin, enquiries were made as to why the jack had been taken out of the car. A thoughtful yard-hand had borrowed it to jack up a corner of Lady Goodwin's bedroom; it was giving way owing to a spot of white ant trouble and he didn't want the Governor's wife let down in the night, the corner being where her bed was! White ants can do devastating damage in a very short time, working from the centre of the wood and so weakening the structure which is often not discovered until something gives way.

Everyone knows of the animals in Australia, kangaroos, wallabies, 'possums, but no one can realise how adorable are the little koala bears until they have held one in their arms. Five of them were given to the Governor and let loose in Government House grounds, wild ones, but they have no fear of humans. I was given one to hold. It confidently nestled up to me and put its arms round my neck, looked fearlessly at me with its boot-button eyes and nuzzled my face with its shiny little black patent-leather nose.

The sad day came – about two years after our arrival in Brisbane – when Topper was put to sleep. His last resting place was under the shade of what I hoped one day would be a very lovely group of flowering trees and shrubs.

It was a favourite place of ours, where he and I often sat. The ground here showed the possibility of an underground spring, as little ferns sprouted amongst the rocks and I knew that things would 'do' there.

As age crept on Topper, so did failing sight, first in one eye and then in both. In heart he remained as young and gay as ever, and he would often 'play puppy' to cheer me up. His faithfulness was if possible increased, for now when he could hardly see he would not let me out of his touch, so close did he keep to me. If I so much as moved from one chair to another in the same room he moved also, leaning against me, his head on my knee or across my foot, or sometimes if I moved away he would come with me holding a corner of my dress in his mouth. In any case he would pick up my scent in a second and follow it.

To follow us when we rode was one of his great pleasures, but now he had to do

this by scent and if our pace was rather fast for him he would sometimes hit his head against a tree trunk or bank.

It became more than we could bear. At last one morning dear lady Goodwin said – "Go for a ride this morning and leave Topper with me. I will look after him for you."

She was one of those people who love and understand dogs, and our dog was one of her good friends. So I left Topper with her in her sitting room upstairs. I shut the door, but the window was open. As soon as Topper heard our horses pass below, he hurled himself out of this window, in spite of Lady Goodwin's efforts to hold him. It was a deep drop and I heard the thud as he hit the ground, but before Neil could get to him, he had picked himself up and was nosing along after us.

It was his last ride and only a short one, but it gave him happiness.

Neil rang up the vet on our return. In a case like this there is only one thing one can do for a faithful friend – give him that sleep from which he does not wake until we meet again.

Topper was such a friend and as 'The Thousandth Man' he would have followed us 'to the gallow's foot – and further'.

Shortly afterwards I came back to England for a few months and was soon joined by Neil whose father had died and he had to come home to settle his father's affairs. When this had been done, together we returned to Brisbane and when the time came for us to leave it for good, I felt very sad. There was so much in Queensland that I loved, the people, the country, the animals and the warmth of it all, from the climate to the friendship.

For some months before we left, I did my very best to persuade Neil to buy a sheep station. He could put a manager in charge and go to England, come out when he wanted, also I was convinced it would be a good speculation, wool was still very low, now was the time to buy. But Neil was not for it, too much of a gamble (a very poor excuse from him!). He put up every obstacle to the idea, though he did relent as far as going to inspect one station which was for sale, but nothing came of it. He was not going to buy a sheep station just to please me or for any other reason and that was that. A few years later the station he had gone to see and which he could have bought for £7,000 was sold for £45,000, now it is worth double that! Neil missed his chance of becoming a very rich man.

Since he would not buy a sheep station, I planned we would go to New Zealand for a couple of months. It was such a wonderful opportunity while we were that side of the world, never might we be so near to New Zealand again. Neil put up every obstacle to that idea; he wanted to get back to England, play golf and go to race meetings.

I was never good on a horse, definitely a week horse-woman, but Neil had taught me one thing – if you put a horse at a jump, get it over at all costs, never let it get the better of you and get its own way. If you once do that, you will never be able to manage it. Now this, I thought, is a case for getting Neil over a jump, the jump of the Tasman Sea and I must practise what he has preached to me, and I succeeded.

Neil had his ears back and tried to refuse even until the last moment, but like a horse once over the jump, his ears pricked forward and treated the course well!

CHAPTER 16

To New Zealand and Hong Kong

New Zealand was a great success and to hear Neil talk about it afterwards with enthusiasm used to make me smile to myself. It was a country that I was sure he would like and he did.

We landed at the very north of North Island, hired a car and drove slowly south; the very north was tropical, huge tree ferns and other exotic vegetation. Then we came to the rather horrible hot springs, bubbling sulphur-smelling mud country, and did the usual sight-seeing there, but to me that country was like a very bad dream. When we left that behind us the country became beautiful again, great mountains, lakes and rivers. We stayed for three weeks in a fishing camp on the River Waikato.

The camp was owned and run by a man called Pye. He and his wife ran the camp, an expert fisherman, his wife an excellent cook. They had a wooden hut for themselves and an eating room for their guests and four permanent tents with wooden floors, wooden sides and canvas tops.

The trout fishing in the river was superb and Neil who was a keen fisherman was happy as the day was long, (*Plate 17*) and I happy for the surroundings were so beautiful. I even tried to fish but without success, still I did want to catch just one trout with a dry fly on my own. I had caught them with Allan Pye's help but never by myself. He told me to get up just before daybreak and the pool to which I must go. Trout were easy in that pool and at that time he said.

So before it got light, I crept out of our tent and made my way to that pool and sure enough at the second or third cast I hooked my fish, played it and landed it and brought it triumphantly back. I had caught my trout, a nice big one, by myself,



Enid waiting for her trout.

unaided and with a dry fly. I rested on my laurels and after that contented myself with sketching, walking and watching others fish, except for one day when we went on the lake in a boat fishing for the large rainbow trout. That was not sport; it was so easy. It was amazing the number of fish we caught and the size of them, but having had the experience of it once, we did not want to do that again.

Life in the camp was pleasant, fishing all day and to bed very early. We bathed in the open in a hot pool five minutes walk from our tents. Into this pool flowed a natural hot spring, very hot at the spring end, pleasantly warm in the centre and cool at its exit. One could swim up and down from hot to cool water.



The hot pool.

There were three men staying in the camp beside ourselves. Everyone bathed in the evenings, the men first and I last. By the time it came to my turn it was generally dark, never quite dark as the stars were so bright and sometimes there was a moon.

When the call came that all was clear for my bathe, I would find my way with a torch along the little path to the pool. Steam would be rising from the hot end. I would slip off my wrap and enter the centre of the pool, wash well with soap, and a few minutes after the water would be clear of soap suds and then I would swim about from the hot to the cold end, or lie in the water where it was just the right heat. I would stay in as long as I liked, for I was the lucky last and when I had had enough I would get out, dry myself standing on the rocky edge of the pool, put on my wrap and find my way back to the tent and get quickly into bed while the glowing warmth of the bathe was still on me, for the nights were very chilly.

When the call came that all was clear for my bathe, I would find my way with a torch along the little

Two of the other men who were at the camp with us were charming (I can't remember the third). One a dear old man called Campbell who came out every year to New Zealand to fish and always came to Allan Pye first to have lessons from him or to learn some new technique. The other was a man called Graves, a middle-aged man who had travelled far and wide and always by unconventional ways. He was a most interesting raconteur with a delightful personality.

We got on very well together, we both had the spirit of adventure and I was never tired of listening to his tales of travels. He had got a passage to England on the 'Hertzen-Cecile', the last of the windjammer's carrying a cargo of grain. If I would like to come too he could get me a passage on her. I would have to sign on as a hand of course but he had influence, and once signed on (and he could do that for me) I need do no work. The voyage would take about four months.

It was a most tempting offer for me. Mr Graves was leaving the next day, so I had to make up my mind by the morning. Very regretfully, I said 'No'; it did not seem

fair to desert my husband in the middle of New Zealand. We had made plans to return to England via Hong Kong and see Bobby who was in submarines there, and yet I would never again get the chance of sailing halfway round the world in a windjammer. Would I always regret the lost opportunity? But I stuck to my refusal and sadly said goodbye to Mr Graves the next morning.

"If you change your mind and send me a wire to Auckland and come there the next day, the offer is still on, but the day after we sail."

I did not send a wire. I have always regretted that I missed that chance; the 'Hertzen Cecile' on her next voyage to England ran aground on the rocks of south Devon and was a total wreck¹. Also I never regretted seeing Bobby and Hong Kong. It was just bad luck that two things I wanted to do happened to be at the same time.



After we left Allan Pye's fishing camp we motored slowly south, staying at various places and turned in the car at Wellington, then hired another in the north of South Island and continued to south of Canterbury where we stayed for a visit at Longbeach, owned by Jack Grigg a cousin of mine.

Longbeach

Longbeach at one time used to be one of, if not the biggest of mixed farms in the world. When John Grigg died the property was divided amongst his four sons, the eldest, Jack, lived at the old home of Longbeach.

We had a delightful visit there. Jack and his wife, Gonda, gave us a warm welcome and it was most interesting seeing everything and riding round the property and being told what it was like in its most flourishing days, when more than 800 horses would be ploughing at one time and everything else was run on that huge scale. Now times were bad for them owing to labour troubles, etc.



Gonda left, Jack Grigg right.

¹ The wreck of the 'Hertzen-Cecile' is visible in Starhole Bay below Bolt Head in South Devon.

That finished our trip to New Zealand (*Plate 18*) and we returned to Brisbane for a week or two to say goodbye to our many friends and pick up a Japanese boat for Hong Kong.

Goodbyes are even worse when it is goodbye to friends whose home is on the opposite side of the world to England and one wonders if one will ever see them again.

The Japanese boat on which we travelled was one I had chosen because it was a small cargo boat taking only twenty passengers and small enough to go inside the Great Barrier Reef. I can recommend anyone to travel that way. We kept in sight of the coast until getting to the Reef and then sailed between it and the mainland. Threading our way between coral islands, the islands described in boys' books, the type of islands that it would be fun to be shipwrecked on; islands of all sorts, sizes and shapes. Most of them had a group of coconut palms, a wooded hill, a sandy cove, a blue lagoon and were uninhabited. I would choose my island, the best I had seen, and then another would come into view even more fascinating and I would switch to that and so it went on all the day that we sailed up the Great Barrier Reef.

