

FOREWORD

I was on a visit to my cousin Selina (granddaughter of Margaret in this book) looking for letters from Ida (hereinafter Mummie) when I came across this delightful Memoir written by my aunt Enid. Really more an autobiography, it really did seem worth making it available to a wider readership and so I set about dictating the text into a digital format as a first step towards publishing. In this venture with her significant role as a Commissioning Editor at Penguin Random House Selina has been a most useful guide and support.

There is much to enjoy in the pages that follow. It brings to life the social whirl of the British Raj in the period leading up to the First World War and the beauty of India and its wild life from the Plains to the Himalayas. Comments about dress and etiquette remind us of how much has changed, but how human nature remains the same.

Enid was a romantic adventurer. As a romantic she had a difficult time coping with her many suitors and once married made sure that Neil was kept up to the mark with adventure. She was also a perceptive matchmaker and had a significant part in introducing my father (Bobby in this story) to my mother. Later she was to introduce me to more than one girl in the hope that it would be a good match.

During the First World War she took on pioneering work together with her mother and later Violet at Gwynnes' Aeroplane Factory in Chiswick. Thanks to Enid and others who then worked so hard on the home front, this was the age when women gained respect among men before being given the vote. Driving all the way to Poland in the late 1930s with a friend she had made in Australia further illustrates how adventurous she was. She had the audacity of introducing herself to those who could give her access to what she wanted. I can recall the embarrassment of my parents when she wanted to look round the private garden of some grand house and would have rung the bell but for my father restraining her.

I first knew her when I was a child and she was living at Elm Lodge, the six bedroom house that features towards the end of this story. As young children we were advised to be on very good behaviour and to keep quiet lest we disturb the irascible Neil, who must have been nearing the end of his life. More enjoyable was the experience of joining Enid attending to her beehives and coming away with a jar or a comb of honey.

It was after Neil died (1950) and also very sadly her sister Margaret (1954) that Enid read Margaret's journals. We can sense that out of such loss she found a stimulus to write this memoir. She may well have attempted to get it published herself. The attitudes she expresses are refreshingly enlightened for the time, though sixty years on our use of language and attitudes to class have of course changed.

From Elm Lodge she moved to Quennington in Gloucestershire renaming her Cotswold stone dwelling Moyles Cottage (after Moyles Court near Ringwood the home of our de Lisle ancestors). There her gardening talent was evident and she delighted in her orchard with its springtime undergrowth of 'ladies lace' and the way plants seeded themselves in the crevices of steps. In 1956 she married Wigram, a

cousin to whom, as you will read in this narrative, she had been engaged for a short time before meeting Neil. The shock of finding him dead in bed only two and a half years later brought on diabetes. She died in 1972 and I was privileged to preach at her funeral.

A few years earlier when I was training for ministry in the Church, Enid thought it most important that I should visit Palestine, offering to pay for my flight. Taking up this offer I spent a couple of months, in what had become Israel, working at Kibbutz Kfar Mazaryk near Acre. This was developed from the mosquito ridden swamps, close to where she had lived in a tent soon after marriage to Neil. On my return she showed me her watercolours of the area and gave me two of these which continue to remind me of my time there.

Having now reviewed many more watercolours and photographs inherited in the family I have been able to match these with this narrative, a selection being included in this book.

I do hope you will be as delighted as I have been, entering into the adventure and romance of Enid's life which was lived to the full.

Lisle Ryder, February 1917.

CHAPTER 1

Prologue

My parents belonged to the generation that kept letters to read through in their old age, but they never did. As writing-table drawers were filled up or a move took place, the letters, papers and photos were put in boxes to be 'gone through' later. The time then came when others had to do this. Anyone who has had to do this job will know that the only thing to do is to burn most of them unread, or after a quick glance, otherwise it would take years to read through a ton of letters.

It took my sister Violet and myself several days to sort out, and destroy, the contents of several huge black tin-lined boxes, letters, papers, and photographs. Many of the letters were to our parents when we were young, and after we had grown up, married and gone to other parts of the world, others were from our grandparents, uncles, aunts, relations and friends.

Some, of course, we did read. They recalled incidents which we had forgotten and they made us laugh, others made us sad. Some which were of interest we kept, such as those from my father written whilst on his many explorations in Yunnan, Burmah, China, Tibet and many other places, but the greater part we put into big hampers, took them into the garden and burnt them.

Violet telephoned me the evening we had finished doing all this. "The bonfire has burnt itself out but there are still fragments of paper ash blowing about. I feel as if our youth had gone up in ashes." We both agreed we felt very depressed and that our youthful days were haunting us.

Having had my simple supper of a boiled egg on a tray beside the fire (from which any woman will know that I am by myself), I decided I would try to write my memoirs. When I have written them and read them through, they will, in all probability, "go up in ashes," but I think it will help to pass long lonely winter evenings and early mornings. I will write to amuse myself.

It is early morning as I write, a January morning in England. For some time I lay awake thinking about dull and depressing matters. Would I be able to get enough fuel to keep the house warm? Fuel at £10 a ton. Could I afford it? Could I afford to continue living in my home even though I had let half the house? Could I do this? Or could I do that?

At 4 am all the problems rear themselves up and taunt one to try and solve them rather like a modern picture, fantastic, deformed and out of proportion.

When we were children, we three sisters, one older and one younger than myself, slept in one room, our three beds in a row. I, a bad sleeper even then, would wake one of them to 'talk to me' early in the morning. It was unkind of me and they must have had very nice natures for they would obligingly try to do so, even to the point of getting out of bed and drinking a glass of cold water to wake themselves up more thoroughly.

So I started to think of other early mornings and dawns in all the various

countries I had been in and how different they all were; from the delicious brief spell of early morning coolness before the excessive heat of an Indian day, to the short time that elapses from night to morning in Queensland and the equally brief twilight. There were dawns in New Zealand, China and in many countries in Europe that I had had the luck to visit.

Then there were dark cold winter mornings in Poland when our host, walking along the corridor of his beautiful house, would wake his guests by blowing his horn to rouse them for the shooting party.

I thought of the moist warm dawn as the ship neared Bombay and we saw India for the first time. My father had written and told us to rise early and see what we should remember all our lives. He was right. I could never forget it. The pearly pink dawn, a queer forest of dhows and ships' masts, and the smell, that even from the sea, is peculiarly India. I remember the thrill it gave my sister Margaret and myself as we stood and watched India getting nearer. To us it was a great adventure.

India then was the dream of our childhood from since I could first remember. When we grew up we should 'go out to India'. We read books about India and looked at old photograph albums. Some of the photos were big professional ones of the Marble Rocks of Jubbulpore, the Avenging Angel at Cawnpore, and the Residency at Lucknow. But those I liked most were the personal ones of my parents' bungalow at Bangalore showing its deep verandahs which gave one a delicious squirmy feeling that a cobra or a kraitⁱ was lurking in its depths! – my father sitting in an Indian basket chair with a dog on his knees and another at his feet, such nice old-fashioned smooth-haired Fox-terriers with broad heads and names like 'Patch' and 'Nicky' – my mother on her horse, her exquisite little figure (she had an 18 inch waist) in a well fitting side saddle habit, with a smart syceⁱⁱ standing at the horse's head.

We could never hear enough about India. It was a land of jungles and romance, of dances, tennis and riding, of hot plains and the immense, grand cool Himalayas. We would have pretty clothes and marry and lead just the same sort of life as my mother and father had led, and be happy ever after.

So until we grew up and went out to India it was an endless subject of conversation, of thinking about and planning. No wonder that dawn outside Bombay seemed like the beginning of a glorious future. We were grown up, Margaret 18 and I, 16 – very grown-up – with skirts down to the ground, hair up and all life was before us!

That was before the 1914 war.

CHAPTER 2

To India

It was 28th October in 1911 when we left for India and I (at least in my own eyes) was officially 'grown-up'.

I was sixteen, four months and a bit. If, after today anyone should ask me my age, I would say I was nearly seventeen but I hoped they would not, and that they would think that I was eighteen or even older.

The night before I discarded my girl's clothes for ever. The following morning I dressed completely differently, even to putting on my new many-boned corsets. These, I confess, I had rather spoilt but made far more comfortable, by removing a great number of the whalebones. In every other respect I was dressed correctly and as I should be.

Taking a look at myself in a long mirror, I thought with satisfaction that I might easily be taken for twenty-one and a half.

It was an exciting and yet a very sad morning. Exciting because Mummie, Margaret and I were starting off on our journey to India. It was an adventure to which Margaret and I had been looking forward to ever since we could remember – that when we grew up we should go out to India. It was sad because it meant saying goodbye to my younger sister, three little brothers, our old governess, our pets, our happy home and my childhood days.

During the long journey to Birkenhead I was very grateful for our governess' parting present to me, a bottle of smelling salts. My constant sniffs at it provided an excuse for my eyes to fill with tears. What a thoughtful darling she had been.

As far as I can remember we were rather silent on that journey. It must have been heartbreaking for my mother to have to leave for perhaps three years, four of her children and the youngest less than four years old. To try and stop myself thinking about sad things, I thought about all the wonderful and beautiful new clothes, I had so carefully packed for Margaret and myself, and which were now safely in huge, black zinc-lined, airtight wooden boxes, in cabin-trunks, in hat-boxes of enormous dimensions, and in various suitcases and holdalls with exciting labels of 'Hold', 'Wanted on Voyage' and 'Cabin'.

Father had allowed Margaret and me £100 each for our outfits, and they had been carefully thought out. Six evening dresses, garden party frocks, riding habits, shoes for all occasions (and in those days we wore different coloured shoes to match each evening dress), many pairs of long white kid gloves and the usual underwear of calico garments made by ourselves. Nothing silk of course, even our stockings were white cotton for the dances and black cotton every other occasion.

We were now wearing our travelling outfits, which were suitable for the voyage and when we went to Kashmir. We were to go straight from Bombay to Kashmir, where there would be cold and winter weather but between Liverpool and Kashmir, we would experience great heat. In the Red Sea and in the Indian Ocean we should

be wearing summer clothes, in November, how wonderful!

Time enough to describe those dresses when we come to wearing them. At the moment I felt strange and rather self-consciously new from top to toe, and looking at Margaret sitting so very upright opposite me, I felt rather guilty at the thought of how I had removed the bones from my corsets. I had offered to do the same for her but she strongly disapproved of my vandalism and would not let me touch her armour of drill and whalebones.

We were all dressed more or less alike in tweed coats and skirts, flannel shirts and ties, tweed hats to match our suits, and tweed great-coats. The latter were the same except in colour; Mummie's was grey, Margaret's mud-colour and mine a revolting pale mauve, which later faded very badly in Kashmir. They had cost three and a half guineas in Barker's sale and were wonderful value, considering they were lined with squirrels' tummies, and opossum collars, and came nearly down to the ground.

Margaret's and my skirts were half an inch from the ground and we had sewn brush-binding round the hems on the inside to prevent the skirts from wearing out – and collecting the dust and mud. Mummie had all her skirts made much shorter than ours and they looked far smarter. I had mine long because I might grow – but I didn't. Margaret's were long because she was rather plump and a skirt to the ground was supposed to disguise this – but it didn't, as far as she or I could see.

The only other difference in the way we were dressed was that Margaret and I had black cotton stockings and black laced shoes, whilst Mummie had brown shoes and stockings. I thought how much nicer they looked than black and wondered why. When I had hopefully asked if we might have brown instead of black I had been told that black footwear was more suitable for girls but married women could wear brown. Why?

Birkenhead Docks had a certain thrill, though it was late at night when we arrived and it was bitterly cold, raining and with a wild wind blowing. But docks have always fascinated me. The strange smells, foreign voices, ships' shapes and lights, and sea birds swirling and mewing around, all contribute to that exciting feeling of adventure, of coming and going to all parts of the world, which has always elated me.

In spite of it being a really nasty night and in spite of hearing repeated answers from porters to anxious enquiries about the weather – "Yes, Madam, a bit of a gale outside" – I felt cheerful and happy for the first time since leaving home.

Never having been in a ship before, except as a baby coming home from India, I found it thrilling to be going up the steep gangway. My new long skirt was a bother but when getting on to the gangway and off on to the deck one was practically lifted by strong blue-clad seamen, with orders to "Hurry along please, the ship will be sailing as soon as we have got you all on board."

We stood for a moment by the railing, looking down. Luggage was being hauled in tumbling masses along a shorter, broader gangway and through a hole in the side of the ship. Amongst all that luggage were our beautiful new trunks and suitcases: how carelessly they were being treated!

"Come along now, girls, follow me. We must find our cabin. It's most important to get settled in and to get some of our necessities unpacked as soon as possible. I know we are going to have ghastly rough weather and an appalling storm." My mother was always dramatic and on this occasion, she was right. Margaret and I wanted to linger on deck and see the last of England, but this was not allowed.

Margaret did manage to get a whispered request to me that she would like six of the bones in her corsets extracted, if I could do so for her without Mummie seeing. Yes, of course, I would do that for her and in return, would she cover my tracks if I shortened my skirt? I would do it half an inch at a time and Mummie would only think I had grown. I couldn't stand tripping over it much longer.

Up and down companionways I stumbled, gathering up my bulky coat and long skirt, hoping that no one would notice if I shewed a few inches of leg, following Mummie and Margaret along passages until we found our cabin.

My first impression was that it was quite the most fascinating little room I had ever seen. I had never been in anything quite so small or so dark or so cosy. No luggage had yet arrived, so we could stand in a row and decide who should have which berth.

It was a four-berth cabin, and it was arranged that Mummie should have one lower berth and Margaret the other and that I should have one above hers, leaving the spare upper one for our suit-cases and odds and ends. There was the usual ship's tip-up wash basin and four hooks on the back of the door. That completed the furniture of our cabin.

By degrees our luggage arrived. With one deft action and a bang crash, a burly man flung a cabin-trunk on the floor and with another pushed it under a berth. By the time there were cabin-trunks and over-full holdalls under each bunk, suitcases flung on the top berth with the rest of the small luggage, and hat-boxes, etc., piled on the floor space, the cabin did not look nearly so adorable. There was literally nowhere to stand and as the ship had now left, there was a definite movement. The two drinking water bottles, held by a clip above the looking glass, were gently swaying backwards and forwards and our greatcoats on the hooks behind the door, kept billowing out into the cabin.

Our initial politeness to one another changed from "Let me lift that suitcase onto the top bunk, darling," or "Sorry I trod on your foot," to "Oh, can't you get out of my way for a minute, you keep bumping into me."

The obvious retort was: "Tell me where to get then."

"Get on to my bunk."

"How can I? You've got a suitcase open on it."

"Get up on your own then."

"How can I, when everyone has put everything up there?"

"Can't you put them away somewhere?"

"Where?"

"Yes, where?"

There was nowhere. The spare hook could take no more, the little hammocks

alongside our berths already overflowed, night-gowns and dressing-gowns had been put under our pillows and our sponges and tooth-brushes back into their sponge-bags. At least there was a hook at the side of the washbasin to hang these.

Gradually some sort of order was created out of chaos, by sorting out the bare necessities and putting everything else back into suitcases and somehow cramming those onto the top berth. We tidied ourselves up after a fashion – an operation simplified in those days by not using powder or lipstick – and made our way to the dining room to get something to eat and to book our places at a table for the voyage.

Other people had been there before us and the best places at the best tables were already booked. Mummie was disgusted to find that we had to sit at the Doctor's table. "Why?" I wanted to know. We had all loved our family Doctor at home and he had been a great friend. "A Doctor on board ship is quite different. They are only there because they are bad doctors and would never get a patient on land."

When some days later we had the pleasure of sitting at his table and he happened to be present, I did think him an unpleasant looking old man. His thinning grey hair was crudely dyed a bilious yellow, his fingers were stained with nicotine, which I thought was hair-dye, and his nails were revoltingly dirty. Luckily we were not to have need of his professional attention.

The first evening only a few of the passengers were having a scratch meal of cold meats. We collected some biscuits and hurriedly retreated to our cabin. Very silently and as quickly as possible, we undressed and crawled – I scrambled up – into our respective berths. Margaret gave me her corsets and whilst Mummie went to the bathroom, I cut slips along the top and managed to extract six of the twenty-four whalebones. By the weight of them I think they were steel and not whalebone.

Lying in my bunk I felt better. Each of us had an individual electric light to turn on and off at our pleasure, so I was able to read whilst Margaret wrote her diary – which she never failed to do sometime during the day or evening for several years.

It was difficult to sleep during that first night on board. There were so many strange smells, all of them revolting, of oil, cabbage water and goodness knows what else. And never any cessation of noise: throb of engines, clank of chains, grinding, grating and bumps. And always people shouting, people going along the passage outside our cabin and always, so it seemed, bumping against it.

Also the movement: the ship pitched, tossed and rolled. It was most difficult to wedge oneself firmly to prevent the movement of the ship rolling one from right side to left side, and back again, without stopping. The only change was a violent pitch, when one slid down to the end of the bunk and then slid back until one was almost standing on one's head.

The next morning, about seven o'clock, the steward brought us each a cup of tea, made with sweetened tinned milk and quite undrinkable, and asked us if we wanted our sick pans emptied. On our proudly saying "No", he congratulated us and said it was one of the roughest nights he had known. We were only a mile out of Liverpool and riding out the storm. He pushed our cabin trunks under the berths and wedged the holdalls in an endeavour to keep them in place.

Margaret admitted to feeling quiet and not hungry, but Mummie and I made an

effort, dressed and staggered up to the saloon. We could not go on deck as all the doors leading out were closed. From the saloon we could see the sea and for the first time, I understood the meaning of the saying – 'the sea running mountains high'. For a short time we watched our little ship climb up and up a wall of grey water – not a wall, but a mountain – then she seemed to pause for a moment on the edge of a ridge, before plunging down and down. This time I thought it must be to the bottom of the sea, for how could she climb another cliff of water? But she did.

There were vast explosions of water against the portholes, waves washed over the bridge and a torrent swept over the decks. Later we heard that several of the lifeboats had been carried away. There was no one in the saloon but ourselves, till a steward came along and in a harassed manner, advised us to go back to our cabin. "Breakfast? We have not had any yet." "Oh, yes, I'll send some along to your cabin."

It was exhilarating to watch the wild grandeur of the storm. But once down below again, it was not so funny. I was glad to crawl up into my bunk and when tea and biscuits arrived, turned my face to the wall. For several days the very rough weather continued but it was never again as bad as during the first twenty-four hours.

We took it in turns to make an effort to go up above, and even to the dining saloon for a meal of sorts, returning pretty quickly to report to the others and crawl back to our bunks. My father had offered us a reward of a shilling if we reached Gibraltar without being seasick, but I am ashamed to say, we did not earn it. Margaret and I both succumbed several times before sighting the coast of Portugal.

Off the coast of Portugal life became different. The sea became blue, instead of grey and we had become accustomed to the movement of the ship. We were better tempered and when brushing our long hair at night or in the morning, no longer got so cross when my hair got tangled in Margaret's brush, or Mummie hit me on the head with hers when the ship lurched. We even changed for dinner.

Margaret and I wore saxe-blue velvet blouses, with crochet lace collars made by Mother's clever fingers. The blouses were made by me, and not at all well cut. We also wore dark blue serge skirts, alas! as long as our tweeds.

During the day, passengers began to make their appearance on deck. Deck chairs were produced and men offered, quite unnecessarily, to move these chairs for us from one part of the deck to another. Smuts from the funnel provided an excuse for this. Then they offered to lend us their field glasses but Mummie warned us against men who wanted either to move chairs or lend us field glasses. I thought it rather fun for men to do either and Margaret thought it most unselfish of them, but we made prim replies – "Thank you, I can see quite well without glasses", or "I prefer my chair to remain where it is."