Our boat was exceptionally comfortable. Neil and I had a large cabin each with bedroom and not cabin furniture; a large washstand, a dressing table one could sit down at with plenty of drawers, a chest of drawers and a large hanging wardrobe with a long mirror – it could not have been more comfortable.

The sweetest little Japanese stewardess maided me. Every day my clothes were taken away, washed and ironed; also she helped me change, brushed my hair etc. She spoke no English, everything was done by smiles and gestures; she was there to wait on me and made it quite clear what I was to do and what not to do. I must not for instance put on my stockings myself; smilingly she would hold the stockings behind her back, point out the armchair in which I must sit, and put them on for me and laugh her approval. Clean undies were produced for me every morning and again in the evenings. She selected what dresses I should wear and would not let me leave the cabin and till my make up was to her satisfaction – a perfect maid.

The whole ship was spotlessly clean. The Japanese have a reputation for cleanliness, but I never realised how true that was till I travelled on one of their ships. The food too was excellent.

We sat at the Captain's table with a very nice middle-aged couple, Mr & Mrs Mayhew, and a single woman who was a bit of a mystery. I liked Mrs Mayhew, she was kind, friendly and amusing and it made all the difference having one nice woman on board. Her husband had been ill and they were doing a trip to Hong Kong and back for the sake of his health.

She tried in a friendly way to get to know the mystery woman better; a rather flash-looking young woman. We both felt sorry for her for some reason but she wanted no friendship; she remained coldly reserved.

The rest of the passengers were monks, fifteen of them; till we got to Thursday Island where another passenger boarded the ship.

Thursday Island is a dreary place. As far as I could see it was a collection of tin roofed huts and miscellaneous sheds. It was flat, hardly above sea level and quite

colourless. Even the sea, after the beautiful colours we had seen inside the Reef, looked drab. The heat was tremendous. On shore it must be worse, so we decided we could see all we wanted from the ship and the only thing of interest we – that is Mrs Mayhew and I, who were leaning on the rails – saw, was the new passenger coming up the gangway.

"My dear, a most fascinating man but not the sort of a man husbands would like." (She must have been very quick in summing people up!)

"I am sure the mystery woman will be attracted to him; perhaps her depression is due to there being no unattached man on board. As far as we know she has no husband, anyhow not on this ship."

'Z' (the name of the new passenger did begin with a Z) sat with us at the Captain's table. The mystery woman also must have seen him come on board, or seen him on the ship and thought he was worth trying to attract, for her full evening dress that night was lower in the front, shorter in the skirt, tighter and of more shiny satin than usual. It showed up her magnificent figure to advantage.

The fashion was just on the verge of changing as we left Australia, from the ugly knee length skirts for day and evening, with a waist band round the hips, to the long full-length for evening. I have always thought the short, tight evening dress hideous and had made myself a couple of washing dresses to wear when I changed in the evenings, with full length very full skirts and the waist in its natural place. One I remember was pale ice-blue and was my Japanese stewardess's favourite. It is delightful in very hot weather, to put on a freshly laundered dress each evening.

Dear Mrs Mayhew wore beige lace, or dark flowered crêpe-de-Chine with coatees to match. Her dresses were medium length and I am sure would always remain so no matter how the fashions changed.

The Japanese Captain spoke only two words of English and that was 'All right', but he could express everything with those two words. As the various excellent dishes were handed round, he would look at each of us in turn and say, "All right?" If the weather was a bit rough he would indicate by circling his finger so many times round his watch and then it would be, "All right." If he wished to play a deck game, he would point to me or Neil, point to 5 o'clock on his watch, point to the deck above and ask, "All right?" So at 5 o'clock we would be ready to play the deck game, the only one and an excellent one it was. I had never seen it on other ships though no doubt some do have it. It was a mixture of golf and billiards, the balls being flat wooden discs and the clubs wooden pushers. A course was made out several times round the deck, the bunkers were the obvious coils of rope and funnels and things that stick up on decks. It was definitely a game of skill, playing off your partner's or opponent's balls, allowing for the slant of the deck, the roll of the ship and so on.

The Captain and the Chief Engineer were the champion players. The other officers played but as soon as the Captain appeared the little chaps used to scuttle away and leave the deck clear. Neil picked up the game fairly well, I never, so I was used as a handicap. Whoever played with me had a start of halfway round the deck for I always managed to get my ball into the rough (scuppers, the ditch just inside the railings that carries the water away). The Captain would look at me mournfully,

shrug his shoulders, then proudly point at himself and say, "All right," and would cleverly get my ball out and make a break of ten or more shots. After the game was over we must watch the Captain and Chief Engineer play singles and applaud them. They were experts and proud of their skill. Politely they would bow appreciation of our applause at the finish of their game and disappear. The Mayhews did not attempt to play, neither did the mystery woman, nor of course the monks, but Z. liked to watch the games. He and Neil would have bets on the singles and drinks afterwards. As a man Neil liked Z, as a husband he disliked him – poor Neil! I felt sorry for him; he was often torn in two; to linger in the bar and have more drinks or chaperone me after Z had left it to join me on deck!

It amused me to see how Z in that small ship with so few passengers, contrived to make things go the way he wanted; he wanted to amuse himself with me and I must admit I found him most entertaining! He was not a man I would have trusted with a young girl but I was a married woman and considered myself a much travelled and experienced woman of the world, and well able to take care of myself. Z was half French and half Russian, tall and broad shouldered with a feline grace in the way he stood or moved. His technique was subtle and sophisticated and rather unusual. He had charmed Mrs Mayhew into keeping Neil talking to her if and when he wished. He was a jewel buyer (mostly pearl) for Cartier in Paris and had been to Thursday Island, where there are large pearl fisheries, in search of them. He was looking for a drop-shaped pearl to match one he had, and if he could find it the pair would be worth £8,000 or more. It might take years to find but he had no doubt that he would get what he wanted in the end.

He was extremely interesting and entertaining on the subject of jewels and on many other subjects. Margaret (if she had been on board) would have told me she did not think he was a 'nice man' and did I think I ought to see so much of him. She would have been quite right.

Violet (if she had been on board) would have got a lot of fun and amusement, invented stories of his lurid past and encouraged my friendship with him.

Neil (who was on board) asked me one evening, when he was in a black temper, why the *** did I wear a dress that was so transparent? Obligingly I changed, whereupon Mrs Mayhew said:

"Oh, do go and put on your pretty blue dress again, Z likes you to wear that dress and I've promised him to keep Neil a nice long time talking to me this evening!"

I can recall so well those hot tropical days at sea, the refreshing cool breeze in the evenings and how loath one was to leave the deck and go down to a hot and airless cabin. Now a cold winter rain is beating against the windows. What a contrast to those days!

After Thursday Island, except for a couple of days or so, we were always in sight of land or islands. I get tired of day after day of ocean and like the interest of land far or near.

The only stop we made between Thursday Island and Hong Kong was Manila. Here we went ashore for the whole day and evening.

The town is part very old Spanish and part very modern American. Curiously the

two blended very well or else the Americans had been clever in their architecture and built to blend with the Spanish style. The country around was hilly and wooded.

Neil had won a bet off Z as to who would pay the expenses of our time on shore and winning put Neil in a good temper! Z did us well, hiring a car for a drive into the low wooded hills and through the old Spanish part of the town and stood us an excellent lunch and dinner at the expensive modern American hotel.

A few days after Manila we reached Hong Kong or rather Kowloon on the mainland, and took rooms at the Peninsula Hotel. The island of Hong Kong and the town of Kowloon is all so well known that I will not attempt any descriptions.

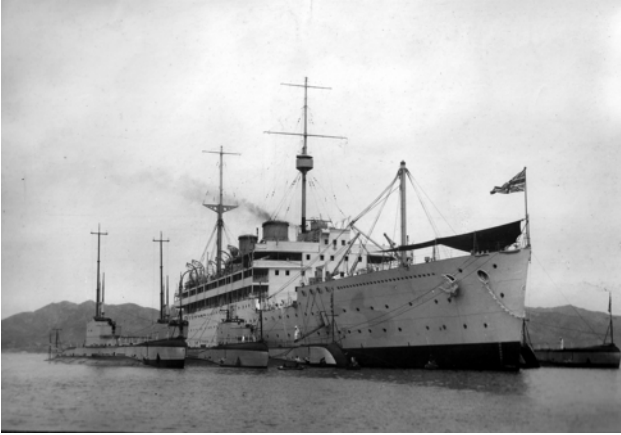
The Mayhews were staying a few days there at the same hotel where we were and we sat at the same table. One evening in came the mystery woman in a much be-spangled evening dress and holding by the hand a man whose head was on a level with her hip. We watched them thread their way between the tables and saw to our horror that he had no legs, or practically none, a few inches perhaps, and on those stumps were roller skates and he was rolling along on them. Holding the woman by one hand he used the other which reached to the ground to help propel himself. On reaching their table he swung himself onto his chair. We could then see that he was a big, swarthy, brutal looking man.

We found out from the hotel who he was, 'the legless swimming wonder'. He had been a miner or deck hand and had had a street accident, both his legs being cut off by a passing tram. He now travelled round the world giving performances of swimming without legs in some sort of portable glass tank. We could see him if we wanted to at the Amusement Park. They said he made a fine thing out of it. The woman with him, his wife or girlfriend, enticed the crowds by sitting on top of the tank as a mermaid.

Soon after our arrival in Hong Kong, Bobby blew in to see us. He was about 23 then, full of the zest of life, good-looking, gay and amusing. He had done well so far in the Navy. He had been the best cadet of his year and followed it up, by doing extremely well finally passing into submarines top with the best marks anyone had had for five years. He was younger yet senior to his contemporaries. He was a born leader even then. By going into submarines he got extra pay 4/- to 5/- a day 'hard laying' allowance, for having no private means. He was keen to save money. He planned to build a small boat and sail back to England via the Panama Canal. Permission from the Admiralty for him to do this came while we were in Hong Kong and he was able to go ahead with his plans. The boat, 'Tai-Mo-Shan', (called after a high mountain in the vicinity up which he used to climb and sit and plan) was eventually built in the Dockyards and he and four others successfully sailed back to England.

So Bobby was on top of his form; he had plans to make an adventure ahead of him. Neil was fond of him and in spite of the difference in their ages they got on well together.

Bobby brought his friends to see us; we entertained them, they returned our hospitality on board the mother ship (comfortably sitting on the water like a duck with her five ducklings of submarines alongside her).



HMS MEDWAY with her 'ducklings'.

George Salt and Philip Francis, two of Bobby's best friends, were generally in the party and when the three of them were together, could I control them? – not a hope! They would come to dine with us and probably dance, for I think there was dancing most nights at the hotel, but when it got late and time for them to leave, excuses were always thought up to postpone their leaving.

From Bobby: "I can't go home so early" (it was after midnight), "I shan't be able to sleep. I haven't slept well for nights because I'm so worried."

I, full of sympathy, being a bad sleeper myself, would ask him the reason.

"The thought of fire in this big hotel and my beloved sister trapped and burnt to death."

From Philip: "Yes, I've seen the fire hose in the corridors and I doubt if it works."

From George: "Only one thing to do, we must see if it is in working order."

Nothing would stop them. The enormous fire hose was run out along our corridors, water turned on full strength, and once on not easy to stop, consequently the carpets were drenched. Now they must make sure that the 'Foamite' worked (the portable fire extinguisher) in our bedroom. It worked only too well. Our room was soon filled with dense clouds of chemical steam bubbles. Contented with the evening's work, they left.

Next morning, before lunch, they turned up, thought we would like to know they had all been to church. (How good they looked, blue-eyed, young and innocent as if butter wouldn't melt in their mouths.) They had prayed, they said, that they would not have to pay for damage to the carpet or to our room. Luckily their prayers must have been heard, as on many other occasions.

One evening a lift got stuck between two floors with a young couple in it. One of them spotted it and returned with the glad news. A glance (that by now I knew meant they would be up to some prank) passed between them.

"We can't go back and leave a couple like that all night in a lift. It wouldn't be proper; we don't know if they are married. Come on, we must do something about it to cheer them up."

Knowing it would be impossible to stop them, I went with them to see the fun.

The lift had stuck on its way to one of the top floors, but there was a small gap through which things could be passed and conversation carried on.

"How long have you been here?" "Are you happy?" "Just you two together?" or

"Would you like us to rescue you?"

"We would be much obliged if you would inform the management at once of our predicament. We have already been here half-an-hour."

"Of course the management will be told, but in the meantime we will try and make you more comfy, for it's more than likely you will have to spend the night here."

"Impossible, we refuse to do that."

"We will see what we can do."

Two were left on guard while they took it in turns to fetch things; blankets, pillows, a wet sponge, toothpaste, towels, everything they could think of for their comfort was pushed down the gap between the floor and the top of the lift; even a potted palm and a raided bunch of flowers ('Just to make it more like home. '), was handed down to them or dropped through the gap.

Next thing was food. This couldn't be got except through the hotel, and then the hotel would have to know of the lift breakdown. However, they had had their fun so one of them went to get help (genuine help) and persuade a waiter to bring drinks and food. We had a good party outside the broken down lift and passed refreshments down to the trapped couple who, by that time, were beginning to enjoy themselves. The lift was repaired and the party broke up – I, only too thankful that no damage had been done that evening.



Philip Francis left, George Salt standing, Bobby centre.

Life in Hong Kong was very gay; tennis, dancing, picnics, the picturesque beauty of the narrow, colourful, Chinese streets to be seen at night, long walks with Bobby

(once all the way round the island of Hong Kong, a walk of 17 miles) who was getting fit to play in seven-a-side rugby; there was golf and racing for Neil. Time slipped by. We had only intended to stay one week. We cancelled our passages several times, and in the end stayed five weeks.

As our ship left the harbour for the open sea, Bobby's submarine saluted us farewell by doing a submerging act. The next time we were to see him was on his arrival at Falmouth in the 'Tai-Mo-Shan', over a year later.

I watched Hong Kong fade away in the distance with the well-known feeling of sadness at leaving a place where I had been happy. Someone came and stood beside me at the rails, and on turning I saw it was Z!

I expressed my surprise at seeing him. It was no surprise for him to see me, he said, he had arranged his passage with that intention.

"But we altered our passages several times."

"Yes, I know that. I altered mine accordingly."



Aboard SS RAJPUTANA: Enid centre, Neil right, 'Z' on left.

It amused me to have Z as a board-ship friend again and he travelled as far as Singapore.

After Singapore, Ceylon, Aden, Suez, Marseilles to Southampton; that and Plymouth are the two best places at which to arrive in England, especially on a fine spring day. It is a pretty train journey to London from either place. We were lucky that it was spring. As is usual after returning from abroad I was staggered at the greenness of everything and how small everything was, tiny fields especially; how

short the journey seemed and how overcrowded things looked. A small spot of country then houses; a few fields, a wood, more houses; villages, towns, little back gardens, the ugly outskirts of London, and then London itself. I concentrated on the joy I would have in seeing all my family again.

Violet had married while we were in Australia and was living at Chepstow; Margaret was in Ireland; my parents in Camberley and we were to go to them on arrival.

We (my brothers and sisters) were exceptionally lucky; we had the most adorable parents. We were devoted to each other, we never had family rows, we were a most united and happy family. We could never see too much of each other.

I went over to see Margaret in Ireland; Violet at Chepstow too, and paid other visits and so quite happily resigned myself to settling down to live in England.

Neil no longer wished to hunt; he wanted to play golf, go to every race meeting within motoring distance and to be within easy reach of London.

Luckily within a month or so after our arrival we found what we both wanted. No more fourteenth century old oak-beam-haunted houses for me. I wanted a small white Georgian house with green shutters and a garden that I could make to my liking and go on and on improving and see the results of my work. The house was all that we both wanted, quite small, only six bedrooms but they and the sitting rooms were good sized. The house was compact with thick walls and well built. It was a sunny house and had no creepy feeling.

So we settled in, having had various alterations and improvements made. The garden needed much doing to it and I was thrilled, planning and carrying out my ideas and had nearly five acres in which to do so.

It was as I have said a small house (for those days). We had a cook, house-parlour-maid and the gardener's wife to come in and help. A gardener in the cottage and an odd man who helped in the garden, did the boilers, cleaned cars etc. We lived very comfortably and happily.

I am still living in the same house¹ and still love it and the garden is a great joy to me. But times have changed; the result of the last war. The house is now considered a large house and the garden huge! I still have a resident gardener, but only one daily help five mornings a week. Wages are high, repairs, upkeep and cost of living, colossal. My friends all tell me how foolish I am to live in such a big house and that I would be wise to buy a little cottage².

Well, I must think that out!

¹ Elm Lodge, Winkfield, Berkshire.

² After Neil died she moved to Moyles Cottage, Quennington, Gloucestershire.

CHAPTER 17

The years before the Second World War

During the years before the Second World War we led much the same life that people in our position led. We were comfortably off, benefiting from various uncles and aunts of Neil's having died from time to time.

Neil spent a great deal of his time racing. There always seemed to be a race meeting within his reach. He generously helped the bookies to give their wives mink coats and other luxuries, as I think do most men who bet heavily.

Racing, golf, shooting, took up all his time. As he was a very good shot, he got many invitations to shoot and I used to enjoy being with him then and was proud of the way he shot. We went to Scotland several times and that I adored. Motoring to Scotland and seeing the signposts 'To the North', always gave me a thrill. Neil's grandfather had been Earl of Cawdor, and Cawdor Castle has been the home of the Campbells since about the eleventh century – and as everyone knows, was the setting for 'Macbeth'. It was very romantic and I believe it is the only castle in Scotland where the drawbridge and portcullis are still working.

Andrew (Jack Cawdor's younger brother) was married while we were staying near Cawdor Castle one year and we went over to the reception. There was a gathering of the clans for it and I shall never forget seeing the various chieftains, in full highland regalia being piped into the courtyard by their own pipers. The swing of their kilts, the swirl of the pipes, gave me shivers of joy done my spine! Wearing the kilt suited Neil; he looked very Scottish, very much a Campbell and often behaved like a Campbell.

I knew far more of Scottish history than Neil, who knew only what he chose to remember! He knew that a Macdonald would not speak to a Campbell and that a Campbell got the better of that by not giving a Macdonald the chance! I learnt to get the better of a Macdonald in an argument in the Campbell's favour in the matter of the 'Massacre of Glencoe', that is if I was in the mood and after first finding out that my opponent knew less about the subject than I did, which was most important!

It is not so difficult to get the better of an argument if you take the initiative in an attack, that is ask questions before your opponent can ask you them first. Ask a few questions which you trust they can answer and then slip in a fictitious one – they will pause and get hot and bothered about that and you can end up with something like, "You really should know more about the subject and be more historically accurate. It's so difficult to discuss things with people who get their facts wrong." You can then tell them how wonderfully wild and romantic you think the Pass of Glencoe is, and indeed it is. Always, when I saw it, dark storm clouds were sweeping down that wild pass.

It used to amuse Neil to listen to a Macdonald and me (a Campbell by marriage) having an argument and he would want to know afterwards how I knew so much about it and from where I got my knowledge. "Oh, from Scottish history books." I

would not tell him that part of it was from my imagination!

Neil knew that Macbeth was an ancestor of his but he had never seen the play or read it. I told him he must see it and learn how his ancestor behaved. So on one occasion when in Plymouth I took him to see 'Macbeth'. Unfortunately the production was by a rather inferior travelling company. It was not a success. Neil criticised the length of the players' kilts; some were two long, some too short. One actor, with a tummy, had his kilt up in the front and down behind. Inaccuracies in dress he commented on in a rather audible voice and when I begged him to be quiet he went to sleep and snored! The Campbells were aggressive, there was no doubt about that. They said what they thought and acted as they wished and heredity is strong.