As we neared Gibraltar a very definite change took place in passengers' dresses. Heavy winter clothes were discarded for something warm, but lighter and brighter. We had an agonising time in our cabin pulling out the cabin trunks. Margaret's and mine were a frightful weight, as we had packed the bottom with books and there was only just room for one trunk in the floorspace. That meant that any packing or unpacking had to be done by one of us lying on the bottom berth. We managed to haul out suitable clothing for warmer, sunny days and pack away our greatcoats, etc.

With the warmer weather, our cabin became even more dark. The one porthole overlooked the after well-deck, in which were stabled twenty-four horses being shipped to India. A tarpaulin was now stretched over this well-deck and over our porthole. I had been very sorry for the horses in the rough weather for I had been told that they would never be sick, however ill they felt and that some were very bad sailors. From now on, the smell of stables in our cabin was mighty strong. Also in that well-deck were crates of poultry and several dogs, so the smell of kennels and ill kept hen-houses was added.

By the time we reached Gibraltar we had made a few friends, a very charming Mrs Batchelor and a Major Wilson, a Horse Gunner whose horses, or those of his Battery, were on board. He used to take us round the stables when he did inspections. Long afterwards, we heard that he was returning from England after giving evidence in the notorious gambling case in which King Edward was involved.

Our number also included two young civilian friends and I suppose we did get to know other people. They cannot have made much impression on me for I can recall neither names or faces.

According to Mummie, the passengers on the whole were rather a dull lot, but we were far too thrilled with life on board ship to bother about them. We did anaemic watercolour sketches of the Rock of Gibraltar (*Plate 1a*) and the various coastlines and also some caricatures of the passengers. There was no dancing or deck games until we reached the Mediterranean Sea. Then deck tennis and a game called 'Bean-Bags' were played by the energetic and sporting ones. We modestly took part, but only under pressure from Mummie, who must I think have felt that she had rather overdone her instructions – "Girls you must not get too friendly." Anyhow, we joined in the games, treasure hunts, and fancy dress dances, and even played 'Up-Jenkins' in the saloon at times.

According to Margaret's diary, which I have only lately read¹, we had plenty of fun and amusement after the first few days. She writes of how we spent every hour of the day, descriptions of the people, what food we ate, what she and I discussed, what books we read, and gives very lovely descriptions of the sea, the sky and all that was around us. In nearly every case, she ended up with – "How lucky we are to have all this wonderful experience. We are happy beyond words."

So, in spite of a dull lot of passengers, we seemed to have enjoyed life, and why not? We were young and it was all a new and very exciting adventure and every day was thrilling.

Our first stop was Port Said and we made up a party to go ashore. Here we had our first taste of the East, with all its strange sights and smells. We saw natives of all types, from handsome Arabs to queer, skinny, barely clothed little black men. We saw dogs looking like skeletons, with hardly any hair, and pathetic undersized ponies, with all their ribs showing, dragging carts far too heavily laden. It was noisy and sordid, but it was the East and it had glamour.

We returned to the ship exhausted with the heat and all the new sites and sounds

¹ Margaret died in December 1954. So Enid would then be reading her diaries.

we had seen and heard. We sat on deck until late that night, eating Turkish Delight, and watching the banks of the Suez Canal glide past us in the moonlight.

The next night the heat in the Red Sea was so great that permission was granted to sleep on deck to those who wished to do so. A following wind made our cabin unbearable, so we availed ourselves of the opportunity of sleeping in the fresh air and gave our cabin steward orders to put our mattresses on deck. The forepart of the deck, round the music-saloon was reserved for the ladies and the after part for the men.

Modesty demanded that we did not go to bed till after 'lights-out' on deck, and in the saloon at midnight. Patiently we waited, Margaret and I, sitting crouched forward on a lower berth, about the most uncomfortable position in which to sit, because the berth above was the height that made it impossible to sit otherwise than with bent shoulders and head down. We were ready for the 'trek' to our mattresses, but Mummie seemed to take an amazingly long time arranging a lace veil over her head, trying it this way and that to achieve the most becoming result.

We started by saying, "Yes, darling, you look quite lovely with it like that," but as the cabin got more stifling, changed to, "But what does it matter what any of us looks like, since everything is dark and no one can see us."

"That's not the point. One must always look as nice as possible for one's own satisfaction." Finally, in desperation, from Margaret: "I think Enid is going to faint if we don't get out of this cabin quickly. I will take her to the deck and look for our mattresses."

"Oh no! You can't do that. I must chaperone you." She came at once.

We crept along grim corridors and up companionways to the foredeck and there amongst rows of mattresses, we found ours with the aid of a torch, the number of our cabin being chalked on the deck at the foot. There were murmurs of: "You might be more considerate, coming to bed at this hour and waking us up", etc. which came from lumped up forms under sheets.

It was beautifully cool with a strong breeze blowing and it was not at all an easy job to tuck one's sheets all round. When one turned over to see on which side a hard deck seemed less hard, in got the wind, out billowed the sheet and being a twisty-turning sort of sleeper, I had frantically to clutch the sheet several times to prevent it blowing overboard. But it was a heavenly night with bright stars and later a setting moon and always the fresh sea air – such different smells and sounds to those in our cabin.

Also it was delightful – but how selfish – to be able to wake Margaret with a barely audible "Are you awake?" And to hear her well-known answer: "I wasn't, but I am now. What do you want?" I didn't want anything only to share the beauty of the night with her. Our mattresses were only a foot apart and we could talk to each other. In the cabin I couldn't hang over the edge of my upper berth and ask if she was awake and I had missed being able to do that. We had slept in beds next to each other all our lives, and she had always been close to me if I couldn't sleep.

About six o'clock in the morning cabin stewards appeared in a hurry to bundle

up our bedding and take it below, while we seemed to be surrounded by Lascars¹ with wooden buckets of water and 'squeegees', only too anxious to start flinging pails of water over all and sundry and start swabbing the decks.

Female forms, in various stages of stumbling stupor, rose up and started struggling into a queer assortment of macintoshes, greatcoats, and cotton kimonos, then headscarves and boudoir caps inadequately covering curling pins. "I'll draw them for you, Margaret," I said as we joined the rush down below.

The next night we again slept on deck. There were far fewer females than the night before and we soon knew the reason – a great deal more wind. It was much more difficult to keep the bedclothes from ballooning out and flapping and at times we were wetted by spray. Finally a big gust of wind ripped off my blanket. Springing up, I made a desperate effort to clutch a corner of it – too late! I chased it for a few yards across the deck, but it was away and over the rails. Alas! my unguarded sheet had now taken to the air like a giant white seabird and was sailing up and away over the partition, dividing males and females, and then was away into the Red Sea night. Of course, I shared Margaret's bedding for the rest of the night.

"No sleeping on deck except the men", was the order given out next day. Anyhow the following wind had changed to a head-on one, so our cabin was bearable. We could now open the porthole and I think we were rather glad to get more sleep.

The last two days in the Red Sea were disagreeably rough, but after Aden all was calm again. It was delightful anywhere but in our cabin, which again became unbearable with its choice of no air, or air which stank. Mummie persuaded the Captain to let us sleep on deck again. This she did by enticing him into the cabin and keeping him there until near-suffocation forced him to relax the rules – for us.

From then on we slept on deck, or not, according to our pleasure, but "Girls – don't tell anyone. It's far nicer to have that part of the deck to ourselves." It was. Of course it meant going to bed after midnight and sneaking down in the early morning. But did we care? We were the privileged few.

He must have been a nice old Captain for he let us go up onto the bridge and entertained us in his cabin by allowing us to play his gramophone. The four or five days' passage across the Indian Ocean passed quickly with deck-game tournaments, concerts – at which my mother, with her lovely voice was a great success – and all the other sorts of entertainment which still take place on board ship, quite unsophisticated but very happy. We might have been a lot of children having a lovely party, because we knew each other so well.

The day before we reached Bombay was one of disagreeable heat and rough weather, and in this we had to pack. We took it in turns to go down to our cabin and haul out those awful cabin trunks. Again we went through contortionist attitudes as we packed while lying down on a bunk. We had to think about what we wanted for the heat of Bombay, and for the long train journey north, with Kashmir and the cold weather ahead of us. All the necessary changes of garments were supposed to go into

¹ A Lascar was a sailor or militiaman from South Asia, the Arab world, and other territories located to the east of the Cape of Good Hope, who were employed on European ships from the 16th century until the middle of the 20th century.

one suitcase and one holdall each, which we could have in the train with us, then in tonga's¹, and finally in a houseboat.

Margaret must have some books, we must both have some sketching things handy, and oh bother! those horrible tweeds must be put in somewhere. To wear them was the only answer.

Packing seemed to go on all day and far into the night. When we tried to help each other, it only resulted in more confusion. We fell over each other and over our boxes, suitcases and holdalls with every lurch of the ship. As is usual in rough weather, our tempers were very bad.

The next morning made up for everything. Father had told us to be sure to be on deck long before the ship was due at Bombay, so that we could catch the first possible glimpse of India, to watch and take in all we could, for never again would we approach India for the first time and our first impressions would remain with us for always.

It was our good fortune that the ship was due to arrive in harbour in the early morning, for at that hour places often have a mysterious, ethereal beauty. Margaret and I were on deck long before it was light – long before there was anything to be seen. Then as we watched, instead of the first light of dawn appearing low down in the sky and creeping up, it appeared higher up and crept gradually down as though a grey blanket stretched across the sky, was being slowly lowered revealing the tops of strange curved shapes of masts and sails. These seemed to be floating in the sky. Then beyond them again, we saw the domes and minarets. None had any connection with sea or land and appeared to float about as ghostly, disembodied spirits as they caught the first light of the rising Sun.

As the sun rose, the hulls of the many different types of dhows, fishing vessels, and steamers appeared and the souls and bodies of vessels and buildings joined together as the sea mist disappeared. Our ship, gradually weaved its way into the harbour. Then there was the rattle of chain as the anchor dropped and the ship came to a standstill.

After that we were busy with last moment packing, breakfast, the arrival of a letter from father to welcome us, wishing our fellow passengers hurried goodbyes, and as we went down the gangway, a goodbye to SS 'Massilia', the little 8,000 ton Anchor Line Ship, which had given us such a happy voyage and brought us to India.

It must have been well on in the morning as we went down the gangway, at the bottom of which I put my foot on Indian soil for the first time. I tried, but don't think I succeeded, to get a thrill. It was so hot by then, and I felt exhausted and weighed down by having to wear tweed coats and skirts, carrying greatcoats, travelling rugs, and as our tweed hats were no safe protection from the sun, having to run to the shelter of a tin shed.

After a long delay in unloading, our luggage was sorted out in this shed. It was an imposing mound, which then had to be divided into what was to go into the luggage van and that for our railway carriage.

¹ See beginning of Chapter 3 for a description.

Father had sent one of his Chuprassies¹ to meet us. He was a tall, good-looking, dignified Punjabi in a smart uniform. He took charge of everything, ordered herds of coolies about, directing them in a lordly way with a wave of his short, stout bamboo cane.

Our luggage went in bullock carts to the station. For our use, out of the line of waiting carriages, the Chuprassie chose the smartest. He gave instructions to the driver, and made deep salaams to us as we drove to the Army & Navy Stores. Here our main object was to buy topees. These could have been bought in London at vast expense, or at Port Said, where they were a little cheaper and there was rather more choice. In Bombay there was cheapness and variety.

From Port Said onwards we had been exposed to almost certain death from sunstroke and this week kept under awnings from sunrise to sunset; liable to be struck down before you could count three, was the awful warning. So until we possessed topees as safeguards to our lives, we had to keep carefully under awnings on the ship or, when ashore, put up our tussure-silk sunshades which were lined with so-called 'sun-proof' dark green material and quickly find additional shelter under the scorching tin roof of dock warehouses or luggage sheds.

Bombay is never cool in November. In the middle of the day, the temperature was probably in the nineties. What a relief it was to drive in a carriage and better still, to cool off in the lofty stone-built Army and Navy Stores where we were fitted with topees. These – large white ladies' ones lined with green – weighed a ton and always left an angry red mark across the forehead.

After lunching at the Stores, and buying biscuits and chocolate for the journey, we drove to the station. The noise and bustle of a large Indian railway station was tremendous. Not only were natives of all descriptions moving at random in every direction, but some were squatting in groups, with others lying wrapped up in bundles like badly-done-up parcels. Amongst them went sellers of sweetmeats, water carriers selling water out of skin 'mussocks'². Trolleys bearing luggage were pushed in and out of and over the bodies, whilst a scattering of English men, women and children moved through the throng trying to find their carriages.

At last we found ours, a first-class one to ourselves, proudly guarded by the Chuprassie who kept all lookers for seats, all beggars and anything and everything at bay. Not only did the station seem far larger and more noisy than those at home (we could not hear ourselves speak above the din of yells and strange jabberings) but the train itself towered above the platform.

We had, it seemed, walked miles to reach our carriage but still, far away ahead of it stretched this monster of colossal size and length. Even the hiss of escaping steam was more ear-splitting than any we had heard before. To get into the carriage we had to climb up three or four vertical narrow steel steps each about eighteen inches above the other, no easy feat in skirts that were both long and narrow.

Once in our carriage, we were delighted with it. It was far larger than our cabin had been, having both greater length and breadth. There were two long broad seats

¹ Chuprassie: A messenger or servant wearing an official badge.

² A mussock is a leather water bag, consisting of the entire skin of a large goat.

on each side, covered with shiny slippery black American cloth and above these, two more which could be let down if required. So altogether, we had four bunks on which eight-foot giants could have stretched out without head or feet touching either end.

A long line of windows on each side gave us a splendid view. Later we were to discover that they had a fascinating number of shutters. In addition to the plain glass there was dark glass, wire gauze and wooden slats. You could pull up or pull down any or all of them, pinching your fingers doing so and becoming quite incredibly dirty.

Opening out of this palace of a carriage was a wash-room complete with toilet and basin – far from clean! We preferred our 'chilumchie' (travelling enamel wash-basin) which was put into the fitted one and filled from the tap. The huge canvas sack containing the laundry we had accumulated during the last four weeks, also went into the wash-room. Into the sack would go still more laundry for the rest of the journey.

The Chuprassie unstrapped our holdalls, out of which we got our dust rugs. Then our greatcoats were put away, our tweed jackets exchanged for cream-coloured linen dust-coats. It was bliss to have a manservant to handle our holdalls instead of having to struggle with those ungainly things and their devilish stiff straps.

The rolled up holdalls made very comfy backrests. Mummie had a long seat to herself. Margaret and I had the opposite one and there we lay, facing each other, and settled down to enjoy the journey and see everything we could out of the windows. Before dark our train had climbed up into the ghats¹ where thick vegetation and strange trees were interspersed by deep ravines and streams trickling over black boulders. The scenery was loveliest when the sun, of flaming gold and carmine, set behind dark violet hills.

Major Wilson came to visit us at various stopping places, and we were glad to have him once more as a fellow passenger. The Chuprassie also appeared at our carriage door whenever the train stopped; he dusted our compartment and superintended, in a lordly way, the sweeper brushed out the floor – and how it needed it!

After dark the Chuprassie put out our bedding. Mine was unrolled on the lowered top berth which had only a narrow slip of a window view, but had the advantage of being nearer the electric fan. I scored in one way as my windows were not shuttered while down below the wooden slats had been pulled up.

The night was very hot and unfortunately it was not considered 'nice' to undress as there might be an accident. Margaret, however, insisted on getting out of her corsets. I took off mine and wriggled out of as many garments as I could after Mummie had put out the main light and all that remained was a tiny dark blue glimmer. It was most refreshing to cool my bare legs under the fan.

I told this to Major Wilson when he came next morning to enquire how we had fared during the night but, after he had left us, Mummie said I must never mention 'legs' in front of a man. Her mother had told her that when she was a girl, so she thought she ought to tell us the same.

¹ Two mountain ranges in central and southern India, known as the Eastern Ghats and the Western Ghats, run parallel to the coast on either side of the Deccan plateau.

Three days and three nights were spent in that Punjab mail train. Major Wilson spent a fair amount of time with us, pointing out the Taj Mahal as we neared Agra, and other things and places of interest; later, the first distant view of the Himalayas with a faint glimpse far away up in the sky of the eternal snows. All that journey was a wonder and a delight. The vast stretches of plain fascinated me and when the evening closed in and the colour died out of the sky, the coming night seemed alive with all the unknown mystery of India.

Gradually the country changed. It was more or less flat as we travelled north, a monotonous looking land of vast distances of a grey sandy colour, only broken by splits or ravines in that dried-up and waste land. It was as though for millions of years, constant earthquakes had taken place and the land had been open, here there and everywhere. The only signs of vegetation were belts of dried rushes, occasional scattered clumps of what appeared to be dead thorn and other trees. Major Wilson told us that this was grand pig-sticking country and that, when the rains came, all those dead looking trees blossomed forth. Some of them were Flame of the Forest and their solid masses of flaming orange and scarlet were quite unbelievable.

But when evening light flooded the brazen sky and the setting sun turned all that land and sky into shades of rosy-pink, mauve and blue, it charmed and fascinated me for it was an uninhabited and uninhabitable land. It was as God made it and had not been spoiled or improved upon by man.

We passed over several big rivers, including the Jumna, but mostly at night, when, for a very long time, the rapid clanking as the train passed over the iron sleepers of the long bridges, told us we were crossing yet another river. We came to the Jhelum river in daylight and I was amazed by its breadth, or rather by the width of the river bed which looked like a series of wide curving sandy beaches interspersed by trickling streams. So small the watercourses appeared, way down far below the height of the bridge.

Jhelum, Lahore and finally Rawalpindi, late in the afternoon of the third day, brought our train journey to an end. Here father met us and to my joy he hadn't changed at all. Having so many times, during my youth been separated from my father and sometimes from both my parents, for spells of several years at a time, I always had a secret fear that they might have changed. Perhaps I thought, he might have grown old and grey. But he had not changed at all: he was still tall, slim and good-looking though he was forty-three, which to me, was quite old.

We had so much to tell him but we had to hurry ourselves into two waiting tongas that were to take us and our luggage up to Tret, the first night's stopping place on the long drive to Kashmir.

Father had brought our dogs to meet us. His own black cocker spaniel 'Blackie', 'Winkie' who was Mummie's precious little smooth haired old-fashioned fox terrier which father had cherished for her whilst she was in England, and a young daughter of Winkie's 'Judy', who was for Margaret and me.

So we started off on our long journey to Srinagar the capital of Kashmir. It was 85 miles, as far as I remember, but it was to take us two weeks to get there. Four days by tonga and ten days by houseboat.

CHAPTER 3

To Kashmir

Have you ever seen a tonga? Been in one? Travelled in one? If not, you have missed an experience! I am grateful that I was able to travel up the wonderful Jhelum Valley into Kashmir in such a primitive and romantic way. It was, in fact, the only way in those days. We went in winter when, of course, it took much longer as the state of the roads was worse, greater hazards were caused by landslides, and the earlier nightfall curtailed the length of each day's journey.

For those who do not know what a tonga is like, here is a rough description. It has two large wooden wheels – banded with iron instead of rubber tyres, two seats, back to back, and is pulled by two ponies. The driver and servant, or odd man, sit in front and the passengers sit with their backs to the ponies. The luggage is strapped on any old where! As you climb in, up go the shafts and the ponies, which are of the very smallest kind, are sometimes lifted off their legs! You brace yourself from falling head first into the road by jamming your feet against the foot board and twining your arms round one of the poles which support the canvas hood. You remain like that while the owner-driver tries to stop the ponies jibbing backwards, as sometimes a few feet of backing would be enough to send tonga and all in it over a drop of thousands of feet. The driver and odd man sensibly refrain from getting into their seats until the ponies make a forward plunge. When they leap finally into their places the balance is slightly better and away you go at full gallop for five or ten miles. After this the ponies are changed.

For the last few hours in the train we had seen the mountains getting gradually nearer and at Rawalpindi they seemed to be almost on the top of us, so near were we to them. Now our road started to climb straight up and into them. We were entering yet another stage of our journey.