Once I came across a description of them in a book on Scottish history. It told how in past centuries when a Campbell walked in the streets of Edinburgh others had to make way, step aside, if needs be get into the gutter, for if not the Campbell could say, "My name is Campbell and ye can get to hell!" and run him through with his sword!

Naturally I never told my husband this. It might have encouraged his aggressiveness; but how often I saw those traits in him. When driving a car he would make other cars give way to him. "I'll blow them off the road," he would say and if they did not at once get to the side of the road, he would shoot past them with a blare of his horn with no more than a hair's breadth to spare and the poor chap in the other car would almost be pushed into the ditch. When I remonstrated, he would reply:

"He should have got out of my way quicker. He could hear my horn. Serve him right if he is in the ditch."

Luckily he was a very good driver and never had an accident or caused one.

Years later when he was getting very lame and feeble and was walking with a stick, if someone was in his way he would brandish his stick for others to give way to him. Unconsciously with him it was, "My name is Campbell and ye can get to hell."

He, a Campbell, never lacked courage and I have never known Neil other than brave both physically and morally, and often prove this. The Campbells had good war records. Neil's Uncle Ronald was recommended for the VC in the Zulu War and his son, John, was the 'Tally-ho' VC of the 1914 war.

England to me was very much like a home and a garden, but however much England was mine and however much I loved it I longed to get outside what to me were its narrow boundaries and get away from time to time.

So I took every opportunity that came my way, or made opportunities if they did not come, to travel. I wanted to see more of the Continent. At different times and in different ways I saw most of it; France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Spain (I think that covers most of Europe) and to several of the countries I went again and again. I also went yachting in the Baltic.

Except in the winter when I went by train twice to Switzerland and once to



Sailing in the Baltic - Enid centre.

Austria, I always went by car, either taking my own or going in a friend's. Watching the cars being swung from ship to land on arrival at a French or Belgian dock, recognising one's own car and then, after a short delay at the customs, driving off, gave me the feeling of a dog that has been let off its chain, or a liberated bird; a wonderful feeling of freedom. I was off to see a new country, to go through countries I knew and liked, to visit again a country I loved. I could move as far as I liked in a day or could stop when and where I felt inclined. Part of the feeling of freedom was not knowing where one could spend the night.

Switzerland was fun. I enjoyed trying to ski in the winter. There was a gay holiday feeling in the air and the cheerfulness of friends. But though motoring through Switzerland in the summer is beautiful, Austria appealed to me far more. I thought it more beautiful, more wild and it had more charm than Switzerland.

Violet and her husband¹ took a little villa in Austria one year from September to March. Marvellous, we would go to stay with her (we on this occasion being Margaret and I). Margaret had never been on the Continent before and was thrilled to go.

I took my car, a sporting looking pale-grey Hillman Minx drop head coupé. I was very proud of it, the first car I had ever had of my very own. She had a beautiful figure and a charming expression, definite 'car appeal'. She was game to go anywhere and enjoyed an adventure as much as I did! One of those successful cars; it never let me down, had a lively acceleration and was a good hill climber.

We crossed to Ostend and spent the first night at Ghent at an old Archery Hotel. Then we wandered through southern Germany, stopping at Nuremberg, Rottenberg,

¹ Violet married Colonel Geoffrey Lawson on 30th December 1931.

Heidelberg, and along the valley of the Moselle and so into Austria.

Margaret adored it all. To start with she was afraid that I would try and stay at odd dirty, vermin-invested inns (she had promised Neil to try and look after me). Where she got the idea that I liked places of that sort I don't know, though in the past when travelling I had put up at some queer spots and no doubt I had given her an exaggerated description of them. But it did not take her long to find out how attractive, how clean and preferable in every way were the smallest 'Guest Houses' in the tiny but picturesque villages. In a town it is advisable to stay in the best hotel and pay the high charges, but staying a couple of nights in a small guest house, very cheap, the cost is averaged out and this helps towards inexpensive travelling. Buying food, rolls, butter, a tin of tongue, fresh fruit etc. and having picnic meals by some delicious stream in a wood or meadow, is not only far nicer but keeps down the cost of living. We were very happy travelling so.

I had been to Austria before but not to where Violet had taken her villa, Grundelsee in the Salzkammagut.

We reached Bad Auzzi one afternoon and followed the road alongside the lake to Grundelsee and then slowly on looking for the 'Villa Christie'. It was off the road and a track led to it up a grassy slope. Before we reached it we saw Violet. She had spotted our car and came running out to welcome us. She, Geoffrey, their lovely little boy of two¹, and Nannie had only arrived the day before.

'Villa Christie' was almost part of a farm. There was a farmhouse and farm buildings beside it. It was small and built entirely of wood and completely Austrian, fascinatingly peasant Austrian. The walls were covered with hundreds of small deer horns; everywhere were mounted horns, coloured oleographs, framed photos of men with magnificent moustaches and of their wives and children. There were crochet-lace curtains at the windows, crochet-lace anti-macassars and at the back of the beds, washstands and wherever they could be placed, were elaborate cross stitched pieces of needlework, mostly of long religious texts in German, all edged with crochet-lace.

There was no bathroom; a zinc tub in front of the kitchen fire was delightfully adequate. Deep wooden eaves over one side of the little house and apple trees outside, a view of the lake and grand mountains all round – that is how I remember the 'Villa Christie' and Grundelsee. We thought it perfection. No other English people were in Grundelsee and no tourists to spoil it.

That night, when we went to bed, we heard a curious noise outside; a bumping and then something would flash past the window. We had not drawn the curtains as there were only mountains beyond and apple trees below or on a level with our window. We called Violet.

"Oh yes, those are the boys of the village who have come 'fenchling you'. You must draw your curtains and not laugh at them. Take no notice and they will go away."

'Fenchling' was an old village custom of paying a call on newcomers, carried out by the lads. They take a long post (used to prop up the apple trees when heavily laden with fruit) and as they ran, they stuck the end of the post in the ground and swung

¹ Julian, born 16th March 1933, so this would have been 1935.

up and over passing the window on their way. It was very funny to watch and very difficult not to laugh, but finally we firmly drew our curtains.

The two or three weeks we stayed with Violet were most happy. There was so much to do, so much to explore, such lovely walks in the mountains and round the lake; and an occasional village festivity to attend, such as the celebration of bringing the cattle down from the mountains for their winter quarters. It was September, the air fresh and invigorating and the hill sides were covered with autumn crocus.

Margaret had seen the simple side of life in Austria; she must now see the life of a big schloss, so we went to stay at Schloss Weinberg not far from Lintz. I had an introduction and a visit was arranged. (Alas, it is now a ruin; it was utterly demolished in this war. How glad I am that we store it in all its beauty.)

As we drove across rather flat country we saw on a rising hill what I thought was an old mediaeval town and that in it we would find the Schloss, but what we thought was the town was Schloss Weinberg.

It was huge. We crossed a drawbridge and drove into a courtyard and were charmingly welcomed by Madame Boyer, the mother-in-law of Count T. It was a fascinating place, 14th century, and so enormous and so old and so rambling that people who knew it well and had lived there for years would lose their way and helplessly wander about for hours.

We were shown our room; (luckily Margaret and I were put into the same room) and a servant was stationed outside our door to escort us back to the reception rooms so that we would not lose our way; and when we went to bed he led the way. Madame Boyer hoped we would not mind the door of our room being locked on the outside, it was safer – the man would be there at ten o'clock the next morning and escort us back to her apartment.

We heard the grating noise of the key being turned in the lock and the man's footsteps dying away along the long stone corridor. Out of curiosity we tried the door; sure enough it was locked! We wondered if people did try and get out of their rooms in the night and get lost, or was there a mad old uncle who wandered about at night, came into people's rooms to frighten them or perhaps murder them? Margaret thought our room had a queer feeling and we had better not imagine things but try to go to sleep.

The door was unlocked for our breakfast to be brought in the next morning and locked again. At 10 o'clock we heard the key turn, and being up and dressed we opened the door and the man took us to Madame Boyer.

We spent many hours that day being shown over parts of the castle. One enormous room was laid out like a giant chess board, in which former Count T had played chess with the guests, using real people in armour as Kings, Queens, pawns etc. and who only moved to order. The most fascinating room was the still-room, a small octagonal room high up with windows overlooking the many buildings composing the Schloss. In it were lovely antique apothecary's jars containing various herbal remedies and many books of mediaeval recipes, some dating from 1300. The traditional skull formed the centrepiece and bunches of dried herbs were hanging on the walls.

We were given 'herb tea' to drink before going to bed at night. "So good for the nerves," we were told!

Schloss Weinberg was as far as we went. After that visit we turned homewards by a different route. It had been a delightful six weeks motor tour on the Continent, and how cheap in those days. From the time we left England until we returned, it had cost us £23-0-0 each, including the cost of car transport, all our expenses, even the various things we had bought for ourselves and presents to take back.

It was quite an adventure at one time for two women to take their car abroad, and when Aileen Bell told me she was coming to England for a trip and was bringing her car and would like to go somewhere on the Continent with me, I chose Poland for no other reason than when asked at a party where I was going, I suddenly thought of Poland! I did not quite know where it was and had no idea what it was like but it was a good long way away and that appealed to me. Immediately I was told that it was impossible, people did not motor to Poland; two women certainly could not.

"What will happen if you have a breakdown? There are no roadside garages and the roads are very bad and it's no good waiting for a car to come along, because they just don't."

"Oh, just hope we won't have any trouble and if we do, cope with it somehow."

"Do you know anything about car repairs?"

"Nothing!"

"Do you know anybody in Poland?"

"Nobody!"

"Do you know anything about Poland?"

"Nothing!"

"Well, people go there if they are friends of the Radziwils or Potolskis. They go to huge shooting parties and they always go by train. Why not go to the south of France, quite a lot of people are motoring out there now, why go to Poland?" and so on.

The answer was – having said Poland, I was now genuinely keen to go. I wrote to Aileen in Queensland to tell her and she was thrilled with the idea.