Little over four weeks ago we had been in England and it seemed incredible that we should have come so far in such a short time. My grandfather¹, as a boy of 18 had gone out to India in a sailing ship taking four months to reach Calcutta and then another four months by slow stages to join his regiment in the Punjab. Our journey was a matter of weeks instead of months and we thought it was flashing by far too quickly. Now the journey from England to Kashmir can be done in a matter of two or three days by air!

Since leaving England we had steamed through seas and oceans and had caught fleeting impressions of other countries on the way. Ever since Bombay it seemed that we had travelled far too quickly for me to take in and remember forever, all that I had seen.

From Bombay, with a mixture of European and Indian people and buildings we had gone into the Ghats and watched until night had hid them from sight. The next morning we had entered the Plains. These I could recognise and they were to me the

¹ Colonel Spencer Charles Dudley Ryder (1825-73).

old-fashioned India with clusters of villages with huts made of mud, the walls of which were spattered with round brown lumps. These were cow-pats, made into balls when fresh and moist and flung against the walls, where they stuck. When dry they fell off, were collected and used as fuel. A very unmistakable odour could be smelt during the evening meal hour, even from the train! I sniffed that rather peculiar and unpleasant smell as being typical of India. I decided I liked it!

We had seen the pale mouse-coloured cows with queerly shaped humps on their backs and primitive slow-moving bullock carts as well as the wooden ploughs also pulled by bullocks. We had seen the slim upright women, in graceful draperies, balancing on their heads with effortless ease, large terra-cotta-coloured pottery vessels. All this in addition to a great many other things which were, in one way or another, India.

Most of the next day we had passed through the barren dried-up pig-sticking country and the day after was varied by glimpses of distant mountains. Then we arrived at Rawalpindi, and found ourselves travelling in tongas and entering the magnificent mountain country.

The first stage must have been, I think, short, as darkness set in shortly after we started. Soon there was very little we could see, except when looking over our shoulders or, when the tonga swung round a bend in the road, the towering height of the mountains ahead of us gradually shut out the sky.

I remember the increasing smell of the pines and the increasing cold and being grateful for tweeds and greatcoats and for the warmth of Judy, who was on my lap under the rug. Margaret and I were in the first tonga with Father and Mummie following.

At Tret we had our first experience of a Dak-bungalow, or Rest House. Our bedroom was huge and very cold but a big log fire soon improved matters. Evidently it was meant for the occupation of a number of people, if required, as there were six beds. Luckily, in the depths of winter there were few travellers, so Margaret and I had the room to ourselves.

We slept on 'charpoys' for the first time. These are native beds with very wide wooden frames and bands of webbing stretched across instead of mattresses. On these our holdalls were laid and the bedding in them made up for us. As the holdalls had a great deal more in them than sheets, blankets and pillows, they were not as soft as the 'Vi-Spring' 'Easy-Sleep' beds of today. In the large end pocket of the holdalls, which was intended to hold a pillow only, we kept a number of books and the heaviest and strongest of walking boots and shoes. Goodness knows what else there was with hard contours. A pillow on the top of all this was, I suppose, a help!

"Don't put anything on the other beds," we were told, "because they may be needed for other travellers arriving late; and nothing on the floor, as Dak Bungalows are never very clean."

We had a rickety chair apiece but did not like to use the chairs allocated to other beds in case travellers arrived. Beyond that our room contained only what passed for a looking-glass – hung much too high over the fireplace for us to see ourselves in it – and a mantel shelf, which was the only place we had for our brushes and things.

Mummie kept running in and out of our room with various instructions, such as: – "Darlings, on no account put your brushes on that filthy shelf. I'll get one of your father's clean handkerchiefs to cover it."

Dinner was in a big communal dining room which we had to ourselves as there were no other travellers. The dinner was repeated every night at each Dak-Bungalow for the next four days. It consisted of, 'Brown Soup' – tasting strongly of Worcestershire sauce, 'Chicken' – very thin and tough, 'Brown Custard' – caramel custard. We thought it all delicious and our room and beds with all their discomforts so excitingly romantic that sleep was difficult. We heard jackals for the first time and not having been warned of their weird sinister howls and laughing cackles, thought with a tingling excitement of fear, that another Indian Mutiny had broken out. Father then came in to reassure us. It was just another strange Indian noise.

We were up and away early next morning, making a stiff climb to Murree, where it was really cold. There were patches of snow lying on the shady side of the road and, as we gazed higher up the mountain slopes, we saw more and more snow.

We were fascinated by the maiden-hair fern we saw half buried in the snow and looking so delicately fresh – fresh and happy. Maiden-hair fern: grown in pots in my grandmother's conservatory or kept in a well warmed room at home, and here it was happily growing in the snow! We got out of the tonga to make sure, and to us it certainly looked like maiden-hair fern.

After leaving Murree we dropped down to the Jhelum River once more and spent the night at the Domel Rest-House. As this was situated on the bank of the River we heard all night the rushing stream. Never, so far as my memory serves me, did we lose sight of that Jhelum River, as we followed its course up the valley to our destination – Srinagar. (*Plate 1b*)

For four days we drove up into those wonderful mountains. Up and down went the road, sometimes close to the River, sometimes well above it, with a sheer precipice on one side, at the bottom of which raged a rushing winter torrent. In places timber was being hurled along by the current and wherever this piled up in a jam, men had to work at the very dangerous job of dislodging it.

The road more or less followed a gorge between the mountains and the River. No motorcar drive will ever equal the thrilling tonga way of travelling it. Swaying and rollicking along with a stop every ten miles, or less, to change ponies. The walk on ahead while the change was taking place, enabled us to see far more of the scenery than the people who later made the journey by motorcar.

In winter there was the excitement of landslides when the ponies had to be led over a temporary rough path and a gang of coolies bodily carried the tonga and luggage across.

Travelling at pony speed meant spending nights at different Dak-Bungalows. Margaret and I were always put in the first tonga and sent ahead, our parents followed in another 'to pick up the bits', as they said! This resulted in Margaret and me arriving at the Dak-Bungalow well ahead of the others. At the beginning we found this embarrassing, as the caretaker, cook and others came jabbering around us. We did not know what they wanted or how to explain to them that we did not

understand them. The only thing to do was to shrug our shoulders and walk back rapidly the way we had come to see if our beloved parents had had an accident. As we went round bend after bend in the road, I peered fearfully over the cliff sides, terrified that at any moment I might see the splintered remains of what had once been a tonga, or legs of ponies, or worse. Margaret and I would be orphans in a strange country in which we could neither speak nor understand the language. By this time I had decided that Margaret would have to write the sad news to my sister and little brothers and I would mend her stockings for rest of my life to repay her for having written this heart-rending letter! Then around the corner would come a galloping tonga and all was well. "Just thought we would take the dogs for a walk to meet you," we would remark casually. Father would always get out of the tonga and walk back with us. The first time this happened we explained to Father that it was a little awkward not knowing what to say when we arrived first and people swarmed around us. "Say 'Achha'," was his reply, it was the first word of Hindustani that he taught us. A most useful word meaning 'All right' and agreeing with everything. In future, therefore, when we arrived first we used this word in a bored but dignified tone of voice, with the result that the crowd, however large, would quietly fade away. We were assured by Father that what we had done had resulted in our engaging rooms, ordering dinner, arranging for a fire to be lit, as well as other things.

We also learnt to say 'Go on', 'Go slow', 'Stop', and so we were able to regulate our drivers. Before this their one idea had been to go all out as fast as their miserable little ponies could manage and then ask for 'baksheesh' (reward) for their furious driving.

Next, Father taught us how to decide when to get ready for the road. "Darlings, don't you know your Mother yet? Haven't you learnt that when she says 'I'll be ready in a moment', it means half an hour, and that 'I'm just coming' means a quarter of an hour, and that when she says 'Now I'm ready', it will only be five minutes?" Of course we ought to have learnt that from shipboard life. After this we refused to be hustled into our tonga until the 'Now I'm ready' signal had come. Not only were there the usual delays over fixing her veil to her satisfaction, finding the right gloves and so on, but she was also most humane about the ponies and would insist on having one changed if it had a girth-gall, or make the driver wrap a rag around the rusty bit of a pony with bleeding lips.

After four days we reached Baramulla. There a houseboat awaited us and for the next five days we were poled, paddled or pulled along the Jhelum River by the crew of the houseboat until Srinagar was reached. This was also a delightful way to travel. After the jolting, galloping tongas with all their hazards and chances, we now moved in a leisurely fashion along a very broad and sluggish river in a boat home of our own. It was long, narrow and low, consisting of three rooms – a living room and two bedrooms. A narrow ledge ran along each side and the members of the crew of six, or possibly eight, ran up and down this on the one side. They dipped their poles in simultaneously, pushed until very little pole was left above water, then up came the poles and along ran the crew and so on, over and over again. It was all done with the most perfect timing, and the sort of singsong incantation accompanied the pad, pad, of their running feet. Every now and then the leader would change his tune. At this

signal all poles were shipped and paddles took their places, the river having become too deep for poling. At other times the men towed the boat from the bank.

Our favourite place on the boat was the roof where we could lie for hours watching the slowly changing scene, or sit and sketch. My impression of the colouring is of soft pale blues and browns. The sky and river were pale bluey grey and there were wisps of thin white cloud and ethereal glimmers of the snow – the latter always so unbelievably high up in the sky and sometimes reflected in the River or in the lakes, which we crossed. Everything else was in varying shades of brown – the bare poplars and Chenar trees, the earth and the pale dry winter grass. (*Plate 2a*)

The waterside villages were very picturesque with wooden buildings, curiously like Swiss chalets, but having several storeys, which overhung the water. They reminded us of overcrowded slum dwellings, except that they were attractive to look at. There was so much beautiful country roundabout, yet where men built villages, they squashed themselves together like sardines in a tin.

They were essentially water people. They lived on the river and made their living as crews on houseboats when the chance came. Their main food was fish from the river – so easily caught – all they had to do was to drop a line from the balcony. To get water they lowered an earthenware vessel and pulled up a supply. Washing of clothes? – A net containing the garments to be laundered was let down into the river and pulled out a day or two later, presumably clean!

Sanitary arrangements too were so easy: they consisted of suitably sized holes in the verandahs. All refuse was thrown into the river and a house or flat was kept clean by sweeping the dust overboard. The Kashmiris are light-skinned and I thought some of the women lovely, but father said that on the whole they were a useless lot, both men and women, not to be compared with many of the other Indians – Pathans or Punjabis for example.

Well, so much for what we saw of Kashmiri life from the River. Our own life on it was beautiful. At night we tied up alongside the bank and also at mealtimes as the cook-houseboat was a separate affair. On it our staff of servants lived and wonderful meals were cooked and passed from the cook-boat to our boat.

When a lake had to be crossed, the whole atmosphere changed. The crew and their leader became charged with a mixture of fear and bravado. On these lakes terrific and dangerous storms could spring up without warning and it would be difficult to paddle a shallow flat-bottomed and perhaps top-heavy boat across three or four miles of wind swept water. Storms as on the Sea of Galilee could spring up at any moment and when later we did experience one, it was quite alarming.

When crossing a lake each man strained his utmost at his paddle leaving himself just enough breath for an 'Ough' at every stroke. The leader managed a more commanding and louder 'Ough'. When we were safely across father gave permission for a long rest and handed our 'baksheesh' to the men.

On more than one occasion Father was up before dawn and came back to breakfast with a brace of wild duck, which he had shot in a nearby marsh. These were most delicious to eat and far nicer than chikor (birds of the partridge family), which he sometimes brought. The tough tasteless little chikor usually had to go into a curry.

As we neared Srinagar, the river and its banks became thickly populated on both sides and there were several fragile, rickety-looking wooden bridges, crossing the broad river. Below the overhanging houses, rows and rows of native houseboats were moored. They looked as though made of cardboard and rushes and resembled our cook-boat. As they housed vast numbers of people, I suppose they must have been stronger than they looked.

Presently the Captain of our boat called our attention to the Palace of the Maharajah of Kashmir, which we were expected to admire. Never had I seen anything more awful! It was built of brick, stone and wood in a mixture of almost every known style of architecture, from Gothic and Renaissance to Windsor Castle and the Victorian villa, sprinkled with poor imitations of Taj Mahal minarets and ornately carved wooden balconies derived from Swiss chalets.

As we gazed, fascinated, at shiny blue, green and red designs made in lavatory tiles, father interpreted from the captain's excited comments that these had been imported direct from England. The Maharajah had thought the tiles far too beautiful to be placed where originally planned, so they had been displayed on the outside walls where his loyal subjects could see and admire them. "Very kind and thoughtful is our Maharajah," said the Captain.

Our boat was paddled very slowly past this unique building so that we might also see and admire it.

"Now you can show a dignified smile and slight inclination of the head in appreciation," Father said.

As the river smelt particularly foul at that point and several bloated corpses were floating by, it was difficult to look with smiling adoration at the Palace and also heed Mummie's emphatic appeals to hold hankies to our noses. As the latter would convey disgust, we chose the former.

During the short time we had been with Father, we had grown to admire and instinctively want to copy, his understanding manners and charming courteous dignity to all natives.

During the evenings on our houseboat he used to urge us to learn Hindustani, as he said that so much harm and misunderstanding could be avoided if English people would trouble to do so. He deplored the snobbishness of many British regiments, especially cavalry regiments, who were inclined to think a knowledge of Indian languages was beneath their dignity. A great many Indian servants understood English, but they considered it an insult to their masters to let it be known that they could understand or speak it. To hear themselves referred to as 'dirty niggers' or worse could do untold harm to our great nation and might even cause another Indian mutiny.

Father's mother and father had been in India before the Mutiny, and only escaped it because they happened to be on leave in England at the time. Also one of his aunts had been all through the siege of the Residency in Lucknow, so I suppose the Mutiny did not seem to him the faraway episode in history that it did to us.

Years after this Father became Surveyor General, and as such had his private

carriage attached to trains for the many long journeys he took all over India. He told me that on one occasion, at a railway station, he heard a commotion going on and strolled along the platform to see what the trouble was. Several young British cavalry officers were shouting that they were not going to have the carriage they wished to occupy polluted by a dirty nigger, and were demanding that the Station Master should turn out the 'black monkey'.

The train was very full and the Station Master was in a dilemma as the native had paid his first class fare and was entitled to a seat. Father did not wait to see if another seat could be found for him but asked the Bengali gentleman if he would honour him by sharing his private compartment. The invitation was accepted and later on, when they exchanged names, father discovered that his guest was a Mr Gandhi. This skinny little man, clad only in his white cotton wrap, sat cross legged on the seat opposite father and they had a long and interesting talk on many subjects. He was impressed by Gandhi's intelligent, though in some ways, unpractical, ideas of self-government for India.

The name of Gandhi, of course, was little known in those days and in later years, father always said how glad he was to have met him in the earlier stage of his career. Father had a firm conviction that at some time, India would have to stand on her own, and that it was Britain's responsibility to guide and help with wise and friendly diplomacy.

"You can't keep children in the nursery or school room once they are grown up. They must be independent and free to make, and one hopes, learn by their mistakes. Always one hopes for their confidence and perhaps some other things one has tried to teach them will be remembered and work out for their good. It is so with children and so it would be with nations. Parents should not try to possess their children and neither should England try to possess India, indefinitely," so father would say. All this however is jumping rather far ahead of our houseboat journey.

We paddled slowly through the crowded reaches of the river near the Palace at Srinagar but, once past the unique spectacle of the Maharajah's residence, the pace increased tremendously. The men bent to their paddles with as much enthusiasm as Oxford and Cambridge boat crews on Boat Race day. This was partly to give us a final impression of their skill and energy, and partly to gain the admiration of their many waterside friends and relations who hailed and cheered them as we flew past their humble dwellings.

For our last night aboard the houseboat we were moored in a quiet spot some miles beyond the crowded city. For the last part of the journey the men took to the poles and sang their enchanting boat songs. If I had been musical, perhaps I could have written them down. All I can remember is their haunting quality and strange half-tones, to which Margaret and I listened as we lay on top of the houseboat, watching the great river glide by, the beauty of the soft winter sunset, and the dark, perfectly cone-shaped mountain called – 'Takht-i-Suliman' (Throne of Solomon), silhouetted against the sky in the middle distance.

Srinagar lies in a basin shaped plain, wide and undulating, sixty-three miles from Baramulla by river, along which we had taken many days to travel in our houseboat.

When it became too dark and cold to stay in our favourite place on the roof, Margaret and I returned to the sitting room and our cosy stove. The ladder we had to climb up and down was no trouble to us as our skirts had grown shorter, with the aid of scissors, needle and cotton, during those restful hours on board and they were to shrink still further during the next few months.

The next morning we moved into our house¹, and there I met my first disappointment – we were not to live in a Bungalow, but a house. Father had been lent a most comfortable one with stairs and a bathroom with running water, but I longed for a Bungalow with mysterious dark verandahs, a bathroom with a tin tub and a hole in the corner for the water to run out and snakes to come in by. So I did not like the house and don't remember much about it.

One of the reasons I had been allowed to go out to India when I did was because, by going straight to Srinagar, we should lead a very quiet life, and I should not have a rush and a gay social Indian life before I was seventeen. In the summer, Srinagar became a gay place with many visitors but, in the winter, there were just a few residents. There were dear old Colonel and Mrs X, and two old Miss B's, old Z, and others who had decided, when their time in India was up, to settle in the most beautiful country in the world. Here they could have cheap living and much comfort, instead of joining the depressing crowd of retired Indian Army or Civil Service people living in for example Cheltenham, and moaning about the number of servants they had had in India and the gaieties they had enjoyed there.

Actually there were a fair number of residents and they had an English Club, English Church, and a resident parson and his wife.

We had hardly been in the house a day before callers arrived. When these calls were returned Margaret was usually the one to accompany Mummie on these boring occasions as I was not yet 'out'. As more and more callers arrived I grumbled, saying that I thought we were going to spend a happy time by ourselves, sketching, reading and going for long walks.

We did do a good deal of what we liked but there was far too much of what I would now call 'mediocre' social life, with ghastly tea parties at the Club, games of Badminton and musical afternoons at which my mother's singing was the only thing that sounded like music to me.

At Christmas time a valiant effort was made to reproduce an English Christmas. We helped to decorate the Club Room and, following the instructions of the oldest inhabitant or resident, cut out streamers of red paper and stuck cotton-wool snow and bits of cardboard with the word 'A Happy Xmas' all over the place until it looked a tawdry muddle.

For fun and games we played the usual Badminton, alternating with Musical Chairs, and I dare say we played 'Ring o' Roses'. I do know that I was reproved for suggesting 'Hunt the Slipper'. Someone murmured, "Oh no, remember the Padre is here," and I thought, "Oh yes, I know. It would be suggestive of legs, I suppose."

Except for these efforts to keep up the spirits of the little English Colony, Margaret and I adored Kashmir. There was a good old-fashioned library at the Club

¹ This belonged to Colonel and Mrs de Lotbinière.

and we grew quite cunning at slipping in at a time when no one was there and sneaking out again with arm loads of books. The early afternoon was the best time, but on occasions we browsed two long before making our choice and someone would catch us and say brightly: "Now what are you two young girls doing, hiding away amongst all these dull old books? You must come and join us at tea. Yes, I insist you must have some fun." That was why we carried as many books as we could manage, for it meant fewer visits to the club.

One of our first callers was a young Survey Officer who shall be known as 'K'¹. He was on Father's staff so naturally came to pay a call on us. We thought he looked rather romantic the first time we saw him. He was a tall, strong, good-looking young man, with gentle brown eyes. He had just come in from a long trek and was dressed in his 'Poshteen' – a short jacket made of sheepskin, the woolly side in, and the shiny side out. The outside was stitched in delightful Persian designs in what had been bright colours, now softly faded. On his legs were 'gilgit' boots, also of sheepskin and almost hip-high. A round fur Cossack-shaped cap was stuck at a jaunty angle on his curly brown hair.

He arrived at some early hour in the afternoon and was still with us at teatime. He remained for dinner and seemed content to stay on afterwards until our barely concealed yawns made him realise that it was getting very late. His first call had lasted eight hours, during which time he had hardly said a word.

Mummie, of course, chatted away in her bright and amusing manner. She had the happy knack of making people feel at their ease, and Father could usually make shy people talk to him, but Margaret and I hadn't a hope as we had neither of these social graces! Poor 'K' remained almost as dull as his dog; the large curly coated spaniel was very much a doggy replica of his master. 'K's many calls were always of great length, very boring, and quite unwanted by Margaret and me.

We did not have that house very long, as the owners returned to it and we had a houseboat once again. It was moored some way up the River, well away from the native city and the English residential part of the town.

We were still being entertained and had to return the hospitality but it was easier to get out of doing things which bored us. Instead we went for long walks of exploration along the river banks, across fields of cultivation and up the nearer and lower slopes of the mountains.

Alas, it was not easy to avoid 'K'. It did not seem to matter which direction we took; on our return walk, late in the afternoon, who should we see but this romantic looking man and his dog striding along to meet us. I asked him once, very crossly, how on earth he always knew where to find us.

"Oh, quite easily," he replied honestly, "I always watch the houseboat through my binoculars to see in which direction you set out, then I can pretty well judge the course you will take on the return journey. I get a very extensive view from the windows of the Survey Office."

I thought it a low-down trick to spy on people and told him so, but it made no difference. He continued to meet us on our homeward walks or, if we managed to

¹ Kenneth Mason.

give him the slip, we found him waiting for us at the houseboat. He was my first suitor and his faithfulness was doglike. In fact he was so very like his dog that when the spaniel followed him, as he followed us, into the boat, I almost expected 'K' to shake himself all over everything. This the dog never failed to do, having plunged into the river first, after which it invariably expected a warm welcome. They both had brown eyes and brown curly hair and while the dog gazed at master, master gazed at me with much the same expression.

Then the gramophone was brought out and 'K' would play his favourite tune – 'The Bells of St Malo' – over and over again. Presently there would be the smell of dinner cooking and the Khitmagar, seeing we had a guest would lay another place. Politeness forced us to ask 'K' to supper and this invitation he never refused. Long after, when he could no longer fail to see that he was not wanted, he took himself off to the bank, from whence the strains of 'The Bells of St Malo' would waft across the lake.

Once I complained to Father that I thought that 'K' had not nearly enough to do and asked if he could be sent off to measure mountains or something. Father only laughed and said that 'K' was an exceptionally nice and capable young officer who would go to the top of the Survey of India one day. Father's prophecy was correct.

We did have several lovely all day walks with 'K', taking food with us. He had the mountaineer's unerring knowledge of country and could find paths and ways we never could have done. With him one could never be lost.

Once he took us to the Dal Lake. We started with an early rise, always a joy to me, and then a walk of many miles to the nearest shore of the lake. Here he found, or had previously arranged to find, a rickety and most un-lakeworthy boat hidden in some rushes. The question was how to get into it, as the rushes grew in swampy ground.

"Let's take off our shoes and stockings, hitch up our skirts, and paddle out to it," I said hopefully, giving Margaret a quick glance to see if she would approve the show of legs that this would involve. The answer was a stern frown of disapproval at me, and to 'K', "That's quite impossible. Enid always gets pneumonia if she does things like that."

A happy light spread over 'K's gentle face; I could almost hear him thinking that he was a knight about to rescue his ladies in distress. He said that he would, on no account, dream of letting us get our feet wet, and that it would be quite easy for him to carry us out to the boat.

I could see that Margaret did not like the idea, so I said: "Since you are so very strong, you paddle out and pull the boat in. I should think that it is as light as a feather and then we can get in properly."

Of course! Anything to please us. First he helped us into our heavy greatcoats which he had carried for many miles and then waded into the water, which was much deeper than we had thought, coming nearly over his 'Gilgit' boots, and brought the little cockle shell of a boat easily up onto the hard dry land.

Poor man! He now had to drag the boat, loaded with us both back into the water – a dead weight and not good for the boat – and having clambered in himself, heave

his heavy wet spaniel in as well. Of course, 'Smiler' had taken the opportunity to have a good wallow in the mud before swimming after his master to the boat. When we were all aboard, the boat was very low in the water.

It was a perfect day; the sky was a pale cloudless winter blue and the lake without a ripple, reflecting the snow topped mountains. It was a very long way across to the distant shore and the Shalimar Gardens, where we intended to have our picnic lunch, but 'K' managed our boat with ease, kneeling in the prow and using the one paddle as the natives did.

When we finally reached the Gardens, landing was easy, for a flight of old stone steps led down into the water. The gardens of the then popular 'Pale Hands I Loved', must have been exquisite at one time, but in winter they were neglected and sad looking, with an eerie haunting beauty. Wide shallow stone steps led up a gradual slope to a stone pavilion at the far end. The steps were alongside a swiftly flowing stream, which we crossed at intervals on stone bridges until we came to the pavilion, far away on the hill slope, and there saw the spring, which gushed out of the rock face to plunge down to the lake the way we had come.

By the time we had explored all this, I began to feel that the gardens were haunted. There was no longer any sun, the lake below was a cold grey, and purple clouds which came rolling down the mountains had completely shut out the beautiful snows.

'K' now urged us to hurry. We must eat our sandwiches as we went along or do without them. "Don't put on your greatcoats," he ordered. I was surprised by his lack of consideration, as he had always helped us on and off with our coats so politely, and now when it was going to be very cold, he just said: "Don't argue. Put them over your knees," and fairly hustled us into the bobbing boat.

He unhitched the painter and was soon kneeling on one knee in the prow and skilfully paddling away. He did not take the direct course across the lake, where white horses could be seen, as we should never have weathered it out in the open. It was bad enough even hugging the shore in the lee of the mountains, for water splashed into the boat and the bottom was filling up. Margaret and I bailed as hard as we could, using an old tin can. 'K' looked his most romantic in his Poshteen and fur cap, silhouetted against the sombre dark grey of the mountains. Every now and then vivid flashes of lightning lit up the scene. I had always been thrilled by the wild elemental beauty of storms but felt acutely sorry for Margaret who was terrified of them.

There must have been one rather tricky moment when 'K' said: "Don't be alarmed if I throw 'Smiler' overboard. He'll be all right and swim to the shore." Protectively, I held onto 'Smiler's' collar and shortly afterwards 'K' beached the boat and helped us to land. He apologised for landing us further from home and thus giving us a longer walk.

The storm cleared almost as quickly as it had come and now that it was safely over, we decided that our experience of one of the sudden lake storms had been a thrilling adventure. Margaret confessed to me later that she had thought that if poor 'Smiler' had been thrown overboard, she ought to follow and still further lighten the

boat, but, as she knew that I would promptly follow her, she was thankful that she had not been put to the test.

At dinner that evening to which 'K', of course stayed, he assured us that he had kept close enough to the shore to be able to rescue us if the boat had capsized but that if we had worn our greatcoats it would have made things more difficult.

"I will write to Bombay to see if I can get a record of 'Pale Hands I Loved'; perhaps you are getting a bit tired of 'The Bells of St Malo'," 'K' said.

"Don't bother," I replied, "I think that the Shalimar Gardens are queer and haunted."

I remember that day's outing well; others more vaguely, such as the day we spent climbing to the top of the 'Takht-i-Suliman', in the hope of seeing the sun touch the surrounding snow peaks. We got there in time but the pale blush-pink coloured the snows for only a few minutes, but how worthwhile those minutes were.

A great deal of woodcarving was carried out in the Kashmiri villages and the results mostly sold to English people who came to spend their leave periods there. Many months before we joined him, Father had ordered a carved screen and some tables as a present for Mummie. One day we all went down the river to see the carver's workshop and the nearly finished work they were doing for us. The screen was a tremendous piece of work, consisting of three hinged panels, each about two feet by five, carved out of walnut, two or three inches thick. The carving penetrated right through the panels and both sides were of equal beauty and perfection of workmanship. The designs were in lovely patterns of local flowers and foliage, such as lotus, iris, chinar, leaves and many others. There was also a low octagonal tea table, exquisitely carved and two small stools. These had a simple key-pattern round their edges with father's crest in the centre and are the only pieces that my sister and I still have.

The screen, which was of colossal weight, and the tea table travelled all over India with us on our various moves and eventually back to England. Some time later however, these were sold as being too large, too heavy, too ornate and needed too much dusting; nor did they fit in well with the simpler furniture we preferred. But I have always been sorry that the screen was sold as it had taken the old carver over a year to make and the panels would perhaps have fitted the end of choir stalls in some little country church. What it had cost, I don't know. Labour was cheap in those days, but no doubt Father had denied himself many small comforts to give Mummie such a lovely present.

At the end of March we left Kashmir with many regrets. It had been beautiful during the winter, and now spring was coming with delicate greens flooding the flat lands and wild flowers were beginning to appear. Of these, one of the most intriguing was the little mauve iris, which grew on the wooden roofs of the houses. Up the gentler slopes of the hills were many orchards of almond blossom, showing pink against the blue of the mountains and reflected in the river and the lakes.

We were seen off by the faithful 'K', with repeated assurances on his part, that he was looking forward to seeing us in Mussoorie.

Once again we travelled by tonga down the beautiful Jhelum Valley to India.

CHAPTER 4

Mussoorie

From Srinagar we journeyed to Mussoorie which was to be father's headquarters. At Dehra Dun the low hills began and the railway went no further, so for the next eighteen miles we went by tonga. Then the road too came to an end and for the remaining ten miles to Mussoorie, during which we rose 6,000 feet, there was only a steep hill path.

From there on Father walked with Mummie, and Margaret and I were carried in 'dandies'. It was our first experience of this conveyance and most peculiar we found it. A dandie consists of four poles with a canvas seat slung between them. A man walks at each corner with the end of a pole on his shoulder. Two more act as spare bearers so that the team of six take turn and turn about carrying the burden. Except for a recognised halt they seldom put the dandie down but changed men and changed shoulders on the move.

Margaret and I were rather horrified at this way of being carried and would have much preferred to walk if it had been allowed but it was not considered good for us to climb thousands of feet, so we had to submit to what we thought was a most undignified mode of travel and still hated the idea of men acting as such beasts of burden.

Much worse was watching the coolies, both men and women, being loaded with all the luggage. By means of a rope and a wide leather strap across the forehead, a board was slung horizontally across their backs and on these were loaded all our boxes, trunks and suitcases, and no luggage was of light weight in those days.

The coolie stood with his board resting on the eighteen inch stone walling which bordered the track and on it his fellow coolies piled his load: rather surprisingly they avoided the lighter pieces and each man made a rush for, and squabbled over, the largest and heaviest ones. The heavier the load the better for then could be claimed a larger baksheesh (tip).

When all was loaded up the long string of coolies set off ahead of us and we climbed into our dandies to experience the queer sensation of being thus carried.

Father walked alongside one or other of us and if our bearers tried walking in step he gave the order "Hillo mat" (don't shake). The correct walk was for them to be out of step so that one was carried smoothly, otherwise one was bounced up and down in a most seasick making manner.

As there were many rests during the climb, we often passed our baggage carriers, or they passed us, and father told us not to look so distressed at the heart-rending grunts and groans they gave, as this performance was put on in the hope that our kind young hearts would soften for still further baksheesh. But I don't think we really ever got used to these human beasts of burden. The mere sight of the strap round their foreheads gave me a headache and it was painful to see those poor specimens of humanity bent to an angle of 45 degrees with the immense load on their backs.

All day we zig-zagged up the mountainside in the heat, up the dry barren south face where we saw only a few stunted trees in the yellowish grass. Our first view of Mussoorie was disappointing, just a native bazaar, a collection of shops and some houses of sorts. Here we stopped to have tea in a restaurant before continuing our journey in rickshaws.

This was a delightful way to travel. A rickshaw is a two wheeled light vehicle with a pram-like hood and shafts in front. A man pulls between the shafts, two men pushed from behind and a spare man changes places with the others from time to time. Rickshaw men run very fast and the faster they go the more baksheesh they hope to get. So we bowled along at a rattling pace for the remaining five miles of our journey.

Shortly after leaving the ugly houses, shops and bazaars, we went through a cleft in the hill and from then on it was a fairly level road winding further towards the north side of the mountain. And oh! the difference – heavily wooded with deodars, hill oaks, great tree rhododendrons and luscious green undergrowth. Above and beyond us to the north were the eternal snows and below us in a shallow basin we could see a number of residential houses and the English club with its tennis courts.

Luckily our house was not there. It was about two miles further on, right away on its own, standing on a small cleared plateau with forest above and below, and a beautiful view away across valleys and mountains to the snow. No sign of habitation was to be seen.

It was a heavenly place. Father thought it must have been built for someone who planned to live there when he retired, instead of returning to England.

It also had all the advantages of being a proper bungalow, large and spacious and not like most of the hill houses which were built in imitation of Swiss chalets or ugly English villas. These were perched on, or propped up against, a steep hill side with the view generally blocked by a collection of mangy specimens of the less attractive firs. Others were built in a hollow near the club with no view at all. We were indeed lucky in our home which was built on a flattish promontory and surrounded by wild beautiful country and wonderful views.

In a very few days Mummie, helped by us, had made it into a charmingly pretty home. Reading the description of it lately in Margaret's diary has made me realise how it was very unlike other houses in India in those days.

We had brought from England many yards of old-fashioned flowered chintz for curtains and chair covers, pretty china glass and lampshades and materials for cushion covers etc. We worked like beavers, cutting, tacking and machining, hanging pictures, arranging and rearranging until Mummie's critical and unerring good taste was satisfied.

According to Margaret's diary, she and I always found time for exploring scrambles up and down the hillsides in search of wild flowers to fill bowls and vases. I wish I could remember what we found but all I can recall are tiny delphiniums, monkshood, columbine and rhododendrons and many unusual grasses and foliage.

As well as helping to arrange the bungalow, Margaret and I had the thrill of unpacking our best clothes. Firstly the ball dresses with their matching satin strapped

shoes at 8/11d a pair. Then there were the long white kid gloves. Ours cost 5/11d but Mummie's as befitting a married woman, were longer and cost 6/11d. White cotton stockings for the dances and best occasions, and garden party frocks and picture hats as well as tennis skirts and blouses and riding-habits. All these were hung up, or arranged in drawers and on shelves, with the utmost care and mixed feelings of anticipation about the occasions on which we should wear them.

Margaret and I had a shy fear of our first proper dance and wondered what it would be like. We were convinced that no one would ask us to dance or, if such a miracle should occur, one would be taken and the other left. It wouldn't matter so much if we both happened to be asked for a dance at the same time, or both left as unwanted wallflowers. Could we in all politeness say to a prospective partner, "I am sorry that I don't want to dance unless my sister has a partner too." We confided in Mummie who assured us that neither of us could possibly lack partners at a dance, but we must not make ourselves conspicuous by dancing more than two dances with the same man, otherwise we might get 'talked about'.

In the privacy of our bedroom I told Margaret that I thought it would be rather fun to be talked about, and at her shocked look of disapproval, tried to persuade her that it would anyway be better than having to stand or sit out many dances.

Neither of these alternatives was our fate at our first dance. We had not been many days in Mussoorie when the social life began. We joined the club, left visiting cards and had them left in the box on our gate. There was always a certain excitement in looking in the card box and counting the number of people who had called on us.

Our first dance was at the Charleville Hotel and we were asked to dine there first, by a charming Mrs Murry whose son was spending part of his leave with her.

We wore our best white ball dresses as, 'Always advisable to make a good first impression', was Mummie's advice. Those dresses could almost be worn by a young debutante today. They were made of silk ninon, the very full skirts accordion pleated, and the tight bodice lightly veiled by a ninon fichu and edged with 'bugle trimming'. The latter was a fringe of very thin fragile glass tubes which glittered and tinkled as one moved, the faster one swirled around the more they sparkled and rang like a million fairy bells. Unfortunately they were apt to get caught up and it took a long time the next day to disentangle the glass fringe.

Our evening wraps were listed in the dressmaker's bill under the grand name of opera cloaks. They also could have been worn today for they were very pretty cherry-red fine cloth capes, lined with black satin. The little stand-up Chinese collar fastened at the throat with a clasp.

Day clothes for sport, walking or general use were long, ugly, inconvenient and restricted the freedom of movement, but in the evening I felt grown-up, very grand and gay in a full, long evening dress.

So dressed and given a dose of sal-volatile to keep up my spirits and because I was not yet seventeen, I started off with Margaret in a double rickshaw, to our first dance which we enjoyed more than we had thought possible, even in our wildest dreams. We danced every dance and were actually asked for more dances than our programmes contained.

My little Mother was then under forty and looked far younger: she was lovely, gay, full of high spirits and fun. Men clustered round her for dances and we were included. Before the evening was half over I noticed that Mummie had danced more than two dances with the same man. Passing the information on to Margaret with 'We can't go wrong if we copy her', I gaily danced the three supper dances with one man. He told me he preferred dancing to eating, and so did I! I was enjoying myself.

When we tackled Mummie on the subject the next day she gave in and said, "Oh well, perhaps two dances is rather limited and I leave it to your discretion." Which from henceforth, she did.

We had a wonderfully gay season with the dances, dinner parties, tennis, riding, picnics and long walks.

Mummie was very hospitable and gave many dinner parties and picnics and asked a number of our young men to stay with us instead of at the hotel. One of them was Margaret's future husband.

I don't think the expression 'young men' was used then and certainly no 'boy friends'! They were referred to as our 'friends', or when rather more than friendly as 'admirers'. I preferred the just friendly ones, as 'admirers', especially those with serious intentions which I did not appreciate, were apt to become sentimentally boring and too intent and so spoiled a happy and easy friendship.

It was not easy to get to know anyone well during a dance; anyhow not for a shy young girl as I was then. Dance, then five or ten minutes interval of sitting out together, then a change of partners and so through the evening. I did now have more than the regulation two dances with the same man, but it was considered better form to have those dances scattered about in the programme and not consecutively. Needless to say I did not always do this! but by having three dances running with the same man, and sitting out the middle one I was less conspicuous and it gave one just that much more time for uninterrupted conversation.

But picnics were another matter, and one could spend an hour or even much longer riding or walking with the same man and then the surroundings of that lovely mountain country (*Plate 3*) seemed to me far more natural for the making of friendships than a dinner party, followed by music or games, or at the very ugly Edwardian style Charleville and Savoy Hotels where the dances were held, and where between the dances one sat out in very obviously arranged alcoves in which one could hear the adjoining couples attempts at conversation and know they could also hear one's own. Not that I didn't enjoy dancing: I adored it, and later I went to dances and balls in most glamorous and romantic settings – but not in Mussoorie.

So I remember far better the many picnics to which we went. It was not considered proper for a young man to take a young girl for a walk alone and unchaperoned. A ride – Yes! I can only presume that on foot one could take advantage of a girl, but if she had a horse available she could mount and make a dash for the safety of her honour! But during a picnic, which was a whole day excursion, young people could happily pair off and spend as much time as they liked in each other's company either on horseback or on foot, going to and from the appointed meeting place and not necessarily following the same paths as others did, but free to

trust one's escort's ability to find tracks, shortcuts or long ways round to wherever had previously been arranged that all should meet for the midday meal. So at lunch time we all foregathered and under the shade of a spreading deodar or some such delightfully selected spot to which the syces had brought the food hampers. Here we had a simple meal which tasted delicious eaten in the invigorating air and with healthy appetites after the exercise we had taken.

Then came the drowsy hour. Some remained where they were on the outspread rugs, while others wandered off for further exploration to find an even more delightful place to spend the hours till all foregathered again for tea.

A chaperone was a necessity even at a picnic. Often it was my mother who enjoyed a whole day out in the wilds as much as we did, but if she did not come it had to be a married woman whom we could gather round at mealtimes.