Soon after this I was introduced to a young man whose stepfather lived in Poland and he tried his best to persuade me not to attempt motoring on Polish roads, but I could not believe that they were worse than some Queensland bush tracks.

"Very well then, if you do go will you take out some English cigarettes with you and give them to my stepfather?" And he sent me a parcel of them and the name and address.

Aileen arrived in England and we set off, collected her car which had been shipped to Belgium at Ostend, and gaily started eastwards across Belgium and Germany to Schwerin on the Polish frontier. Such first-class roads in Germany, such very clean hotels, such quick and efficient garage service, such an extra good road from Berlin to Schwerin of about 100 miles and now we would leave all that behind and enter Poland.

I had emphasised to Aileen the importance of getting her passport correctly visa-ed. I had seen about mine, paid extra and had visa and stamps and things put on it for Poland, so I knew mine was in order but at the frontier it would not pass, it must be stamped, etc. etc. in Berlin. The language used to explain all this was German of which neither of us knew a word, but they made it quite clear we must go back to Berlin so back we had to go.



'De Soto' Aileen's car

Unfortunately it was a Sunday and at the British Consulate Office there was only one miserable young clerk who said nothing could be done till Monday, but by mentioning the name of the English Ambassador he brightened up and after a good deal of delay the necessary stamping was done.

Aileen was most good-natured about it all, I felt very apologetic.

"You are quite sure yours is in order?" I said.

"Absolutely certain. You were so fussy about getting it correct. I know mine is all right."

As you didn't show yours at Schwerin, don't you think you ought to see if it is in order here?"

"To prove mine is all right and to satisfy you, I will."

Thank goodness as hers needed a few extra stampings also!

We both felt very much better! We went off to the German Consulate to have further stampings. Although it was Sunday, the German office was alive and efficient, uniformed officials dealt speedily with our passports with much clicking of heels and saluting. (Years later when we were again at war with Germany I thought of this terrifying efficiency of the Germans.)

Having got our passports finally in order we returned to Schwerin and stayed the night there at the only little pub. Next morning we crossed the frontier successfully and entered Poland.

The contrast between Germany and Poland came as a nasty shock – true enough the country for the last few miles west of Schwerin had been flat and rather uninteresting, but now as soon as we had crossed the frontier nothing could have been more disappointing. From the first class German roads it changed to a very definitely appallingly bad one and deadly straight, so that one could see how endlessly it stretched to a far away flat horizon.

The sun was shining when we left Germany but on entering Poland the sky became overcast, then a drizzle and soon heavy rain which had one advantage – it



*At Schwerin ready to cross into Poland;
Enid centre.*

Birmingham. We decided we had 'had' Poland! We decided we would go as far as Warsaw (just to say we had motored there) and then spend the rest of our time in a more attractive country.

Warsaw was roughly 120 miles. We could do that in a day. Could we? Not a hope! All that day we motored on and on along more or less straight roads through flat country. They looked as if in the process of being repaired; there were heaps of flints at regular intervals but the surface of the road was appalling. We crawled in and out of potholes, in second or bottom gear, averaging eight to twelve miles per hour! Taking it in turns to drive we did 80 miles that day. It was 1 am when we reached the small village of Luvitz and we both decided that we must find somewhere to spend the night, but where? Curiously enough though so late there were signs of life. On the outskirts of the village we had seen lighted icons by the roadside and peasants kneeling in prayer, and no longer were they dressed in European clothes, and in Luvitz itself there were a few lights shining but nothing that looked like an inn.

Aileen said: "I will stay in the car and guard it. You go and see if you can find

partly blotted out the dreary looking land, the drab villages and the people dressed in drab English-style clothes. It turned very cold and we became rather silent.

"I am sure Poznan will be fascinating. I can just picture a magical old Russian-looking mediaeval town, can't you?"

"Of course," I responded and went on to give a glowing picture of what I imagined it to be.

It took us a long time to get to Poznan. We had made an early start and it was dark when, after an eighty miles drive, we reached it. We were cold, wet and tired, and our impression of what we hoped was a glamorous town was – just the opposite. We had difficulty in finding an hotel, difficulty in finding a garage. We were both feeling depressed and not liking to admit it.

Pozan looked no better the next morning, just a large dull town rather like a small

somewhere for us to spend the night."

Seeing a light in a house, I knocked at the door and the most villainous looking man opened it. Should I retreat? But it is not easy to do that once the door has opened and one is obviously being questioned; so I made signs of wanting somewhere to sleep and something to eat. He seemed to understand and firmly taking me by the arm, he led me down an alley-way through an archway, up some rickety old wooden stairs and proudly showed me a bedroom.

I expressed my satisfaction, then made signs that there were two of us and I wanted two beds, and took him firmly by the arm and led him back to the car for Aileen's approval. We were so tired we would have approved of anyone then who could produce beds for us to sleep in and he did, a room with two beds and also a room (a sort of restaurant, I suppose) adjoining, where food was put before us.

We ate a meal of sorts and were then led to our bedroom. We made signs we would like clean sheets and clean towels. One look at those in the room by the light of a candle was enough to know that they had been used many times. We also indicated that we wanted hot water. They were willingly brought to us.

How easy, we thought, to get what we wanted by signs. It just took a bit longer but it caused a lot of laughter and we got all we wanted.

The car we left in a courtyard. We were too tired to lock it or get anything out of it except what we needed for the night.

It was intact the next morning. An old man had guarded it for us. We offered him a handful of coins, he modestly took the equivalent of fourpence! We gave him some more fourpences, a handkerchief and some cigarettes. He kissed our hands in gratitude.

Before we left our host produced a young man who, we gathered, we must follow and he would show us the sights. The sights were well worth seeing. It was market day, a very special market day, the market day of the year. All the peasants were in their national dress, the women in many-coloured striped full skirts, gay shawls and black head scarves.

The stalls were filled with the usual country produce and there were more geese than I have ever seen before.

Our young man, who was evidently rather superior, for he was dressed in a gent's natty suit and homburg hat, proudly showed us round. His special pride seemed to be showing us bottles of live leeches and explaining by signs how beneficial they were in cases of illness.

Luvitz market was a scene of colour and picturesqueness. We definitely felt better towards Poland that day. It only took us six hours to motor the remaining forty miles to Warsaw. Here we would stay a few days then make our way south to Kraków and into Czechoslovakia.

When in a capital always stay at the best hotel. We found it in a big square surrounded by imposing looking buildings.

After a day or so of sight-seeing and enjoying luxury and comfort we decided to make for Kraków, but first we must do something about delivering the parcel of

cigarettes. Either we must post them or leave them with a note to be called for by Baron Kronenberg. As far as we could make out his address in the country was miles off a main road and having experienced main roads, we did not think we could face worse than that. We consulted the hotel manager.

"But the Baron is now in Warsaw, in his Palace. It is facing the Square. You will telephone him now at once. Immediately come with me to the telephone and I will arrange that you speak to him."

We had suddenly become visitors of importance and sure enough in a few moments I was speaking to the Baron on the telephone. He sounded charming and friendly and told us to stay where we were – "Not to move, for I come at once."

He arrived and we gave him the cigarettes. He wished to know our plans and soon he was making plans for us. On no account could we leave Warsaw that day or the next. There were races that afternoon to which he would take us. He was a big breeder of blood-stock himself, a steward and we could see the races from his box.

We had a delightful time at the races and met many of his friends and a party was arranged for us that night, given by Pépe Caballerrio, the Argentine Ambassador, in his apartment.

"It will be gay, you will be amused," we were told and it was gay and most amusing. There was much toast drinking and after toasting the English ladies, the men standing on their chairs with one foot on the table threw their glasses over their left shoulders in the old traditional manner. There was sentimental and gay music, Argentine, French, Russian and Polish.

Poleck Kronenberg was very musical. He could play anything by ear from the highest to the lowest form of music. He would play to suit his company, either the piano or the accordion He would be the gayest of the gay at a party and was a wonderful host.

Aileen and I kept to our plan of going to Kraków from Warsaw, but before we left Poleck had arranged that we should come and stay at Wienice, his place in the country, in a weeks time when his wife would be there. He advised us to come by train to the nearest station. All we had to do was to wire him our time of arrival and at the station, "shout his name and things would happen."



Luvitz market

We then set off for Kraków about 100 miles south-east, thinking we could do that in a day, but 80 miles on rough roads was as much as we could ever do. Again it got too late and we too tired to go further but this time we found a small town and a reasonable enough looking hotel. Again it was 1 am when we went into the dining room for a meal, but late hours are kept in Poland and there were several people dining.

As we were trying to explain to the waiter by signs that we did not want a big meal but only something light to eat, a very sweet-looking young woman came to our table. She could speak a little English and, could she help us? Which she did and when we had had our meal asked us to join her and her husband at their table for Russian tea.

"Where are you going to spend the night?"

"At this hotel."

"That is impossible. The beds would not be clean. You must certainly come to us, we are only having a meal here on the way back home."

They persuaded us to do this; our car could follow their car. The road would not be bad as it was not a main road. True enough, side roads were a great improvement, never having been metalled or made up they were comparatively smooth.

We followed their car twenty to thirty miles, I do not know, but I do remember it was 3 am when their car pulled up and after a blast on their horn, massive iron gates were thrown open and great watch dogs ran out barking.

We had arrived at Gory, and our kind young friends were the Dembenskis .

A dear little maid woke me the next morning by drawing the curtains and then scuffling under the bed clothes until she found my hand which she kissed. She brought us a delicious breakfast and a big bowl of lilac for our bedroom.

Aileen was thrilled to find that the fine linen sheets were exquisitely embroidered with an elaborate monogram and coronet!

The Dembenskis were charming. She could speak English, but he only French (and German naturally, but I did not speak that) so I carried on as best I could with him in French. They



The Dembenskis.



Gory

drove us in a horse and trap round part of the estate and showed us their farms and cattle. We spent a very happy two days at Gory. They pressed us to stay longer, but we felt we must go on to Kraków. They gave us several introductions to friends of theirs around that part of Poland, Count Z, Baron P, and Count T etc. but we did not use them.

The Dembenskis had been married two years she told me and, "You will think it strange that we have no children, but with the state of the world we do not wish to have them."

"Not wish to have a son to inherit all this?"

"Certainly not. War will come and we will lose all this. It would be a tragedy for us to bring children into the world, into the devastation of Poland and the horrors that will come, so we have decided that we will have no children only to be deprived of all that we love and all that should be theirs by right."

They were both so young and so attractive and yet could see the future that awaited their country.

Kraków fully came up to our



Kraków.

expectations of a lovely old historical town.

Seeing a poster of an aeroplane outside some sort of office building, we thought we might be able to fly back to Warsaw and then get a train to Wienice. It is not exactly easy to find out about those sort of journeys by signs, but we managed it somehow. A plane was leaving on a certain date and time and we booked our seats and, more by luck than anything else, managed to fly to Warsaw in a rather primitive aeroplane which needed a lot of starting up and there were cheers from the crowd when it took off! The car we left in Kraków to pick up on our return.

From Warsaw we trained to the station nearest Wienice having sent a wire to Poleck telling him the time of our arrival.

No wonder people went by train in Poland; it was most comfortable.

We got out of the train at the station, a small wayside one, but no one was there, not a sign of life. We wandered up and down the platform for a while – had we got out at the wrong station? What did we do now? Then I remembered Poleck's instructions – we were to, "shout his name and things would happen."

We cleared our throats and together feebly shouted – "Baron Kronenberg" – and things did happen. Out rushed the station-master and kissed our hands (we had by now got quite used to having our hands kissed and automatically produced them). Bowing backwards he escorted us outside the station where two coach and fours

were awaiting us! The coachmen kissed the hems of our skirts as well as our hands. We took our seats in the leading coach and the other took our couple of small suitcases.

Off we started at a hard gallop, through a sandy, dusty road between pine forests. It was a twelve mile drive. Once we stopped, our coachman had seen a friend; he trustingly handed over the reins to us while he had a chat and off we went again.

Poleck and his charming wife, Wanda, gave us a warm welcome on arrival at Wienice. How stately, beautiful and friendly it was. If you have seen the film of the story of Napoleon's love for Marie, Countess Walewski, and remember the arrival at our home, the broad steps leading to the front door and the pictures of the rooms etc. It might have been filmed at Wienice .

In the 1914 war it had been overrun by the Germans. The house and huge



Poleck Baron Kronenberg and Aileen



Wienice

stables and farm buildings had not been destroyed but everything had been removed that was possible to move. The only thing left in the house was an immense chandelier in the hall, which certainly would have been too heavy or too difficult to take away. From the stables and farms, every implement, everything on wheels, every bit of saddlery, harness, leather, iron and steel had been removed. Hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of timber stolen (although there were still immense forests left) and all the horses, cattle and animals of every description.

Poleck said it was amazing how thorough the Germans had been. They had not left a chicken or a loose nail – only the chandelier. Nothing was recovered. A certain amount of compensation was paid but not for the timber. Luckily for them the Kronenberg Palace in Warsaw had been occupied as the headquarters of the German Staff and it had been left more or less intact, so from it and with Wanda's own furniture in England they had refurnished it and made it beautiful.

We had two large delightful bedrooms, and the first night we were there, on going to our baths, left our bedroom doors open to be sure we found our way back to our rooms. The draft caused the lamps (there was no electricity) to smoke and to smoke appallingly as only oil lamps can smoke. Our rooms were raining black smuts; the beautiful brocade curtains, satin eiderdowns, white fur rugs, were black! We decided to sleep in the grime and confess our crime the next morning – which we did.

He said nothing was recovered from what the Germans took, but Poleck did get back three of his horses. He told us the following story.

During the Russo-Chinese war a Russian officer saw a poor little starving Chinese boy crying by the roadside. He had been deserted by his parents who were fleeing before the advancing victorious Russian Army. He was such a pathetic little object that the man picked him up and for some days he carried this child with him on his horse, giving him food and what care and comfort he could. He managed to look after the child or get others to do so and eventually brought him back with him

to Russia and on going to stay with Poleck's father for a visit, gave the child to him as a present; for in those practically feudal days, presents were exchanged such as a stallion, a boar hound, an eagle, or as in this case, a slave, the small Chinese boy.

The boy grew up at Wienice. He showed such love for horses that he was put in the stables as one of the many grooms and there he remained till the 1914 war, when, while Poleck was fighting with his Cossacks in the Carpathians, the Germans overran Wienice; but just before that happened, Pinpin (as the Chinaman was called) took four of his master's best thoroughbred mares and escaped with them into the forests.

For four years or more he somehow managed to avoid the enemy, travelling hundreds of miles with his horses. No one knew how he had lived during that time but he had obviously undergone great hardships.

After the end of the war he returned to Wienice triumphantly with three of the four horses. Pinpin and the horses were in a starved condition but the only thing that worried him was that one of the horses had died and that he had not brought all four back.

He must have been an old man at that time; when we saw him he was a very old, wizened little Chinaman sitting beside the stable door of one of the progeny of his horses. If asked what he was doing, he would reply:

"I guarding master's baby horse, so when Bolsheviks come I can take her and hide her in forest and after war I bring her back and master again have horses. I welly old and can't take four horses but can take baby horse and keep her safe."

This must have been five or six years or more before this last war but even then the thought of war was an unavoidable event that was bound to come from the Polish point of view, and where would they stand, crushed between the Germans on one side and the Bolsheviks on the other?

After Poleck again got possession of his estates at the end of the 1914 war, he worked hard to restore them and when we were there his house was lovely and his farms flourishing. Great acres of land had been reforested and he had again bred up a fine stud of horses – thoroughbreds and also remounts for the army. He was once again a rich man. He was happy and gay and to be with him was to enjoy life.

His son and daughter were about eight and ten years old then.

It seemed strange then that in that huge house and with countless servants, all doors leading into the house were kept locked. We were given a key to one of the side doors so that we could



Aileen and Poleck

get in and out of the house as we wished, but it was impressed on us not to forget to lock the door – against the Bolsheviks we were told.

Some days we rode in the forests, but not alone for we 'might get lost'. The country was flat and many square miles were covered in pine forests; through them were broad green rides (fire breaks) all looking so much alike that one could easily take a wrong ride and go on wandering aimlessly.

One evening to amuse us Poleck took us to a dance. It was in one of the clearings in the forest and was given by his fire guards and keepers. There was a wooden platform with ropes round, rather like a boxing ring, and flaming torches at the four corners. The men and girls were in their national dress or in their guards' and keepers' uniform. The music was very Russian and so was the dancing.

"You shall dance with my head-keeper," said Poleck. "He is a little bit gay¹ but not too much. He has been celebrating, today he shot a poacher."

"Did he kill him?"

"Most certainly for he is a good shot. He would not be celebrating if he had only wounded the man, that would have been a disgrace."

He beckoned the man out of the ring. I was introduced and my hand kissed. We mounted the platform and circled round quite happily to a waltz tune, sadly sentimental, and then with one of those quick changes of Russian gypsy music from the sad to the gay, the tempo altered. My partner clasping me firmly round the waist with both hands, went all Cossack in his dancing. Down he went on his haunches his legs flying out in all directions, still keeping hold of my waist the boards of the platform fairly sprang up and down with all the heel stamping and bouncing dancers! I just about managed to keep on my feet, not from any skill of my own but from my partner's and his firm hold on me. We watched the dancing for a bit longer and then there was an interval.

"Now is the time we will leave, for they will drink vodka and the party will then become too gay!"

There were still more or less feudal conditions in Poland then. The big landowners still had the right of life and death over their peasants. There was little if any middle-class. There were the two classes, the rich owners of big estates and the extreme poverty of the peasants. At Wienice, Poleck was a kind and considerate master. His dependants were devoted to him and some of the families were descendants of those who had been with the Kronenbergs at Wienice for five hundred years.

Poleck realised that times would change and he was keen on the education of the young, so that in the future they would be able to have positions of responsibility; "But it will be cruel to us if war comes too suddenly, for who will look after the old as you do, if there is a revolution?" His people used to ask him.

Well, it came – the war in 1939 – and with it all the sadness and suffering he had foreseen.

Our first and very happy visit to Wienice came to an end. We went to Kraków,

¹ In the old sense of the word.

picked up the car, motored over the Carpathian Mountains (enthralled with the beauty of it all and the picturesque wildness) into Czechoslovakia and so back to England.

How glad I was that I had said I was, "going to Poland" (months before), how happy that I had not been "put off" going there. That was the first of many visits.

When Poleck and Wanda came to England they stayed with us. Neil and Poleck got on very well together both being good sportsmen and eventually Neil agreed to go to Wienice for shooting in the winter.

So one November we went. The cold was very bitter, only a sprinkling of snow. The sun never seemed to shine and the whole colouring was pale grey, ground and sky the same colour, the only relief, the black of the forests.

Early in the morning while it was still dark Poleck would walk along the corridor blowing his horn to wake up his guests. We all collected in the hall and out of great chests were taken extra fur coats, which we put on top of all our other warm clothes. Coats of bear-skin and double-breasted, muffs also if we wanted them; most of the 'guns' used muffs to keep their hands warm in the intervals of shooting.

We then drove off in light farm-carts filled with hay, wonderful for keeping one's feet warm.

The transport for going from beat to beat was a long tree trunk (well padded) length-way across two pairs of wheels and harnessed to horses. You sat astride this pole and it was extraordinarily comfortable for the springiness of it did not jar when going over the frozen ruts and furrows.

Most of the beaters were mounted and they swept the plain towards the guns and then the guns turned round the opposite way and another lot of beaters came towards them.

The shooting of course was magnificent, tremendous bags of pheasant and partridge. Lunch was in a clearing in the forest, a high enclosure was built of fir branches to keep out the wind which penetrated even there, and being very dark and gloomy it was lit up by flaming torches and I for one was glad to eat a good hot meal and have the shelter of the stockade.

Shooting continued till the light failed; the last stand being in the forest and it was then nearly quite dark and the beaters advancing through the trees towards one. When the horn blew, shooting ceased. Once when I was standing beside one of the guests he told me he thought the horn had sounded too soon, "but then our host is very humane, he does not like his beaters shot."