I was not much attracted to any of my admirers, and had no wish to fall in love or get married. Life was such fun as it was and I was happy for it to continue so with no complications of having to change it. Still it was amusing to wander off with a favourite young man of the moment and if he chose to flirt – well! as long as he kept it light-hearted and did not expect me to take him seriously it gave a certain piquancy to the surroundings and a cosy feeling of being liked and of knowing we were not boring each other.

I can recall many a picnic in those Himalayan mountains, though not many of the young men who were paying me attention at that time. It was the scenery that I can still visualise so vividly and its background of varying scents, changing from the freshness of an early morning start when we rode along narrow winding paths, with damp moss and fern-covered rocks and rhododendrons, hill oaks and other trees above, below and all round us. Then as we got further and deeper and still higher into the mountains the nature of it changed to that of a less wooded country, with more outcrops of rocks and of thin dried grass. A hot, dry scent then took the place of the damp cool one; it was getting near the hot time of the day for one thing, and the scent of the herbage had a strong aromatic flavour. The trees were now pines and deodars with their warm pungent smell of pine needles and resin.

After lunch and having wandered off to find a secluded spot with an extensive view away to still further mountain ranges, I would like to lie there a long time, preferably in silence, so that I could gaze to my hearts content at all that was before me. (*Plate 2b*)

The pale heat haze half veiled the range upon range of mountains and valleys, but beyond them all, far up in the sky, it seemed rose the faint ethereal white shapes of the eternal snows. Looking down below me I would watch an eagle gliding between heaven and earth with hardly perceptible movement of its wings. It made me realise how many thousands of feet up I was, to be able to look down on an eagle and how many thousands of feet up again it was to those eternal snow mountains, and between me and them was little if any form of habitation or sign of man's spoiling the wild beauty of the world. May be a small hill village here and there, and less of those the further north one explored.

How well I could understand my father's love of exploration and of what he must

have felt during his journeys into Tibet and beyond, when each days march left civilisation (as we know it) further behind and ahead of him would be Lhasa; still to be entered by any white man¹, and the source of the mighty Brahmaputra river² still to be discovered by him.

Soon it would be time to return to the others, and I would take a last look at the eagle still floating over the deep ravine and then at white billowing clouds rolling up the valleys. I looked at the twigs and branches of some graceful deodar spreading overhead; rub a handful of the dry herbage between my hands to set up afresh those elusive scents and look around me once again for some other never-to-be-forgotten picture of wild nature.

Then there would be a call for me and we would get up, brush the pine needles off each other's backs, and happily rejoin the rest of the party to make our way home, the last part of which would be in the mysterious dark.

From dusk onwards there was a fear of lurking panthers: ponies would be led and our precious dogs put on a short lead. Dogs and their owners walked in the centre of the closed up cavalcade, which was the safest place, while syces went in front and behind, singing and calling out to each other to frighten off the possible danger.

One evening in spite of these precautions the last pony in the line suddenly screamed, reared and plunged backwards over the steep 'Khud' side. The syce declared that the pony had smelt a panther on the bank above and flung itself backwards in terror.

Instantly there was great confusion and an alarming sound of falling rocks and breaking branches. Two syces were sent off at a run to our bungalow to fetch lanterns, ropes and additional help. When they returned and explored the depths below, it was found that the poor pony had luckily got caught up in a tree and when extracted was found to have no legs broken but only cuts and gashes.

It was not advisable to repeat the same walks or rides at the same time, as panthers are cunning beasts and would lie in wait in horrible hungry hopes.

By doing the same thing at the same time we had one of our darling dogs taken by a panther. She was put outside one of our bathroom doors for her evening run. She did not want to go, she must have sensed that cruel death awaited her, but she was firmly put out. Hardly had the door been shut when there was a thud, a horribly heavy thud which shook the room. The panther must have been waiting for her. We rushed out shouting in the hope that he might drop but there was nothing but the blackness of the night.

We vowed vengeance on Winkie's slayer and from the bazaar bought a pi-dog to tie up as bait; it cost 1/4d and was a fox-terrier in make, shape and markings, but as large as a great dane. It was tied up outside the fatal door and for several nights Mummie sat at her window with a pistol, whilst Margaret and I took it in turns to stand by the electric light switch to put on the light if the faintest sound was heard.

After three nights we gave it up. No panther appeared and the pi-dog looked so miserable we gave it a good dinner and returned it to its home in the bazaar.

¹ Not quite true.

² Where the source is in Tibet it is named the Tsang Po.

What Margaret and I really loved were our long walks when we left even the riding paths and found goat tracks to follow. It is very easy in hill country unconsciously to take the downhill ways and then find it is far longer and far steeper to return than one realised.

We had a favourite nook some way down, which here in the autumn was warm, sunny and dry for sitting on the rocks or in the grass.

And best of all, it was here that we sometimes heard our pipes of Pan. We never saw our piper and he may have been a young boy or a very old man, but his music was the youngest, purest and most ethereal I have ever heard. Just a few notes on what was probably a home-made reed pipe. Then there would be a pause, another few notes ending, or so it seemed to me, in a note of question, as though in search of some beauty he wished to express, and yet was too young even to know what he wanted from life.

I said to Margaret, "I'd rather listen to our piper than go to any concert. It means far more to me than Melba's farewell concert," to which we had been taken before leaving England.

Margaret agreed with me but she thought concerts gave pleasure to hundreds of people.

"I can't help it. I dislike concerts. Very wrong of me I know but I always think of all that practising and then, how awful to have to play or sing if you are not in the mood. Our little piper plays what he likes, when he likes, as birds do. To me he is a God of music, a very young God, hardly born."

Margaret was not sure whether this was not rather pagan of me and she was right. I often felt pagan and had leanings towards the mythical side of nature and half believed in Gods and Goddesses of which Margaret did not approve.

"Anyhow," I said, to change the conversation, "if I ever marry the man I love I should like to spend my honeymoon on a wild hillside like this, and have my little piper to play to me in the evening and in the dawn."

"Why didn't you say 'yes' to 'K' then? He loves the remote places of the world. I am sure he would have taken you to Ghilget, or halfway up Everest for your honeymoon."

"Not with 'K', oh no!"

"Why don't you like 'K'? Do tell me."

It is difficult to explain why you don't like a man who is not only very good-looking but is good, kind and thoughtful, and with whom one has many things in common.

"I just don't know." Then as she was patiently waiting for more, I went on: –

"He would never stop staring at me and always be afraid he was doing the wrong thing and that I shouldn't be pleased. It would always be 'I will do whatever you like if it will make you happy', and so on and so on."

"I don't think that's a good reason for not loving someone who would love you the way 'K' would."

It wasn't – and I knew it.

To bring a lighter touch I added, "He doesn't clean his ears and he would always want to use my soap and leave it slimy and dirty!"

"You could always insist on having separate bits of soap."

"Not with 'K', he would say 'Just to use the soap your hands have touched brings us nearer together!' Ough! Oh no!"

"Enid, tell me, have you really seen inside his ears? You must have been very close to him and it couldn't have been when you were standing or walking because he is so much taller than you are."

"It wasn't my fault: he would edge up to me and try to sit on a rock which was obviously too small for us both. I wouldn't give way so he sat at my feet and I had a jolly good look in his ears. Would you like me to give you a description of them? I can't draw them but I can paint them if you will lend me your gamboge¹, mine is all used up."

"Enid, stop it, please! You could get him to clean his ears."

"Not I! You know what it is like trying to get small brothers to clean their ears. What hope do you think I'd have of getting a man of twenty-four to clean his, and he is so much taller than I?"

So Margaret in her turn changed the conversation to: –

"Well, why all this talk of honeymoons? Were you and 'S' discussing honeymoons when you were so long joining the party at our last picnic?"

"Yes," I admitted reluctantly, "in a general sort of way."

"What sort of way? Come on, tell!"

"He just took it for granted that what we both did would be grand fun. He wouldn't bother if I was happy or not, he would assume that if he was, I would be too."

"Then why didn't you say 'Yes' to him?"

"I might have, if it had been only for a honeymoon but unfortunately it doesn't stop there." This I said with a worldly-wise air, knowing nothing whatever about married life.

It was getting near panther's lurking time. We heard a ka-ka (laughing deer) bark not far from us. As this was a sure sign a panther was near, we made a hurried scramble up the hill in the direction of home.

I told Margaret I was sorry I had been so unkind to and about poor 'K' and that I wouldn't borrow her gamboge to paint a picture of the inside of his ears.

Then I felt better. I did not want to meet my death by panther, nor did I want Margaret to remember that my last words had been of such a frivolous nature.

Margaret consoled me by saying that she knew I didn't mean everything I said, and that I had only talked a lot of nonsense to make her laugh, in which I succeeded.

That conversation was the result of poor 'K' coming to stay with us for a few days. When we were in Kashmir, he had asked my parents' permission to propose to me. They had wisely said they thought I was too young and suggested his waiting

¹ Gamboge a yellow paint, also known as Rattan or Wisteria Yellow.

until I was seventeen. Constant letters then passed between them and I think my parents strongly advised him to try and forget me, but without effect, so he was asked to come for a short visit.

Mummie wrote a letter of invitation and asked if I would like to enclose a note saying I would be glad to see him.

"No," I said, "I won't. Surely you know I don't want to see him again." But the invitation was sent and 'K' arrived for a stay of three days. And what uncomfortable days they were for us all! Mummie and Margaret must have agreed to leave 'K' and me alone together to give him time to plead with me.

In the mornings Mummie was unusually busy and long over her house-keeping and strangely did not want my help, merely saying, "Go and talk to 'K' in the drawing room, it isn't polite to leave a visitor alone."

Margaret would be busy writing mail letters and did not want to be disturbed. "Go and talk to 'K' in the drawing room, it isn't polite to leave a visitor alone."

So I curled up on my bed and wrote letters to my little brothers and my sister, too!

"Haven't you finished your letters yet?" Margaret would ask.

"No, it will take me all morning, I feel in a letter writing mood and I am going to draw them some pictures as well."

In the afternoons we went for long walks, all together, as I refused to go along with 'K'. Mummie and Margaret would stick together and, as the paths were too narrow for more than two abreast, I had to walk with 'K'. But I took good care that if they lingered behind so did I, or if they spurted ahead I walked at their heels like a well-trained dog and firmly ignored 'K's' requests that I should stop and tell him the name of some flower or fern.

The last afternoon Mummie and Margaret must have been desperate for they hatched a mean plot which was my undoing.

As we were returning from our walk, Mummie whispered to me: "Margaret's suspender has broken, for goodness sake take 'K' on ahead and give her time to fix it."

Of course I knew that this did not necessarily mean suspender trouble, no doubt Margaret had her own reasons for wanting privacy, and loyally I walked ahead with 'K' to give her 'time'.

After going round a few bends in the path I said: "I am going to sit on this stone and wait for the others."

"Then may I sit beside you?"

"No, you may not, there isn't room."

So he sat at my feet and asked me many questions, to all of which I said 'No', and sometimes I said, "I am terribly sorry to go on saying 'No' but you must believe it."

I saw him turn his head away and stare into the far distance. Surreptitiously I looked at him, at his handsome profile and wavy brown hair and then – I noticed his ears! I hurriedly looked away, wishing I hadn't looked and seen their condition and

hoping he would not get canker in them. His dog 'Smiler' had canker, and there was no mistaking the smell, and our spaniel was apt to get it if we did not give his ears constant attention.

“Come on,” I said, “forget it all, try to forget me. I've not got a nice character and if you married me and found out you would be disappointed.”

My heart was beginning to ache for his silent sadness.

“Come on,” I urged, “otherwise a panther may spring out on 'Smiler' and I am not going to wait for the others, and when we get home I'll clean out 'Smiler's' ears for you. He has canker and I have some good stuff for that.”

Even that didn't seem to cheer him up. He ruffled his faithful dog's ears, kissed him and with a sigh he got up and we walked home in silence.

Mummie and Margaret were waiting for us at home. The cads had taken a short cut from where I walked ahead with 'K'. I ought to have remembered there was one just there.

I cleaned out poor 'Smiler's' ears after supper. Then I said goodbye to 'K' with the excuse of having a bad headache and wanting to go to bed early.

He left the next morning at crack of dawn and kind hearted Margaret was the only one up and dressed to see him off.

So the season passed. Young men came up for their last hot-weather leave and, when they left, we looked forward to meeting again in Lucknow.

We were to have a wonderful treat and spend some weeks in Lucknow during the cold weather, so we were quite glad to have a rest, to lead a simple country life again and to repair our party clothes.

In those days when we all wore long white kid gloves at every dance, we put them in a jam jar of petrol on our return and cleaned them next morning with a piece of soft flannel. Our gloves had had a hard season and were smelling peculiar and hardening like boards and no amount of cleaning could remove an all-over greyness. What with the monsoon damp mould which covered all leather with green fungus and one thing and another, our gloves were in a sorry state, our satin evening shoes also had to be cleaned with petrol to remove the black marks they received from the black shoes of bad dancers. Trying to remove these marks wore the satin till it was frayed.

So we sent to England for more gloves and shoes to make 'A good first impression on Lucknow'.

CHAPTER 5

To Lucknow

As I have said, Mussoorie was father's survey headquarters and from there he went for many tours and inspections. It was whilst he was away on a prolonged tour that we were to spend some time in Lucknow.

Mummie, Margaret and I walked the eighteen miles to Dehra Dun, partly to save the expense of hiring rickshaws and dandies, but mostly for the pleasure of walking.

We had been warned that the unbroken eight miles of steep downhill path would not be all pleasure – and how right that was! Our toes got a stubbed feeling from constantly being pressed forwards and downwards and this in spite of wearing our strong comfortable shooting boots.

Margaret and I had each grown a couple of inches taller – at least that is what we hoped Mummie would think, for in the privacy of our bedrooms we had still further shortened our tweed skirts to a comfortable length for walking.

The only thing that now strikes me as most peculiar, although it did not at the time, was our headgear. For Lucknow we had trimmed our large white 'ladies' topees with a deep gathered flounce of white embroidery on top of the broad brim, while the underside was lined with ruched silk-pink for Margaret and blue for me.

The whole affair was clumsy and most unsuitable for wearing with tweeds but we had to wear the topees as life-protectors when walking down the glaring sunny side of the mountain, and were thoroughly exhausted by our heavy head and footwear by the time we reached the train at Dehra Dun.

I always had a feeling that I would like the plains of India. They drew me like a magnet and I was not disappointed in Lucknow. The Hills had a beauty and grandeur of their own and could not be compared to the plains for the contrast was too great.

To me the plains were more truly India; the India of the Great Mughul Emperors with their beautiful old palaces and forts, the India of the tragic and heroic days of the Mutiny; the India that was part of my grandparents' lives and part also of my parent's young married life. The life led in the plains in our day was much the same as they had said. Bungalows were the same, the same number of servants was kept and people still rode and drove, for motorcars were a rare and exciting novelty. The design for living had not altered, only the fashion of European clothes, the length of men's moustaches and a few such minor details.

On this, our first visit to Lucknow, we were to live in tents. These were lent to us. Three large tents and all arrangements made for the furnishing of them by the Colonel of the H.L.I.¹ who was a friend of Mummie. The tents were pitched for us under the shade of a banyan tree near the polo ground and we thought it most romantic living in tents. Either the Colonel or his young officers 'called' on us every day to entertain us and see that we had a wonderful time, and we certainly had that!

¹ Highland Light Infantry.

Until now I had only passed through the Plains of India by train. When we stopped at some well-known station such as Allahabad, Agra or Lahore, I had seen but a glimpse of a native town with domes and minarets and in the distance an oasis of green, signifying the cantonment area. Thus I got but a passing panorama of part of that flat plains country; the India that was to me typical of the life of my parents and of my grandparents. Typical too of the life before, during and after the Indian Mutiny.

So our arrival at Lucknow and the weeks that followed our stay there, were to give me my first insight into the Plains of India.

Lucknow at this time was a typical large cantonment. This was prior to the 1914 war. A considerable area was naturally given over to everything connected with soldiering; barrack squares, parade grounds, men's quarters, married quarters, and so on. These could be seen a long way off (and smelt) by the cloud of dust which perpetually hovered over them. As the barrack squares and parade grounds were only made of beaten earth, they were constantly being churned up by men and horses into miniature dust storms and it must have been hell for the wives and children who lived in such close proximity to them. However, I saw little of all that, except in passing, and one generally did a wide detour to avoid the dust.

The officers' bungalows were placed in a much more attractive part near the large Maidan which was always green; large spaces of green grass with groups of trees such as peepul, banyan, nean and many others. Here also were the polo grounds which were kept well watered and this partially accounted for the general greenness. The bungalows adjoining the polo grounds were charmingly situated. A great snob value was attached to the position of these!

British Cavalry regiments had the best position nearest to No. 1 Polo Ground, probably because the rents there were higher. And so it went on down the social scale to the least popular native foot regiments, recruited from Southern India. These were furthest away from even the practice ground.

The bungalows were of all shapes and sizes, no two alike. Some of them were built just after the Mutiny and many of them even before that. There was no growing population in that area so no new bungalows had to be built. The existing ones were kept in order and patched up, the occupants changing as regiments moved. The bungalows had many things in common such as very thick mud walls which in the heat of India baked as hard as stone and they were surrounded on all sides by deep cool verandahs.

The rooms were whitewashed and the outside walls were generally colour-washed white, pale green, pink or yellow ochre. The roofs were sometimes of reed thatch but more often this had been replaced by corrugated tin. The thatched roofs were infinitely preferable as they were warmer in the cold weather and cooler in the hot. They were also far less noisy during a rainstorm.

It was far more amusing too, from a natural history point of view, since reed-roofed bungalows were the happy homes of tree rats (grey squirrels) and one could watch their antics on the stretched canvas of the ceiling. One could lie in bed and watch the bulges caused by those little animals as they moved about overhead.

Sometimes the large slow-moving bulge of an expectant mama would, after a sufficient number of days, become that of a slimmer figure followed by several very small, crawling, hardly perceptible dear little bulges!

Inside, the bungalows varied very little except for individual taste and arrangement, for the incoming tenant bought the existing furniture from the outgoing one supplementing it if necessary by hiring more 'English style furniture' from a contractor. So on entering a bungalow one knew it was not Mrs Jones' choice of furniture nor in all probability her choice of curtains or chair covers, but what she had taken over from Mrs Smith who had taken over from Mrs Brown and so on. So one could only judge the taste, or lack of it, by table appointments, glass, china, silver and the food produced.

My Mother was a rare exception to this as, although she took over the essential furniture, she always brought out from England chintzes and materials for chair covers and many other things, refusing to live with what she called 'other people's choice'. And I must admit the majority of them were drab and dreary!

Everyone had more or less the same number of servants as no man would do the work of another, and I suppose the average was sixteen servants. The bearer was one's personal servant and it was his responsibility to engage, with your approval, the other servants and see that they did their work properly. There was a cook and one or more under-cooks. A butler, his understudy and his washer-up. A man who did all the laundry and last of all the indoor servant was the sweeper who was of the lowest class and did the most menial jobs.

Of the outdoor servants there was a night-watchman who was rarely seen even at night but he was a form of insurance, for if you did not have one, your things were sure to disappear, whilst if you had one your possessions both indoor and out were absolutely safe. So simple! There was no need for locks, bolts and bars.

As there was no running water, there was a water carrier who had to fill his musshak (a revolting skin of a pig and still looking horribly like one) from the well, and keep the drinking water vessels filled in kitchen and bathrooms and water for the many baths taken. Morning and evening he sprinkled paths and drives with this water to lay the dust.

A gardener was a necessity and more than one if it could be afforded. Also required were a pair of bullocks in the charge of a man and his several small sons, to pull water from the well to irrigate the garden.

Each horse had its own two servants: a groom and a grass cutter.

All these servants lived in the retainers quarters at the end of the garden behind the bungalow, together with their innumerable families, relations, and friends who in return for free accommodation made themselves generally useful in any way that was needed. The bearer had only to call 'someone' and a very old man or a small urchin would appear ready to run off to deliver a note.