When it was all over the guests lined up and a very attractive tune was played on the horns, 'Farewell to the Guests', and then Poleck's own tune was played and we all packed into the hay cart for the drive home.

How gorgeously warm it was inside the house, hot baths, changing into full evening dress was not cold, for huge porcelain wood stoves everywhere kept the house wonderfully warm.

We all collected in one large room with tables spread with delicious food and drinks. It would then be about 9 o'clock. About 11 o'clock we all went to the dining

room and ate a four course dinner! After that there would be music.

Twice I went in the winter for a shooting party and how I enjoyed it all. Neil went by himself the year of the Munich crisis. I had planned to go the following summer and Wanda and I were going to Russia together to stay with some of her Russian friends and relations, but that never came off for by the summer war was very imminent.

Wanduka, their daughter, was at school in England then and not far from us. She was sixteen and one of the sweetest and most attractive girls I had ever known. She was quite beautiful, very talented and a charming companion. Her parents came over that summer to bring her back to Poland. Neil and I both tried to persuade them to leave the girl with us, but they decided they would all return to their country and face whatever came together.

Since my first visit to Poland between the two World Wars during the months of May and early June, several things about that country made a lasting impression on me. One was that there were geese – geese everywhere! I saw no cattle or sheep as we crawled slowly up, over and down all round those heaps of stones and deep pockets in the so-called main roads. For miles in every direction we saw nothing except endless flat land, cultivated after a fashion, then as we neared the outskirts of a village there would appear a small child in charge of a few geese, an old granny rounding up some more, or a young woman driving along a fair-sized flock, all armed with incredibly long and forcible bamboo canes to whip up the stragglers and to keep the flocks, large or small, in compact groups. Never having seen geese in such profusion they fascinated me and gave a kind of fairy-story look to the country. Later, when I saw what happened on market days I was far from fascinated, for old women were plucking the geese alive for the sale of their down and feathers, and these were young geese too, not yet ready for killing, which were bringing in a preliminary – and most painful – profit.

The small villages, probably only a collection of farm (geese farm) cottages, were on one side of the road only, built sideways onto the road with a large communal goose pond in the centre. They would be better described as 'huts' rather than cottages, or again, similar to Irish cabins. All were whitewashed with window-shutters, but no glass in the windows as far as I could see, and the doors were painted in that Prussian blue, which colour I always connect with France. Heavy thatch was used for the roofs, and the intriguing little windows in the roofs resembling half closed eyes, were I suppose ventilation for a loft.

As dwellings for human beings these places had I am sure everything to be deplored. They were



Half closed eyes in the thatch.

insanitary, unhealthy and lacking in any kind of reasonable comfort. In other words the inhabitants lived in congested squalor. From an artistic point of view the buildings delighted me for their utter simplicity. Excluding white they were pictures of only two colours – blue and brown – with an occasional mauve in place of the lilac: just that – blue for the sky, reflections in ponds and puddles, and the wooden doors and shutters, with brown for the flat country – the crops, not yet having shown their green, – and the thatched roofs. Then there was rusty black of the peasants' garments and white for the clouds, the walls of the huts and hundreds of geese. Here and there was a pale mauve splash of lilac, growing against a whitewashed wall. The beauty of it all was that the flowers were out in dense profusion before any green had appeared – just the ordinary small-flowered pale mauve and white lilac, but I have never seen any so lovely in its simplicity – unspoilt as one's eye was by other flowers and greenery.

Those villages made a very lasting impression on me. The large ones had a Market Square, a Church, and a few solid stone-built buildings. They were also beautiful because of the obvious age of the simply built church, the complete lack of any ugly modern building, and no blatant and gaudy advertisements.

The further we travelled into the heart of Poland the less we saw of peasants dressed in tatty 'gent's natty suiting' and the women in cheap copies of English clothes. More and more of them were in their enchanting national and colourful dress.

It was a country of extremes and great contrasts, of the very rich and the very poor, of huge estates with their palatial homes, and the peasants in their hovels.



I was struck with the hopeless look of hungry despair on the faces of the peasants, who seemed to have no alternative but a life of slavish work, coupled – and here was the great contrast – with the radiant and hopeful happiness, shining in their faces as they worshipped in their churches or knelt at some wayside shrine.

Religion obviously meant a great deal to them – it seemed to represent all the joy, hope and beauty in their lives, their only relaxation and recreation.

They had no other pleasures and it seemed to take the place of cinemas, outings in cars, dancing and many other enjoyments indulged in by their equivalent class in other European countries. They were able to give to their religion with their whole hearts that which others spent on a variety of amusements.

Sometimes we went through an entirely Jewish village. I did not like them,

principally I think because of the dirt and the smells and the cruelty to the horses. We were told that a Jew would buy an old horse, nothing but skin and bone, for a few shillings and over and over again so overloading his cart when taking people to market for a few pence, that the old horse soon dropped dead and the Jew made some profit. He would even fail to give the horse a feed on the day which he thought would be its last journey in order thereby to save a few pence. We saw many of these skeletons of horses dragging carts with twenty or more passengers, and being cruelly beaten to keep them on their legs. It was a grim site¹.

On big estates however well-fed, happy-looking and even prosperous-looking peasants were to be seen. The middle-class seemed to be non-existent – there must have been some of course but anyhow there were no obvious signs of suburban houses on the outskirts of towns.

May was definitely a time of lilac. In the grounds of big estates there were huge groups of it in all sizes and colours with very few other kinds of flowers. However when in Poland one September there were dahlias everywhere and they were the best I had ever seen.

The enormous forests seemed to consist principally of pines. These were grown commercially and were a source of great wealth to their owners. Further south, south of Kraków, and in the Carpathian Mountains there were magnificent forests of cedars, pines, and as far as I can remember a vast number of beeches.

From the time of my first visit to Poland – many years before the Second World war – and during every subsequent visit, the Poles talked of a coming war as a certainty. Some of us in England thought that another war in our lifetime was an impossibility, but not so the Poles who knew only too well that when war did come they would not only have enemies on either side of them, Germans and Russians, but that they would have a third enemy to content with, namely the Bolsheviks now generally known as Communists in their midst.

The odds against them were hopeless but fight they would to the last man – and when the time came they did, even the cavalry with drawn swords, charged the oncoming tanks which just rolled over them and crushed them. The Poles fought however with everything that they could give and with superb gallantry.

When the war came a few weeks after Poleck and Wanda and their daughter returned to Poland, and their country was overrun, we were terribly anxious about them and all our friends there.

Later we received letters from them through some mysterious source in Switzerland. They were well but had lost everything. Poleck and his son were fighting, Wanda and Wanduka were living in a couple of rooms in Warsaw. They were short of food and clothing but begged us not to send them anything. They would rather starve and freeze than run the risk that anything we might send them would benefit the Germans. We were also able to write to them through Switzerland, until we got a last letter telling us not to write further as the Swiss address was no longer safe. Then there was silence, we heard no more from them or of them.

¹ Was she unaware of what circumstances may have led to such Jewish poverty?

After the end of the war, we tried many sources for news, the various embassies, neutral countries, the Red Cross, but the reply was always the same. They regretted they were unable to get any information.

Months later we had a letter from a cousin of the Kronenbergs in Paris. A Polish Staff Officer had escaped and being a friend of hers, came to see her. He told her that the whole family of Kronenberg had been killed. Poleck in the fighting outside Warsaw, his son with his regiment, his wife and daughter in the bombing of Warsaw. It was very sad news.

The second Christmas after the war, the telephone rang (it was actually Christmas Day), and when I answered it, to my amazement, it was Poleck speaking. Yes, he was in England; he had escaped from Poland.

I went off straight away in the car to fetch him and bring him back to us. He was terribly thin, worn and nervy. His son had been killed fighting, his wife killed during the bombing of Warsaw and later his daughter. His beautiful Palace which we had seen once when in Warsaw was now a heap of stones. He had been imprisoned five times since the end of the war, escaping and being recaptured and going through frightful starvation, hardships and torture. Once he tried to make his way back to Wienice. He succeeded in getting to within five miles of his property. In the ditches and along the roadsides he recognised pieces of his china and treasures lying broken, books torn and rotting in the mud and many other signs of vandalism. It was imprisonment if he was found within 100 miles of his estates; he was captured and imprisoned but later escaped.

He spent some time hiding in the purlieu of Warsaw befriended by one of his cooks who had a little restaurant. Eventually he managed to get out of Poland and so arrived in England.

He told us all this and a great deal more besides which I cannot write. It was not told all at once; little by little he would tell us what had happened. Sitting for hours in a swing seat on the lawn when the weather got warmer and drinking jugs and jugs of coffee, he would tell us of what he and others had gone through. His nerves soon got better. To start with he would at a sudden noise swing round with his hand at his hip for his revolver (no longer there) and then apologise; he had forgotten for the moment he was in England and safe and did not have to face sudden danger.

He loved talking over the old happy days of when we had first met, of gay parties in Warsaw, the shooting parties at Wienice and looking at the photos we had. Luckily I had still kept the films and he was able to have copies of them.

He had wonderful courage in facing life again. He said that he had so much in the past to be grateful for and to remember, a lovely wife and daughter, and a son, beautiful estates (for he had had other estates besides Wienice), his horses, farms and forests, his shooting and his friends, so much to look back upon, so many happy memories.

Now he had nothing except a very little money in Paris which he would collect. Neil tried to persuade him to take some money from us, or even a loan, but he refused, he would work.

A cousin of his wife's had a house in Wimbledon and he went to stay with her

and earned a little money by going round and tidying up peoples front gardens for 2/6d per hour. He said it was amusing and he enjoyed it and he felt independent.

From time to time he came to stay with us. Once we took him to the Windsor Horse Show which he thoroughly enjoyed. To supplement the rather scanty buffet lunch at the Show I had given him some sandwiches. That evening at dinner he asked to be excused for a moment, he had forgotten something, and he returned with one of the sandwiches out of his coat pocket which he had forgotten.

"But you can't eat that, it is stale."

"My dear, if you had starved you would never leave a crust, even in your pocket."

"Was the starvation very bad?"

"The gnawing pangs of hunger you could control, by forcing yourself to think of other things, but when it got to cramp in the stomach, that was hard."

Later he went to work with a farmer, and later still a very great friend of his escaped from Poland. He married her and they went to Casablanca and started a weaving industry.

He writes that he is happy in the wonderful companionship of his new wife, is working hard but that it is difficult to make a living out of the weaving industry and that he longs to have something to do with the management of horses and horse-breeding again.

How many tales there must be about the hardships the Poles have had to endure. This is only just one of them – of a very great friend of ours.

The years before the war were very happy. I took every opportunity of motoring on the Continent, was lucky in always finding a friend to come with me or in having invitations to go with a friend. I believed in never missing a chance, doing what one could while one could. The time would come, war, sickness, old age or something else that would prevent one travelling and I wanted to have pictures in my mind to which I could look back.

I am tempted to write about Spain, a country I wanted to visit again, but as one of these days I want to write a story about an adventure I had there, I believe it till then!

War came. Margaret happened to be over from Ireland then and a day or two after war had been declared, we three sisters decided we would go to London for the day to say goodbye to our capital before it was bombed to bits!

Our wills were in order. We said goodbye to those at our homes and set off together. We would not spend long there, just have a look at London still standing up, have a meal and come home if we survived.

It was a strangely deserted city. The roads seemed peculiarly empty of traffic. When about to cross Piccadilly three gentleman police with W. P. on their helmets but otherwise not in uniform, rushed to us and taking us by the arm, assured us they would see us safely across (the quite empty) road, which they did! We then looked at a large notice pointing to 'The Ritz Air Raid Shelter'. Violet said if we had to take shelter there we would be given champagne.

There was a dead stillness everywhere and certainly no sound of enemy aircraft approaching, so we walked back to to Hyde Park. There we sought notices pointing 'To the Trenches'. Margaret said they would be more her style than they Ritz. We walked down Knightsbridge and fascinated, watched a large rat slowly amble across the street. We then had lunch and having seen London in wartime, we returned home. We had not seen or heard the enemy, only the queer emptiness and silence.

I had had a hectic day the day before, helping fit gas-masks and the day after our London jaunt I was busy helping to fill sandbags round strategic points, such as telephone kiosks and war memorials, the latter only had to be covered up as far as the name of the village which was engraved on it.

The Home Guard created delightful little poles which when invasion came would be swung across country roads to stop the advancing tanks. They gave great pleasure to the village children who use them on which to swing.

We all then settled down to the static war of that first winter, I doing hospital work again, going down to Odiham to nurse an epidemic of 'flu and German measles, a spell of nursing in a cottage hospital, helping to get an emergency hospital ready at Old Windsor and for some months nursing in Windsor Hospital.

The war as far as England was concerned had not yet started.

Then came Dunkirk – the invasion of England was now certain; in ten days' time it was generally thought. I cut a peep hole out of our wooden fence, from this I could see quite a long way down our road. I would be able to see the field-grey of the approaching Germans and I saw that my husband's service revolver was oiled and loaded and where I could put my hands on it. I had been a crack revolver shot and was determined to kill six Germans. Neil told me not to forget that as I was a woman, to leave the last and sixth bullet in case I needed it! I preferred his heavy service revolver to his own light automatic, which he would be using.

As I was working in a hospital by day and on guard on the church tower by night, I do not quite know when I would have had the time to defend my home!

A collection of women volunteered to sit up all night on the church tower and look out for the invasion. Off we went at 6 o'clock and stayed till 6 am the next morning. Two of us on watch for two hours and two off duty sleeping in the belfry. Sleep was nearly impossible because of the colossal ticking of the church clock.

It was a square tower but had a pointed centre and there was no room to walk around and so keep warm, and even in mid-summer it got very cold in the early hours. We soon collected a good store of old rugs and coats which we left in the belfry platform for the use of the night watches. 'Uncle George' was very popular, this being a very heavy old great-coat which had once belonged to Neil's uncle. 'Uncle George' was responsible for giving many people a warm and cosy night – dear gay bachelor that he had been!

The next most popular item was an old side saddle. This wedged on top of an old box made quite a comfy seat.

We paired off as a nimble and not so nimble couple and had a wonderful system of speed worked out. A message in a matchbox would be let down from the top of the tower by one of the watchers (a slow mover) and the other (a fast mover) would

zip down the perpendicular iron ladder to her opposite number trying to sleep among the bells. She would zip to the ground, pick up the matchbox and race to the vicarage to telephone the message, which would be of a dramatic nature reporting hundreds of enemy being dropped by parachutes from 'planes in the field behind the church.

For months we patiently waited for this to happen but it never did and shortly before the Blitz of London and the Battle of Britain started we were relieved by the Home Guard. They would not put up with the discomforts we had, but had an elegant sloping wooden staircase made, camp beds were provided and a proper blackout and a two-way electric light switch were installed.

War had started seriously for those in England. From then on there were the ghastly bombing raids but it was strange how soon we got used to the sound of bombs falling, of great flights of enemy aircraft flying overhead, of putting one's head under the bed clothes to try to deaden the sound and so get some sleep to enable one to work hard the next day.

I was then working seriously each day in a hospital and also had every available room in my house filled with friends and relations who were homeless.

When a factory was started in what had been a large indoor riding school and only about ten minutes walk from my house, I decided to give up nursing and do factory work part-time.

My father and mother were living with me then and my sporting little mother joined me in factory work and a little later on my aunt¹.

It was a small and friendly factory. We made component parts of aeroplanes and we were what was called 'detail fitters', mostly handwork, filing, sawing, bending and riveting. This we continued to do till the end of the war which was to last for three more years.

I felt thankful that I had been able to work hard during both the wars that had come in my lifetime. It must have been more of a tragedy for those who had been too old to work.

It was wonderful to know that my youngest brother Bobby, had come through the war after more than his full share of dangers in the Navy. He had taken part in many daring exploits and it was a very proud moment for all of us when he won the VC for leading the naval forces in their successful attack on St Nazaire.

My eldest brother had been killed at the time of Dunkirk and my second brother had been missing since the fall of Singapore. We waited many anxious months hoping that he might be a prisoner, but nothing was ever heard of him and eventually he was presumed to have been killed.

Both these brothers² were married, the eldest leaving a son and the second two daughters. It was a comfort to think they had left something of themselves to carry on into the next generation. To me, and to all their relatives and friends they left behind happy and delightful memories.

¹ Probably Blanche.

² Lisle and Ernle.

When the war eventually came to an end, a feeling of gratitude that further waste of lives had at last ceased was uppermost in everyone's thoughts. Then a certain type started to grumble. War had interrupted their lives and jobs and now the cessation of war was interrupting them again. I am speaking of the workers in the factory where I had to continue working for some weeks after the armistice was declared, for being in charge of a number of girls, I could not 'down tools' at once – unfortunately!

So some complained at having to rejoin their wives and kids who were 'parked' with Mum in the Midlands. Others that their husbands would soon be home and expect them to give up the American boy friend. To a great many it was the fact that their certain and well-paid jobs would end that made them complain, and also the difficult – and in some cases well-nigh impossible – job of getting a home of their own, so acute was the housing question, and this was likely to continue so for years.

During the war years, friends and relations had shared our house, so it was natural that we should now take in paying guests. We were one of the lucky ones who had managed to keep our home and those who had a house took in PG's, if they had no house they became PG's. We were lucky too in having friends of ours as PG's, so all went well.

The food shortage continued for some time. It was dull work trying to 'make-do' with a little and that little so monotonous. Food was in people's thoughts and conversations. If on a rare occasion one was asked to dine with friends, on one's return the immediate question was: "What did they give you to eat?" and not "Whom did you meet?"

The most appreciated present I could give to those in town were eggs and honey, for I continued to keep my hens and bees.

The most unselfish gift was a few clothing coupons and some of those given to a bride-to-be was, I think, a very welcome additional wedding present.

Many of us continued to carry on running our homes in a tired and spiritless way. The effects of under-nourishment and hard work were felt for a long time after the war had ended. One's face and hands showed it only too well. Friends I had not met for years would comment on one's hands with a sympathetic, "Ah! and you had such slim white well-kept hands once." This was almost the first remark that Claus, a Danish friend of mine, said to me on meeting me during his first visit to England soon after the war ended. I had been very touched and very delighted that within a few hours of the Armistice being declared I had a cable from Denmark from him: "Congratulations on England winning the war." That I thought was a charming gesture and also I was pleased to know that he was still alive, not having heard from him or of him for five years.

Another friend asked me to lunch with him one day in London. I took some trouble to make myself as presentable as possible! After a good lunch, interspersed with many reminiscences on the past happy times together, he said: "You look much the same as you did five years ago, but these shaded, becoming pink lights may not tell the truth. We will now go for a walk in the park so that I can see you in the hard glaring light."

"You would think of something like that." I said, "Never mind! Come on let's

go."

Sitting on a bench in the park, he at once commented on the added lines in my face and the worn down nails of my hands.

"Think of something more original than that please, everyone says that to me."

"You've only got to show your hands to the Communists when they take over England and you will be let off the firing squad, as the evidence you can produce shows you as being one of the manual workers!"

I looked with a certain amount of affection at my hands. Certainly they were not objects of admiration but they had been and still were good friends of mine, ready to turn themselves to a variety of things. Now they must do their best to get the garden into better order. I had managed to keep the garden going during the war years, but mainly for vegetable purposes; now I wanted to have the beauty of flowers around me once again.

As Neil was an invalid, needing much care and attention before he died, I was rarely able to leave home, so it was indeed lucky that my love of gardening was something that I could do and yet be near at hand.

Soon after Neil died, Aileen Bell came to England for a holiday, and once again we took a car and motored on the Continent.

I have written these memories to help pass the long and sometimes lonely evenings.

Only a few letters that I kept did I read again, the majority I tied up into bundles and labelled them to be burnt some day.

Old sketches and photos I looked at in detail. They and the letters have brought me to the conclusion that R. was right when he said I could have much happiness by remembering things.

It certainly has been and I hope still will continue to be:

"A Golden Wind that shakes the grass."