As there were no telephones a constant stream of notes went to and fro: invitations, answers to them, orders to shops, and so on.

The only economy that could be achieved by people leading the average army life was to have less gardeners, less hiring of bullocks to water the garden, fewer

horses and so less servants for them. There was not much else that could be saved on general living expenses.

The best type of servant was found I suppose among those employed by British officers of Indian Cavalry regiments: certainly not those employed by the British Cavalry! Though those paid higher wages and could be robbed right and left, they did not understand the good class of native servant with their high sense of duty, honour and trustworthiness. Neither did they speak the language and that betrayed their poorness of brainpower and lack of intelligence. Those who could not speak their language had little chance of getting good servants. Speaking to them in their own tongue, however badly, was a sign that you had taken the trouble to do what they considered the right thing. Your prestige went up, not only if you spoke their language but if you trusted them, and treated them with justice and fairness.

Also they expected you to entertain constantly and well. The cook got a percentage on all foodstuffs he bought and if you did not entertain sufficiently, he not only received less commission but in his eyes and those of his friends you dropped in the social scale and he then left with the polite excuse that 'his grandfather had died'. The percentage was neither recognised as you giving or they receiving: it was accepted on both sides with great dignity, each knowing that it was bad form to exceed.

At times the servants' compound seemed to overflow with more than the usual number of inhabitants. Then one called a parade of them all and made it firmly known that there was a limit to one's hospitality, one could not have six grandparents living in one's grounds! The bearer – yes. He as head man might be permitted four and a few extra brothers and sisters, but he must control the others to having less. With a lordly gesture of his stick, right and left, he would command that they had fewer relations and they would go – but in a few days most of them would be back again, and one would shut one's eyes to it for a few weeks.

Servants were in no way overworked for there were so many of them and they remained faithful and loyal, taking great pride in the perfection of their work and keeping their masters and mistresses up to the style of living expected of them.

Getting to know people was an easy matter. Directly one arrived in a new place, one got a calling list from someone one knew, then all that had to be done was to drive round the cantonment bungalows dropping visiting cards in the calling boxes fixed to the gate posts. Viceroy, Governors and important generals, each had a book in which one wrote one's name. You finished up by going to the club and joining it. It was all done in practically one day; then you sat back to receive notes of invitations to dances, dinners and 'at homes'. After a few days of meeting people at these functions and at polo and the races, you sorted out who you liked and who you didn't and they did the same by you! A rapid exchange of entertainment followed by those who knew instinctively that they would become friends.

That is a brief description of cantonment life. Naturally not all of it was observed during those few weeks in Lucknow but a great deal of it was. And more still I learnt from all that my father and mother told me and what I observed from their behaviour and way of living. When I was married and had a bungalow of my own and servants to manage, I never forgot the pattern of life and behaviour expected of me.

So much for the cantonment's.

There was also the native town with its bazaar.

On the whole, this was a densely populated, overcrowded seething mass of narrow streets, heaving with humans, bullock-carts, stray cows and ponies like skeletons, and so many of those miserable starved pi-dogs.

There were shops and open stalls with their colourful goods, brass, silks and all the vivid brightness of fruit and vegetables. When I could manage to ignore so much squalor, filth and smell, the sheer beauty of the colouring entranced me.

Anyone who has been to Indian, African or other eastern towns and villages will know that riot of colour and sharp contrast of light and shade, and of glaring sunlight and black shadows, and they will have smelt in the evening that pungent smell of burning cattle dung and rancid cooking fats.

We only went to the bazaars on rare occasions, to buy some silks perhaps, or something not obtainable in the cantonment stores. They were not places in which to linger on account of the unhealthy smells and the possibility of catching plague.

What charmed me almost more than anything in the vicinity of Lucknow were the old historical Indian buildings: forts and palaces, towers and tombs of ancient Mughal Emperors. Here and there within a few miles radius of Lucknow, were these wonderful old buildings: some were ruins, or partial ruins, some would be standing deserted in the centre of a bare plain, others still surrounded by a ragged village, whilst the most beautiful of all were situated on the banks of the river Gumti – particularly the old Red Fort, an immense solid building looking twice as large and far more lovely for its reflection in the river. In contrast to its masculine solid strength there was on the opposite bank of the river a very exquisite feminine and graceful marble building – the Chattar Munzil Palace with its many wide, shallow steps leading down to the river's edge.

The sand coloured banks and cliffs with the grey river flowing between them, set off the solid old Red Fort on one side and the elegant white palace on the other. The sky over the plains of India is always grey – the soft grey of the heat haze (except during the brief flames of sunset and sunrise). If the sky and river had been of brilliant blue and the banks a vivid green it would, in my eyes have taken away much of its beauty. As it was there was nothing to detract from the buildings themselves and the most lovely building I had yet seen was the Chattar Munzil Palace.

At seventeen, with little beyond a great love of the beautiful and the capacity for seeing things as pictures, which engraved themselves forever on my memory, I saw the Chattar Munzil Palace for the first time and could hardly believe it was real for it was a thing of such exquisite beauty and had such a dreamlike quality about it.

I had not then seen the famous, much described and much photographed Taj Mahal at Agra. In a way this was like it but on a smaller scale, with perhaps lest perfection of workmanship, but like the Taj, it was half palace and half tomb.

Until then the only historic buildings I had seen had been in England – Westminster Abbey, the Tower of London and some famous old houses such as Hurstmonceaux, Montacute etc. I knew the difference between Saxon and Norman arches, between Tudor and Elizabethan architecture. I love the great thickness and

size of walls, the huge beams, the linen-fold panelling, the courtyards and banqueting halls. All had been mellowed grey and yellow stone or the soft shades of rose-pink bricks, with the interiors all shaded and dim with weathered oak, faded tapestries and dark pictures.

Now I was seeing something so totally different and fresh-looking that it was hard to believe it was built so long ago. All was so light: a sparkling glittering lightness for all was of marble – floors, pillars, archways. Between these many archways were fretworks of carved marble lace – at least that is how it appeared to me, but how impossibly difficult to describe, and how can I?

The marble was about 6 inches thick and all over were lovely designs of leaves and flowers: the carving of these went right through from one side to the other and in places was of gossamer fineness that gave the lace-like effect.

On the walls, at the bottom of the pillars and on many other places, were inserted mosaics of semi-precious stones such as lapis-lazuli and jade, again in designs of flowers.

The first time I saw the Chattar Munzil Palace was at a very big ball and it was difficult for me to concentrate on partners being introduced to me whilst I was trying to take in all that was around me.

Lucknow, like the majority of large cantonment stations, had a week of specially gay times, of races, polo tournaments and balls. There were two such weeks during the cold weather and it was during one of these that I had my first experience of a big ball. The Palace in itself a thing of iridescent beauty was gay with colour as, except for the few civilians, every man wore the pre-1914 full-dress uniform. So, at this first ball, there was much to dazzle me as I looked at the colour and glitter of the romantic uniforms and at the exquisite interior of the building.

From the tall good looking man in his Indian Cavalry uniform of pale blue and silver, who was being introduced to me, I glanced at the carved marble beside which I was standing, marvelling at its intricate workmanship, marvelling too at the mosaics and the high mystery of the dome and that soon I should be dancing on a floor which was made of marble.

The after effects of dancing on a marble floor were not all bliss! for the next day one's aching legs proved that though the surface was as slippery smooth as possible, it was utterly unresilient.

That night I saw little of the Palace except a central hall and the archways leading out of it. At some time it had been taken over by the English as a club and there were reading rooms and a library and no doubt a bar, but all I saw was the domed hall with its cloister-like surroundings. In these were placed at intervals elephants and ceremonial howdahs¹ which were gorgeous jewelled affairs.

There was a great crowd and my programme was soon overfilled and quite illegible! I had not caught the names of half the men who had been introduced to me, nor can I remember what they looked like, nor at which of the many archways or pillars we had arranged to meet for their respective dances.

¹ A seat for riding on the back of an elephant.

The dance programmes had not only the numbers, but also the name of the dance tunes.

Father once told me that he overheard the following conversation between myself and one of my favoured partners.

He: "You haven't forgotten that you promised me 'Nights of Gladness', 'In a Persian Garden', 'Underneath the Moon', 'The Whole Night Through', 'While the Nightingales Sing' and 'A Thousand Kisses', as well, have you?"

Me: "I couldn't possibly give you all that – I should get talked about."

He: (angrily) "What can you give me then?"

Me: "I can give you 'Gold and Silver'."

He: (taking my programme, looking at it, and then putting it in his pocket) "That's the last thing I want from you. We will settle what you give me while we dance." And as he whirls me off Father hears him say, "Nothing will let me allow you to give 'Nights of Gladness' to that young ***."

Me: "Can't I have half with you and half with him – the first part with him and the last part with you," (adding as an inducement) "the last part is always the best."

I think that Father rather exaggerated this so-called overheard conversation.

So I happily drifted off to the tune of a dream valse with whoever claimed a dance and contentedly sat out or wandered outside with my partner, not caring that I might be cutting some other partner's dance, for it was so beautiful outside. A warm distilled starlit, moonlit Indian night.

The moon shone on the marble dome of the Palace and the shadows of the groups of palms and blue gum trees were traced with such clarity on the lawns and paths that they might have been painted on the ground, for they were so utterly without a flicker of movement that they seemed more clear than the palm fronds and sickle-shaped leaves of the gums above them.

The grounds surrounding the Palace were well kept and of great simplicity: no attempt had been made to have beds of cannas or bright bedding out plants. Whoever was responsible had shown excellent taste.

On the far side of the Palace was the river Gumti and from a wide terrace shallow steps led down the steep bank to the water's edge and from here would be seen, a little further up the river the old Red Fort and its reflection in the river.

Sitting on the lowest of the steps with the water lapping at my feet, only faintly hearing the dance music, I could absorb all the moonlit beauty around me and do the same if we were sitting in chairs placed under the trees. Here I could peel off my long kid gloves for I could not resist touching the shadows cast on the ground to convince myself that the branches of palms and gum trees had not been laid down and pressed flat on the ground.

Eventually the time would come when I really felt that I must no longer succumb to the temptation of my partner telling me that the music I could hear was only an encore of the dance we had been dancing and there was no need to hurry back. I knew this was only wishful thinking on both our parts so I would pull on my gloves

and returning to the ballroom throw myself enthusiastically into dancing again.

Inside or out, dancing or sitting out, it was all of such heart-rending beauty that I shall always remember the Chattar Munzil Palace of those days.

One of the first things we were taken to see shortly after our arrival in Lucknow, was the Old Residency. It stood in a slightly elevated position with the grounds surrounded by a high red stone wall. In many places this wall had great gaps where the mutineers had forced their way in to attack the Residency itself. The gaps had been filled in with iron railings to keep out undesirable persons but had otherwise never been repaired. The big iron gates at the entrance were kept locked and the gate-keeper was always a British Army pensioner.

The Residency had been held by a small and diminishing force of British and a force of loyal sepoy troops. Here they were besieged with their wives and children for four months, part of which was the hot season.

Serious fighting during the Mutiny was mostly confined to the NW Provinces and to Central India.

At Lucknow, Sir Henry Lawrence was obliged to retire at the beginning of July 1857 into the Residency with the European and Christian population and the few troops left. Lawrence was killed early in the siege and Brigadier Inglis took command. Defence was maintained with extraordinary courage and resource until September 25th against swarms of assailants. Then Outram forced his way in after desperate fighting, brought sorely needed reinforcements but also the added problem of feeding them.

Sir Colin Campbell, sent out from England as C-in-C, finally relieved the city between November 15th and 17th.

The thick stone walls of the Residency were battered and stormed and tunnelled under again and again but still the gallant little force repelled the mutineers. Food was at starvation level and water was rationed to one cup a day per person. The garrison was relieved within a day or so of being finally stormed and massacred, for only a few rounds of ammunition were left.

There is a well-known story of a child who told his mother he heard distant music and she, knowing the height of his temperature and thinking he was dying, told him that what he could hear were the angels' harps welcoming him to heaven. She took him in her arms to the now roofless courtyard so that he could get more air and again and again he repeated that he could hear brave music, but the others who gathered around could hear nothing and it was not until some time later that the unmistakable inspiring bagpipes of the Black Watch could be heard on their way to the relief of Lucknow.

A great aunt of mine¹ was there during the siege and lost her little baby. In the cemetery we saw the pathetic gravestone of that baby and many others.

From the day of the relief of the Residency of Lucknow, I was told no native was allowed to put a foot inside certain parts of the Residency and its beautiful gardens. The gardens were kept in perfect order by pensioned British soldiers and it was good

¹ It is difficult to identify who this was, perhaps one of the Money family.

to see smooth lawns, weedless gravel paths, and groups of flowers and trees.

The Residency itself was a roofless ruin, neither restored nor allowed to deteriorate from the state it was in at the time of its relief. Great masses of purple bougainvillea and orange begonia were allowed to grow over the ruined red-stone walls with a strange and beautiful clash of colours.

The whole place had an unusual quiet and a very great peace. A feeling of bravery, strength and courage came to one in those historic surroundings.

It was said that on a still moonlit night there might sometimes be heard the ghostly swirl of the pipes.

"Have you ever heard them?" I asked the old gatekeeper as he locked the iron gates behind us.

"Yes I have, but then I am a highlander and was in the Black Watch myself."

"Do you stay on guard all night?"

"Yes, I am night sentry."

"Could I spend one night here with you? Perhaps I could hear the pipes too."

"Why, yes. You are the first that asked me that. Maybe you would hear them if you got that sort of feeling for hearing." He told me to bring a warm coat for it got chilly in the early hours.

I would do that.

But when I ran after the rest of the party and told them what I intended to do Mummie forbade it, saying I would only get over-tired and not look my best the next day. I should look 'washed-out' and might faint at a dance and I must remember that we were going out every night.

So away went my hopes of listening to those ghostly pipers. I should not have been afraid with my dear old highlander beside me.

My passionate longing to spend a night in the Residency was more than a wish for a new experience. At the back of my mind I had an idea that if only I could do this, if only I could hear those ghostly pipes, or even imagine I heard them, they might at some future time, be of very great help to me. They might give me just that much more courage than I felt I possessed and would enable me to face future dangers. Or, what seemed to me far worse than any personal danger or suffering, the loss of any one of those I loved. Perhaps hearing those pipers who in those days of long ago were coming to the relief of Lucknow, would give me a feeling of hope and the knowledge that however much one had to endure, relief would eventually come.

I wondered if these strange forebodings of future sadness might have been caused by the thought of my great aunt. She as a young woman had had to endure the privations of the siege and as well as losing her own baby had to watch the sufferings of others who lost husbands and children. I realised how young she had been then and yet, when she had been my age, all before her must have seemed safe and happy.

Could it be possible that while I was still young I might have to suffer sadness and loss? But how could that be? My parents were young and I had five brothers and sisters; India was a safe place; the whole world was safe, there was no fear of a

mutiny or wars to come.

Yet a shadow of some unknown future had passed over me and try as I would I could not forget it. I felt instinctively that a time would come – and who knew when? – perhaps even sooner than I feared, when I would badly need the help that remembering those ghostly pipes might give me.

It would not be human help I should rely on, it would be help from past bravery on which I should have to draw. What others had endured, so I hoped I also could, but if the time ever came I wanted to know that in the end relief would come and only the memory of hearing those pipers could help me to this knowledge.

CHAPTER 6

To the Sawaliks, Shillong and Calcutta

From Lucknow we went for a shooting trip to the Sawaliks.

From a life of hectic gaiety we went to a life of complete jungle simplicity – and how we adored it!

We left Lucknow by train suitably dressed for the jungle: short khaki drill skirts with even stronger khaki drill 'bloomers' underneath, buttoning tightly below the knee. Our strong shooting boots reached to just below the knee so that no part of one's leg was left vulnerable to the possibility of snake bites, giant ants and 'spear-grass'. These we were to appreciate later on when we were in waist high spear-grass country.

Our jackets had been given to us by our respective young men and had been altered to fit us by the Dirzi (tailor). Mummie's had a definite H.L.I. cut about it, rather short. Margaret's was waisted 8th Hussar swagger type and mine, from the King's Own, had the advantage of extra big pockets. When we needed them we had men's khaki helmets: so we set off, and almost for the first time I felt comfortably and suitably dressed.

The shoot had been organised by Capt. Conran who had paid me much attention when on leave in Mussoorie and again in Lucknow and he had gone ahead a few days earlier to get everything ready. Now he met us at 3 am on a cold dark morning.

On the journey from Lucknow we had had many changes during the night and now we had a drive of thirty miles to our destination. We drove in 'ekkas' which are native carts, very high, with hard wooden seats, no springs and iron-banded wheels.

I thought the drive most romantic, starting in the dark and driving further and further into the real jungle. When dawn came we walked ahead of our ekkas for a while, silently and softly, in the hope of seeing some wildlife. We did, and I have never forgotten the beauty of those moments.

Capt. Conran was leading and had told us to watch him: when he stopped we were to do the same. When he turned his head we were to look in that direction and we might see something.

He stopped and turned his head to the right, so did we.

There was a small clearing surrounded on three sides by deep blue forest trees: it was swathed in morning mist and above the mist we could see antlers appearing and disappearing, moving gently this way and that.

We watched them for some time until the deer, which had been grazing, suddenly got wind of us, or we startled them by some movement, for up went all their heads and with a quick turn towards us they bounded away into the safety of the dense trees. As they leapt up and out of the mist I could see their pale undersides and their incredibly fragile-looking legs.

Then they were gone, led by a big stag who was followed first by the younger

stags and then the does and their half grown fawns.

Capt. Conran had chosen to go in the ekka with Mummie so Margaret and I could hold hands in ecstasy, remembering what we had seen. Oh! how we were going to love the jungle if this was but a glimpse of what we were to see.

The forest block that had been allotted to us was about ten square miles and was called Karra. It had a very simple wooden bungalow, occasionally used by forest inspectors, which contained just the bare necessities of furniture. It was built in the most perfect position on top of a steep low cliff which banked one side of the river Jumna.

Late that afternoon after we had unpacked our small amount of luggage and settled in, we wandered down a steep path to the river's edge where there was a sandy bay. This became a favourite spot for Margaret and I to dream away an afternoon or evening, when we had not spent a whole strenuous day shooting.

Here, or from the cliff above, we could see a vast stretch of country where the huge, wide, slowly-flowing river twisted and turned in its many bends. Beyond, as far as the eye could see, was fairly flat densely wooded country. Behind us were low hills growing into steeper and higher mountains, also thickly forested.

This sandy bay was considered a safe place for us as it was protected by the cliffs and river and was near enough to the bungalow for the nattering of the staff to frighten away any tiger on the prowl.

The reported man-eater was said to be on the other side of the river, but tigers swim rivers – of course! So we just kept a lazy eye on the lookout for an orange and black striped head swimming towards us when we could have reached the safety of the bungalow in a matter of minutes. We were never put to the test of a quick scramble up that steep cliff!

The day after our arrival Father joined us for his three weeks' leave which we were to spend all together in this wonderful real jungle country. A third man was to have joined us but failed to get leave at the last moment. We didn't mind, we were a happy party of five. Capt. Conran was liked by us all. He had a quiet strong character and a great love for and knowledge of the ways of all wild things.

This shoot was not a grand affair of elephants, hundreds of beaters and hopes of shooting a record number of tigers. Hopes of getting a tiger, yes, and perhaps a good sambur¹ head, and birds for the larder. Otherwise it was to be just a heavenly three weeks in the jungle. And so it was.

But several serious attempts were made to shoot a tiger: on one occasion a live bait, in the shape of a very young bullock, was tethered to a tree in the heart of the jungle. Poor little thing, it was killed that night and partly eaten.

A machan was built in the tree above so that Capt. Conran could sit there the following night in the hopes that the tiger would return to finish his meal.

As I thought, most unfairly, Mummie decided she would sit up in the machan with Capt. Conran. But perhaps, after all, it was fair that she, as the eldest of us women, and having the advantage of being married, should have the first turn, but I

¹ A type of deer.

decided in my mind that Margaret and I would share the next night.

Mummie and Capt. Conran sat up all night but no tiger visited the kill.

The next attempt was made some nights later when Capt. Conran was to sit in the machan with a live bait tied up below him. Now was my chance and I firmly announced to Mummie that Margaret and I intended spending the night with him. Alas for my hopes; as usual my plans for spending a whole night awake in romantic surroundings were squashed. Arguments took place. I desperately wanted us both to spend the night with Capt. Conran on this platform high up in a tree. I could not imagine a more thrilling and wonderful experience than a whole night, dusk to dawn, spent like that. Even if a tiger did not come, there would be all the jungle quiet to be felt, the scent of the night, and perhaps strange sounds of stealthy movements below us. There would be the fading light and colouring to watch as the night came on, and again, in the very early morning I would be able to see forms and colours reappear out of the mist.

Again Mummie forbade it and Margaret backed her up by saying, "Well I do rather like sleeping at night and you know I am not as good as you are at keeping awake." And from Mummie, the same old thing about me getting over-tired and so on.

From me: "What does it matter what I look like the next day? You wouldn't mind if I looked 'washed out' would you Capt. Conran?"

"No I wouldn't mind that," he assured me.

From Margaret: "Enid, you know you would hate to sit silently and hear that poor little calf bleating for its mother all night and know it was frightened. You'd tell Capt. Conran to let off his rifle to scare away the tiger and save the calf's life."

Still I persisted: "You could shoot the tiger before it sprang on the calf, couldn't you Capt. Conran, and so kill the tiger and save the calf?" (For Capt. Conran was a good shot.)

"I would try but I couldn't promise."

But, as so often happened, it was Margaret in her quiet and wise way who had the last word in an argument with me.

When we were alone I again brought up the subject with: "Well! I did think you'd back me up, I did think you'd love to spend a whole night up in a machan as much as I would. Darling, you know you would love it. Come on, let's both try and persuade Mummie to let us do this, you know we can get round Father all right."

"Of course you know I'd love it as much as you. But you didn't realise I was only saying about not being able to keep awake because I knew you couldn't spend all those hours without wanting to get up and go down the tree in the middle of the night. Once we were in the machan, Capt. Conran would pull the rope ladder up, and you couldn't very well ask him to let it down with the excuse you wanted to pick wild flowers, or fix your suspender. Now tell me – could you? – and with tigers prowling around?"

She was right, of course, and I gave in. I hadn't thought of that.

Many of our days were spent in following narrow tracks in the hope of finding

game. Father and Capt. Conran took it in turns to lead, followed by the head Shikari (hunter), then by a handful of beaters, and after them a few servants to carry spare ammunition, food for the day, etc.

We walked Indian file with many a stop to look and listen, and on such a day, covered many miles and came back with just sufficient birds for our larder; usually some jungle fowl and an occasional peacock.

On other days a proper beat would be organised. We would be up long before daylight, and very chilly it was at that early hour, but I loved those early morning starts in the dark when the mystery all round gradually took on shape and form.

By 9 or 10 am the heat was great: by midday scorching, especially if, by then, we were climbing up the rocky grass covered hills with few trees. On one such occasion Father, Mummie and Margaret had stayed a mile behind and I stood with Capt. Conran whilst the beaters drove the country down to us. There were sounds of something coming towards us and, in a moment it appeared, a sambur stag bounding down the slope twenty yards from us. It was all over in a second. Capt. Conran lifted his rifle to his shoulder and fired simultaneously and, before I could stop him, he had killed that beautiful beast which continued in its bounds towards us until within five yards, when it sank slowly to the ground. The stag threw his heavy antlered head backwards and turned his deep brown eyes to mine in a look of reproach, as though saying: "What harm have I ever done to you that you should do this to me."

I sprang forward with some idea of stroking it or throwing my arms round its neck, by way of asking its forgiveness, but Capt. Conran caught me by the arm and prevented me: "Don't go nearer to it yet – it's dying."

I knew that. I couldn't take my eyes off its eyes over which a veil was coming.

"Oh! I know, I know," turning in a fury to Capt. Conran. "How could you be so cruel and kill such a lovely wild innocent creature?"

"But you knew it might be a deer coming and, if so, and it had a good head, I should shoot. I told you I would give you the horns."

"I should hate to have those horns. I'd never forget the expression of those eyes looking at me. I never will, never, never, all my life, and then the way you wouldn't let me go and comfort it."

It was in vain that he tried to make me believe that a wild animal would not want comfort from a human being. If it had been conscious it would only have been frightened. He was sure death had been instantaneous and that it was only muscular action that had propelled it those yards nearer to us.

I wouldn't believe him. He had caused that animal pain, then death and nothing he could say would alter my conviction that no person or animal could fail to want comfort in its last moments.

"You don't feel that way about birds and they have life as well as animals."

"They don't look at me," was all I could repeat.

Capt. Conran put his arm round me in a comforting way and gave me his hankie: of course I had as usual forgotten mine. He took me out of sight of the stag and made me sit beside him for a while and I didn't mind his arm round my shoulder, and was

glad to lean up against him as I was feeling weak and wobbly all over.

When I felt better, I apologised for my silly weakness and told him I had never seen anything dying before, except birds, not even a dog, puppy, cat or kitten, and, "Thank you for being kind to me, though I still think you are cruel, but thank you for lending me your hankie. Here it is."

"You can keep it as a token that I do understand your feelings, and that I am glad you are still young enough to forget things like hankies."

"I'm not young," I said indignantly. "I wish everyone wouldn't keep saying that I am so young. I'm seventeen and you know it."

He laughed at me, saying: "That's better; you don't look so 'washed-out' now. Would you like to go behind those big rocks and pick wild flowers or fix your suspender? It's all right. I've got sisters of my own so you need not look so shocked and surprised."

"Yes, please, I would." And I appreciated his thoughtfulness.

"All right then, I'll wait for you here."

When I returned he told me that he had inspected the stag and the shot had pierced its heart, so death had been instantaneous. The horns were not particularly good (though I knew they were because I had seen them), and he would not have it brought back to camp in case it upset me again and he would never have shot it if he had known...

There was something very understanding about Capt. Conran and I liked him even more when we rejoined the others and, in answer to their query about the shot they had heard, he told them he had fired and missed.

So nothing more was said, at least in my hearing, about that stag. I had to tell Margaret about it that night because I felt sad all over again, and I didn't want to keep Capt. Conran's hankie because it would remind me too much. She promised that she would return it to him and say the right things so that he would not be hurt.

Margaret was so good at doing those things for me.

Everything about those days in the jungle was perfect. Walking to and from beats was especially delightful, though waiting during a beat could be rather trying, not daring to move and hardly daring to breathe. If a fly came and sat on my forehead it would have to sit there drinking my drops of perspiration for I dare not move. Or my nose would tickle and it would be too ghastly if I sneezed, for utter stillness and complete silence must be kept at all costs.

Once I thought I would make myself more comfortable – and then it would be easier to keep still – by sitting down on a nice hard mound of earth, as the time one had to be still and quiet was anything up to half-an-hour, or longer, after the whistle blew. I looked down just as the whistle went and discovered too late, that I was sitting on a giant ant heap and the ants were beginning to make sorties! Ants over an inch long with evil eyes and murderous intentions. Luckily just as I was wondering if I could stand it a moment more, a 'sound' of wild pig crossed the clearing we were overlooking and, shortly after that, the beaters appeared and that drive was over. It is comforting when sitting on an ant heap to know that part of one is protected by

long and strong khaki drill bloomers! In future I preferred to stand during a beat, preferably leaning against a tree, but never again looking for one of those deceptive, innocent-looking mounds of hard earth on which to sit!

It was only towards the end of those weeks that we got anywhere near a tiger, and then it was towards evening when the men were finishing the day by shooting jungle fowl for the pot.

I was standing beside Capt. Conran holding his rifle, for he had his gun, when there were shrill and excited calls from the beaters of, "Tiger, tiger!" We stood motionless. Capt. Conran put out his hand for me to give him his rifle, and as I did so we saw the long grass wave a few yards from where we were standing. Afterwards we measured the distance and it was just three yards, but there was no sound. The tiger had passed. What so amazed me was that we had seen nothing except the waving grass. There seemed no cover, only very sparse long grass, a few stunted shrubs and some patches of sand, yet the tiger had slipped by unseen.

We were on the boundary of another shooting block and the tiger had passed into it. We traced his pad marks in the soft sand. I was staggered at the huge size of them and bitterly disappointed that, though it had been so close to us, we had had no glimpse of a long, lithe, orange and black striped body.

Capt. Conran told me that he was glad we had not seen it as he would have had to resist the temptation to shoot for fear of only wounding it, and a wounded tiger might turn dangerous.

It gave me a queer creepy thrill to think I had been so near a real live and perhaps man-eating tiger. My confidence in Capt. Conran was such that I was sure he would have saved me from being eaten! for what with one thing and another, I felt safe with him and longed to tell him so, – but didn't. I just kept close to his heels like a rather frightened puppy, and during that walk back in the rapidly fading light I tried hard not to look back over my shoulder or jump at rustlings in the grass, or amongst the trees.

Rising as we did every morning before 5 am and often as early as 3 am, to enable us to do a long walk through jungle paths and reach some given point before the wild life was awake and astir, and being out in the open air all day long, we were tired by the evening and after our last meal were ready to go to bed.

But for a short time we sat round the enormous square central table at which at least twenty-four people could have sat, though there were only four chairs. The reason for its large size was so that visiting forest officials could spread out on it their maps of the district. While Father and Capt. Conran smoked their pipes and Margaret wrote her diary, Mummie and I did the odd jobs of mending, stockings and socks to be darned, rents in khaki shirts and jackets etc.

It was our last evening and I suppose I was feeling tired, snappy and on edge at the thought that tomorrow would bring all this lovely jungle life to an end and we should return to what seemed by comparison a drab life in Mussoorie. So when the men went outside to make some last arrangements for our departure and Mummie, looking suspiciously at the garment I was mending, said: – "What on earth are you doing?"

I replied crossly: "Mending Capt. Conran's breeches – anything wrong in that?"

"Well," she hesitated, "It rather depends on what parts you are mending."

"A three-cornered tear in the knee if you want to know, and anything else I can find." For I had been well trained to be a very thorough mender: thin places, loose buttons and all.

"I think you had better give them to me."

"Why? Capt. Conran asked me to mend them for him. I've got a nice nature today and I'm feeling kind, helpful and unselfish, though it is actually your job as they got torn when he helped you down from the tree the night you spent in the machan with him. But I don't mind, I'll do them for you."

"You had better let me see if any of the buttons want sewing on. You can mend the tear but I'll do the buttons."

I gave them a quick professional glance and a tweak to see if they wanted strengthening, for I knew from my experience of my brothers' fly buttons, how often they needed that!

"No," I assured her, "they are all safe."

Margaret gave me a kick under the table as a sign to shut up, for Mummie was beginning to look flustered and soon she would get out of her depth trying, not to explain, but to convey in a vague way some half-remembered principles of what her mother had considered improper. I was apt to argue about the strange Victorian codes of what was and what was not correct behaviour, of what could not be said and done, and I would want to know why. Then we would get involved in a somewhat heated argument. Margaret, the peacemaker, would hurriedly say, "Enid has a bad headache, I always know when she has one because she starts to argue. She can't help it. So let's go to bed."

"Buttons! Buttons!," said I later to Margaret. "Now I suppose they are to be added to 'legs' as things one doesn't talk about. I assure you that Capt. Conran wouldn't mind my sewing buttons on for him, or mentioning them, because he has sisters." And I told her how understanding he was about 'picking wild flowers and fixing suspenders'.

Margaret told me, and not for the first time, that she thought Capt. Conran was rather nice and she hoped I wasn't going to be unkind to him. I shrugged my shoulders.

"You were quite right," I confessed. "I have got a headache now – a splitting one – and I wish I hadn't told Capt. Conran I would go for a last early morning walk with him tomorrow. Will you come with me? Please darling."

"Oh no! I couldn't do that. You know I take far longer to pack than you do."

"Not even if I help you?"

But she was adamant in her refusal and when the next morning she produced the excuse of a tummy upset, I had to take that as final.

So there was Capt. Conran waiting for me on the verandah before 5 am, and together we walked a mile or more in the softly growing early morning light: these were to me the most lovely fleeting moments in all the twenty-four hours. Nothing could have been more beautiful than watching the dawn fade and the sunrise over

the banks of the jungle river.

Capt. Conran had chosen the place and time he knew I loved best in which to ask me to marry him, but alas! I was not in love with him and had to say, "No."

He looked so sad and wounded at my refusal and I felt so sad too, that I longed to ask him to put his arms round me and comfort me, but one doesn't say that sort of thing at seventeen: that wish to be comforted betrays one's youth too much. So I threw a few pebbles into the river and chewed a bit of grass whilst I sought frantically for something to say which would be comforting and yet sophisticated – but without success. Finally to break the long silence I said I hoped I hadn't given him any encouragement, for Margaret was always telling me I encouraged men, led them on, and then said, 'No'.

"You have never done that," he assured me. "On the contrary, for when Margaret returned that hankie I knew, more or less, what the answer would be."

And it had not been one of his khaki utility ones which he had told me to keep, but such a clean, fine white linen one with an embroidered monogram in the corner.

If he had said to me: "Do you remember the occasion when you felt so sad about the dying stag? And yesterday evening when you honestly had been a bit frightened by the nearness of the tiger – now admit you were? Well: I've decided to marry you because you so obviously need someone at hand to produce a hankie for you when you forget yours, and to save you from being eaten by tigers." If he had said this I should very likely have agreed with him for I was near enough to the age when one obeyed one's elders and, after a friendly and amusing argument, I might have said: "Oh, all right then: I suppose you know best," and that would have been that.

As it was I had said 'NO', he had accepted it and that was the end.

Sadly we made our way back to the forest bungalow, the breakfast, and all the hurry and bustle of departure.

Nothing looks the same when leaving as it does when arriving. On this occasion the forest jungle seemed unbelievably beautiful as it gradually receded. On our arrival it had been a thrilling and unknown quality, now it had a personal relationship to me. I felt I had shared many things with it. It had been generous enough to show me in rare, unexpected, fleeting glimpses, and occasional revelation of its secret hidden life, and for that I felt a very great gratitude.

Not long after this my father was transferred to Shillong in Assam, a journey of four nights and five days right across India. I think we all felt rather depressed at leaving the vicinity of Lucknow and all our friends and when someone told me that I should like Shillong because it was more like parts of England and Scotland, I took an instinctive dislike to it. I did not want England to be like India or India to be like England!

The country was very green for it was not very far from Cherrypungi, the place which has the greatest rainfall in the world. Certainly it never seemed to stop raining at Shillong which was not very cheerful!

There were rolling hills, only stunted fir trees, no snow-topped mountains to be seen, and even the low hills were usually hidden in a depressing mist.

The only flowers I remember were the blue hydrangeas which made a hedge bordering the drive to our bungalow and wonderful rare and valuable orchids which the natives brought in from distant places. So many times we planned a riding expedition to where these orchids grew, but it always had to be put off because of the rain, rain, rain!

There were also immense and beautiful butterflies, eight inches or more across, the kind you see in very grand butterfly collections and the caterpillars were alarmingly big with faces rather like cats! In spite of a loathing for caterpillars we could not resist collecting some, keeping them until they had all gone into cocoons and then sending them home to my little brothers in England. One or two actually hatched out, though rather misshapen.

Nearly nine months were spent in that mediocre place. The country, dinners, dances, picnics and even our young men (who came in dripping with damp and smelling of mould from the Assam forests – and stood about in our drawing-room, too wet to sit down and too shy to know they were not welcome) were all mediocre! – everything except the orchids and butterflies!

We were delighted when we heard that Father was to be transferred to Simla.

First he was to do a survey tour in Burmah and while he was there, we were to spend the weeks of Christmas gaieties in Calcutta.

Calcutta I did not like, in spite of the gay time we had there. The town of Calcutta as seen by me then, appeared in every way as unattractive as possible. It was a big city that had sprung up in the last hundred years from what had taken two previous centuries to establish, by very slow degrees of building trading sheds on the ever shifting sandy delta of the Huglie estuary. When finally a firm footing had taken hold, after the many setbacks of a fever-ridden swampy country and hostile wars, Calcutta went ahead with thriving business activities and a big city was soon established. Unfortunately it was at the ugly period of building – the early Victorian days. There were large over-ornate office buildings and shops, tram-cars and streets crowded with humanity and every form of vehicle milling about with complete disregard for any rules of the road or safety for human life.

It was exhaustingly hot – the unattractive heat of a large city. If Calcutta had been the only place I had seen in India I should have intensely disliked India – luckily it was not.

But there was one wonderful affair that stood out at the time and which I have never forgotten. It was the Viceroy's state ball which was a dazzling spectacle, the most brilliant social event in India and I should think the most colourful in the world. It was of course a ball at which every man wore his full dress uniform, the Viceroy had his bodyguard in attendance and civilians wore court dress. Added to all this there were a number of the ruling Indian Princes. I had the honour of being introduced to some of these by a man who was high up in the Civil Service. The two men would shake hands with each other with great friendship and after a suitable exchange of compliments, I was introduced. He would formally bow to me, I in return acknowledged it by an inclination of my head, for to have shaken hands with him would have shown familiarity on my part, and for him to have accepted my

outstretched hand would have been an insult to me. I had been warned beforehand what behaviour was expected of me.

I was greatly impressed at their dignity and amazed at the beauty of their ceremonial native dress of gold and silver brocade and their jewels. They had ropes of jewels, pearls, rubies, emeralds, sapphires and diamonds, each stone the size of the proverbial pigeon's egg. These they wore round their necks like strings of beads!

From the front of their turbans stood up wonderful jewelled ornaments. One I remember was like a peacock's tail spread out in full display: an exquisite work of art.

Except for that spectacular ball; where we had a wonderful gay time; where I felt quite exhausted by the heat and noise and crowds, and where I had the admiring attentions of a fabulously rich Greek merchant, I can remember little about Calcutta.

The Greek merchant was very dark and elderly and I was not going to encourage his sticky attentions in spite of the fact that some lady friend of his did her best to point out to me all the advantages. "He is not old," she assured me, "he is under forty. He so much admires your youth and fair colouring, and you would be a fool if you missed the opportunity of becoming one of the richest women in the world." I wouldn't marry that man if he was a Greek God (and he certainly wasn't that!) – and have to live in Calcutta.

"My dear, any girl would give her eyes for the admiration he shows towards you, he has told me that if you..."

Oh yes, he was lavishly hospitable and most generous, constantly putting one of his many expensive cars at our disposal and when he took us to the races he put money on various horses for me. When my horse lost he had only put 1/- on it, but if it won, he happened to have backed it heavily in my name and would try to get me to accept staggeringly large winnings. These naturally I refused to take – it was too much like bribery!

None of his signs of wealth tempted me, not even the sumptuous dinner parties he gave in his luxurious house, where we always dined off gold plates.

After a few weeks in Calcutta we heard from Father that he was to be sent on the Turco-Persian Boundary Commission, immediately. This would mean he would only be away a few months and he advised us to spend the time in Lucknow and then join him in Simla on his return.

We were delighted to go back to Lucknow for the life there appealed to us all far more than that of Calcutta.

CHAPTER 7

Return to Lucknow

February and March 1914 we spent in Lucknow and it was there I first heard anyone say, and with absolute conviction, that there would be a European war before long.

There was no wireless in those days, no routine listening to the 8 am news (mainly for the weather forecast) or to the 6 or 9 pm news just to hear if 'anything was happening in the world'.

Nowadays I do not think even small children could fail subconsciously to absorb news. "Hush children, be quiet and don't talk for a few minutes, I'm listening to the news", and they play or do whatever they are doing silently. They are not listening but they cannot help hearing.

Daily papers have pictures. Young girls, of the age we were then, looked first at the illustrated fashions, at pictures of a glamorous film-star to note the way her hair is done; to see if chunky jewellery is being worn this way or that; eyebrows winged and whether mouths are to be painted with a 'sexy' or 'sulky' expression.

If they are in the least observant, they cannot fail to catch a glimpse of a few headlines as they turn the pages in search of what really interests them, and so they do get a sketchy idea of what has happened, or might happen.

But in our young days we hardly glanced at the daily paper which, in India, was the 'Pioneer'. Deadly dull and stodgy it was, with long reports of meetings of Executive Councils of this and that, so when Father suggested that we should read some good and interesting article we only did so because his quiet advice was always worth taking. Otherwise we hardly bothered even to look at a paper. When Father was not with us our first economy was to cancel the daily paper. We never read them and they only accumulated for packing purposes.

Read we did, and avidly, but books not papers, and our books were classics and histories. I cannot remember reading a modern novel unless it was an historical one.

Even when we were girls we never read girls' books, such as 'Monica, Head of the Sixth Form'. Some stupid person once gave me this as a Christmas present so I read it but it was all about girls' petty quarrels and jealousies over a hockey playing girl-heroine who, on the last page, shot the final goal and so won the match for the school. One of these books was quite enough for me! "Children of the New Forest", "Coral Island", "Three Midshipmen", and "Uncle Tom's Cabin", were the kind we liked; adventurous travel or books with an historical background.

Margaret, being the eldest, read every book before I did and knowing my over-sensitive fear of anything cruel or sad would always prevent me from reading anything which might upset me. If I was reading say, "Uncle Tom's Cabin", she would tell me not to read from page * to page *. Or she would read to me up to a certain point, then turn over several pages and read on again until it was safe for me to have the book. Or if we were both reading, she one book and I another, she would

keep a watchful lookout and say from time to time, "Where have you got to now? Oh! all right, you can read to the bottom of that page then give it to me."

This I would willingly do and on no account did I ever look back to what she called the 'dangerous' bits, for if I had read anything sad or cruel it would probably mean that I should wake her up in the night and, being what she was, she would get out of her warm bed and into mine to cuddle, comfort, and cheer me up, and this I knew was selfish of me.

Perhaps I was protected too much as a child and as a young girl. Even in India, Margaret always seems to have been near to say, "Enid, be careful, don't look to the right," or to the left, or wherever it was, when a poor injured pi-dog was lying by the side of the road, or a wretched looking pony covered with sores, was being beaten by some native. I would quickly look in another direction.

Mummie also, in her way, guarded us both. She never encouraged us to make friends with other girls, or married women either. "You never know what unsuitable subjects they will try to discuss with my girls," was her reason. Margaret and I certainly wanted no other girl or women friends.

Mummie was very proud and when people said to her: "How unlike your girls are to others." She took it as a compliment (I wonder if it really was!), and put it down to the fact that she chaperoned us so well and was so very careful whom we met.

So – at the beginning of 1914 we were very unworldly-wise in every way.

With all this careful chaperonage and only being introduced to men who Mummie knew were absolutely 'nice' – having found out from their Colonel's wives or somebody – I was more amused and intrigued with 'R' (Mr Dudley¹) the first man who, without formal introduction, came boldly up to me and said: "You will dance this me," and before I could protest had swept me off my feet to waltz to the music of 'The Blue Danube'. This was at a ball at the Chattar Munzil Palace, a fancy dress ball, the day after we arrived back in Lucknow.

True to our love of bygone days, our dresses were early Victorian; they really were lovely dresses, designed by Margaret and made by the *dhirzie*². I think we must have looked quite sweet with our still little posies of flowers, our hair in ringlets and our full crinoline dresses.

While wearing this dress I could not help picturing the contrast in dresses from those worn during the time of the Indian Mutiny in 1857 and what we were wearing in 1914. I thought how simple and wearable our clothing now was. Corsets were worn, but as I always extracted the bones in mine they neither restricted my breathing or my movements. Skirts being just off the ground did not hamper one much and only one petticoat was worn. But think of the days of crinolines, of many petticoats, of the many flounces on them, as well as on the dresses, of the boned corsets, boned bodices to the dresses, and all the other inconveniences of those days!

Through the crowd of people who were filling up their programmes whilst the

¹ Roland Dudley.

² A tailor who would probably have come to them at home.

band played the first extras, a tall 'Cossack' made his way towards me and – swept me off my feet. Laughing at my protestations that we had not been introduced (remember this was 1914 and conventions were very strict), he continued with –

"Your dress suits you and I think your character also, so in deference to your primness, I will find someone after this dance who will introduce us."

"It's too late," I said, "the damage has been done."

I really thought I had committed a crime by allowing someone to dance with me who had not been introduced!

He kept his word and after that dance found a mutual friend to perform the necessary introduction. I danced with him many times and I am afraid I cut several other partners and that was 'not done' in those days. It meant that when I met an aggrieved young man who accused me of having cut his dance, I had to make profuse apologies for having mistaken the entrance to the ballroom at which we had agreed to meet. Luckily there were many entrances all round the ballroom and one could with luck get away with it.

From then on I saw much of R. For the next two months hardly a day passed that we did not meet in one way or another. We danced or we rode together. We got to know each other very well indeed.

His father had been a very rich man but when he died the property and nearly all the money went to the eldest son (R's brother) as was usual in those days, and he found himself at the end of his three years at Oxford with only a very small allowance. He felt very bitter at the thought of his father having brought him up to have a complete disregard for money, having given him a large allowance at Oxford, and then leaving him so very little. So he decided to go into the army. Having had a wonderful time at Oxford and being convinced that before many years passed there would be a European war, he thought it was better to join up then and have a few years of the lighter side of army life before all the horrors of the serious side.

"There can't possibly be a war," I said.

"And what are your reasons for such a positive statement?"

"Just because it couldn't happen. It would be too awful."

"That is no reason. Are you as ignorant as the majority of people out here? Do you read the papers, or take any interest in world affairs?"

"I'm afraid I don't. I'm just like the young subalterns you despise so much."

"Ah well! I'll forgive you. You are so busy with your own little war of wounding men's hearts! But I can't forgive the others, the majority of them don't think or talk of anything but polo and races. They are like ostriches with their heads buried in the sand and all bottled up in their own narrow-minded little set."

"Nobody but you talks about a war."

"Because they don't want to think about it, that's all. They don't even take an interest in this wonderful country, know nothing of its history, have no wish to visit any of its native states or learn about them, or even learn the language."

"R will you please stop being intolerant of people less clever than yourself who haven't had the advantage of an Oxford education and haven't got an MA and BA."

"Who told you I had? I haven't bragged about it."

"Someone told me I suppose. Now please talk about something else. When you talk about war it gives me cold shivers down the spine and I hear the distant 'Drums of War'."

"Would it make you feel less shivery if I kissed you?"

"It would NOT, and I don't want that sort of conversation either!"

"Would you like me to give a lecture on Astrology or Greek Mythology?"

"Yes, you know I love it when you talk about those sort of things."

It was true, I did. I appreciated his cleverness and he had a delightful way of imparting knowledge.

So I chose Greek mythology, for Margaret, who admitted his fascination and charm, had said she thought he looked like a Greek God – and I secretly thought the same. Margaret added that she hoped he would not encourage me in my natural leanings towards Paganism!

So R would talk to me on this and many other subjects; on histories of all countries and ages, and extracts which he translated from Ovid and the Iliad, and he would tell me about the philosophy of Confucius and many other things.

It was at this time that I began to realise what I had missed by having so little education and had a great longing to know more about so many things.

On the whole R was gay and light-hearted, most amusing and with a quick and ready wit. He could twist Mummie round his little finger with his flattering compliments and quick repartee and he even charmed Margaret, who would say to me: "I do really think R is the most fascinating man we have ever met but I still think C has the nicer character and you ought to find time to answer his letters. Now he has to write to Mummie to get news of you."

"Darling, you write to C for me and I'll mend your dress, the one which got torn on your 8th Hussar's spurs."

Margaret blushed, but refused.

"Not even if I mend three pairs of your stockings as well?"

"No, not even that will bribe me. You know I'll do a lot for you but I won't answer your lover's letters for you."

"Well, if I write to him, he will take it as an encouragement and you don't want me to give people false hopes – what am I to do then?"

"Can't you take C seriously?"

"Darling, I do try to do what you say, but take C seriously, I can't."

So R continued to pay me much attention and I continued to enjoy it for I was eighteen and he twenty-eight and they were perfect ages for being happy.

R amused me because I never knew what he would say next and never knew when he would make one of his silent and unexpected appearances, generally behind me.

"I'm practising. It may be useful when I'm stalking the enemy," he would say, laughing at the start he gave me.

Whilst watching polo or at the races, I did not mind so much, but I thought it a very mean thing to do when I was sitting out a dance with a young man and I told him so.

I remember one such occasion when he did this at a dance at the Chattar Munzil Palace, after he had told me he was not going to be there. Suddenly, from behind me, I heard him say to the man with whom I was sitting out, "You had better find your partner for this dance; can't you hear the music has started?" And so dismissed the poor young man, who fled!

"And now," turning to me, "will you dance or sit out?"

"Neither. You know this is not your dance. I thought you were supposed to be orderly officer tonight."

"Well, I changed my mind. I bribed one of my subalterns to do the job. Told him he could borrow my best pony for polo tomorrow. I felt like coming here to see what you were up to."

"I can't dance with you, I'm dancing every dance."

"What nonsense! Oh! all right then if you think you'll get talked about, or if you think your partners will go to your mother or sister with a grievance, we will sit out far from anyone and talk."

He began by saying: "After all the trouble I've taken to try and teach you not to make 'obvious conversation' that was the feeblest effort I've ever heard! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"It's you who ought to be ashamed of yourself – spying on me like that!"

"Well, I'm not! I'll just repeat what I overheard and you can tell me honestly what you think about it. It went something like this, as far as I can remember."

'Did you watch the polo today,' from him.

'Yes,' from you.

A long pause.

'Are you playing again tomorrow?' from you.

Another long pause.

"After thinking frantically for a long time, you ask him if he's going to the races tomorrow – he having just told you that he is playing polo.

'I don't think so,' he replies.

"After a still longer pause, he plucks up courage to ask you if you are going to the dance tomorrow night and, if so, will you keep him some dances. And you say: 'I don't know'."

"And you," I retorted, "Ought to be ashamed of yourself for sneaking up behind people and listening to what they are saying."

"Very private, wasn't it?"

"Don't be so sarcastic. He can't help being shy and difficult to talk to. We were doing our best – both of us. I think all your Oxford education has made you self opinionated and intolerant."

"That's better! Now you are not making conversation. You are saying what you think, without thinking. And as it's about myself, I find it most enlightening and entertaining. So go on, tell me some more of your opinion of my character. You have already told me I am selfish, self opinionated and intolerant. Surely your vocabulary doesn't stop there?"

"Why should I go on saying what I think about you?"

"For the simple and selfish reason that one is always the most important person in one's own eyes."

"Is that psychology?"

"Perhaps, but haven't you noticed that if photos of a group are handed round to those in them, they look longest and with most interest at themselves? Then if they have come out badly they think it's rotten! Doesn't that show how vastly more interested they are in themselves than the others? So come on, tell me more about myself and then I will give you my opinion of you."

"You have already done quite a lot of that. Just think how you have been telling me off about my efforts at conversation."

"I notice a marked improvement when you are with me! Does that cheer you up?"

"You happen to be easy to talk to."

"I'll take that as a compliment. Have you any more to pay me?"

"You are a good polo player and tennis player. I love listening to the stories you tell me and I feel natural and happy when I am with you. Are those enough compliments to go on with?"

"Yes, especially the latter part."

We were sitting right down on the sandy bank of the river. As it was towards the end of March, the night was hot and still. There was a full moon not far risen and R made me sit so that my profile was silhouetted against it.

"And now! Would you like to hear what I think of you?"

"If you don't make it too cuttingly critical – yes."

"I'll start by paying you the greatest compliment I can think of. I would like to have you with me always and beside me at night. Would you like that?"

I said: "I would love it if you would talk to me all the time and tell me fascinating stories."

I described to him my idea of a blissful night – he and I lying side-by-side with our arms crossed behind our heads as pillows and near enough to talk easily. It would of course be a warm night, beside a river, with a full moon. I would lie awake for hours and hours and finally get sleepy listening to his stories of Greek mythology and, when I woke at dawn, he could go on talking to me.

"And am I to have any say in what I would like?"

"Yes of course, that would only be fair," for I was feeling in a friendly mood now. "What would you like?"

As he made no reply, I said: "Can't you think of anything? And you with your quick mind."

"Yes I can, plenty of things. And one of them is that I'd like to look from time to time at your turned-up little nose against the moon, as it is now."

"Yes, you can do that if it gives you pleasure but, as a classical scholar you should admire Grecian or Roman noses."

"I'm also a Pagan scholar, didn't you know? And your nose has a pagan tilt."

"Margaret doesn't approve of pagan conversation so I had better change the subject! I will go on with my description of our night. Only its early morning now and I will make us a delicious and rather smoky cup of tea."

How he laughed at my description of a perfect night!

"You are very young, very innocent and very sweet."

Indignantly I denied that I was young, after all I was eighteen and had been grown-up for two years. As for being innocent I couldn't help that. And I went on to tell him that my father couldn't afford to go on educating me after the age of sixteen when he had a family of six children.

I suppose I didn't know the difference between 'innocent' and 'ignorant' and I certainly must have been both. All I did was to make him laugh more and tell me he loved me as I was.

We sat and talked for a long time – not that it had seemed long to either of us, but looking up at the moon, I realised, with a conscious-stricken start that it was higher in the heavens than it ought to be and now I said firmly that I, anyhow, must return to the dance. As we walked slowly back he said: "What would you say if I asked you to marry me?"

"I refuse to answer that. You would only laugh at me whatever I said, and pull it to bits."

Have you had much experience in refusing offers of marriage? Do you always say: 'This is so sudden' and later, 'I shall always think of you with sisterly affection', or some such trite soothing snub?"

"What I say to men is entirely my own business and none of yours."

"Am I to take that as a snub?"

"You can take it any way you like – which you will do anyhow."

"Do you want me to tell you how I've spent the afternoon?"

"Was it interesting?"

"It was, but rather depressing. I've been having tea with a married lady to find out what it costs to live as a married man. And I find it's d***d expensive."

"So you have added to your fund of knowledge?"

"Do you know why I exchanged being orderly officer tonight?"

"I should think the truthful answer to that is that you wanted an excuse not to play that pony of yours tomorrow. You say he is an unmanageable brute, so now you will lend him and hope that people will think how unselfish you are."

"Shall I go back now, relieve that young man of doing my job as orderly officer and lend him my best polo pony as well? I told you he was an unmanageable brute because I was not going to let you ride him the other day. He pulls a bit but he's

d***d good on the polo ground. If I do that, you can have the pleasure of thinking you are reforming my natural selfishness."

"Yes, you had better go back and I must return to the ballroom now."

As we made our way towards the sound of distant music he stopped at the fringe of the blue-gum plantation which bordered one side of the Chattar Munzil Palace lawns.

"Here I leave you. No," (in answer to a question from me) "I'm not coming into the ballroom. I'm not feeling in the mood to watch you dancing with other men and you won't cut any more dances for me – or will you?"

"You know I've cut quite enough as it is, so how could I? It would be appallingly rude."

"Will you ever take anything I say – or the meaning I tried to convey to you – seriously?"

"My mother said I was never to take anything that any man said to me at a dance seriously. One never knows how much champagne they have had or what effect the music has on them."

"I have not had any champagne, neither could I hear the music whilst we were down by the river."

"No, but the moon was shining and Mummie says that when that is so I mustn't take men seriously."

"I'll admit the moon was divine and thought that by its light you looked - - - and now I can hear the 'Blue Danube' so I had better go. You needn't tell your sister that I put in an appearance tonight, nor tell her of the questions I've asked you."

"I've told you, I don't even tell Margaret what men say to me, and I won't tell her you've been here."

With that he went. And for a moment or two I watched that strangely attractive back of his and the panther-like grace with which he moved as he disappeared into the shadow of the blue-gums.

A shiver went down my spine. It had been colder perhaps than I had realised down by the river. Or was it that R had said just those few words: 'It might come in useful when I am stalking the enemy' that made me feel that, at the back of his mind there was always the thought of the war that was to come? I could sense that, try as he would, he couldn't but help – at times – facing it, and all that it implied, as a certainty. But could that be possible? A War?

I hurried back to the ballroom, made what apologies I could to the partners whose dances I had cut, and tried to throw myself into enjoying the rest of the evening, but it wasn't easy for I kept on thinking and thinking and wanting to ask R the answers to the questions of what I wanted to know, which he could have told me, but now he had gone and all I could think of was – could it be possible – of war! And perhaps even he be killed. How could that ever be – someone as alive, vital and who enjoyed life as much as he did?

There were now only a few days left before leaving Lucknow for Simla.

It was one of the last evenings R and I spent in the grounds and ruins of the old

Residency. It was a favourite haunt of ours and perhaps that is why I remember it so well, for we could talk, with sympathetic understanding about things like the story of the 'Ghostly Pipers'.

The many rides we had together were generally in the cool of the evening and were not strenuous. There was no need for coat or topee and as for riding I always did my hair in a doubled-up plait, with no hairpins. I was both cool and comfortable.

On our last afternoon I took my sketching things and still have the sketch I did. It was a beautiful evening and a lovely sunset. I painted an old fort against the evening sky. Just as I had finished, a huge black cloud came up behind the fort. I painted it in and thought it looked rather effective but R said:

"I wish you had not put in that cloud. That cloud will spoil a very lovely future for us. It is a War Cloud and I shall be killed."

"Don't say that please," I begged him. "You know it makes me so unhappy when you talk of a coming war."

"I am only facing facts," he said, slipping his arm through mine. "War is bound to come before the end of the summer."

"Perhaps if it does come it will be over very quickly, before you have time to get to Europe and fight."

"I shall do all in my power to get to the fighting as soon as possible and, as for its being a short war, no amount of wishful thinking will make it that. Germany has been preparing for it for years and is mighty strong. The war might well last five years. When it comes and I am fighting, will you remember me in your prayers?"

"You know I will."

"And will you be kind enough to pray that I shall be killed instantaneously and not wounded and maimed for life. I can face up to death but I should find it hard to live as a pathetic invalid."

Then he changed his tone to the laughing, teasing way he had. "Cheer up! and take that 'washed-out' look, as your mother calls it, off your young face. When I am killed I shall still remember you. I shall visit you from time to time – yes, silently and unexpectedly! and we will laugh and talk. I'll want to know what you are doing, and what you are making of your life in this world so full of beauty and interest. No, I won't forget you, nor will you forget me. You will think of me when the moon is full and always when you see the star Venus in the sky."

We sat in silence for a while. A silence between us did not mean that we had nothing to say to each other, but just that we were thinking things over. I sensed that R had something more to say. Presently he said: "The remaining time we have together is very short."

I tried to think it was only that in a few minutes or more we must mount our horses and ride back, for tomorrow I was leaving Lucknow and I hoped it would only be a few months before we met again.

He went on: "I'm wondering what I can say that you will remember and that would bring help and happiness to you in the future. Memories can be of great value, but so much depends on yourself and how you think things out. Try to make your

life a full and happy one and you will have something of value to look back upon. It may be a golden wind will stir your memory."

He then quoted some lines to me. I wish I had remembered them but all except the words: 'A Golden Wind can stir the memory,' floated away.

I asked R to say them again but he refused, saying: "You know that I am not a repetitionist."

"At least tell me who wrote it, so that I can look it up. Is it a quotation? Is it a translation from one of the Greek poets, or did you think of it?"

"Why do you want to know? Are not the words themselves enough?"

"Then will you explain the meaning of them to me? the way you can do so well – please! You know that you can put things in such a way that I can understand them."

"I think that it is time you thought out meanings for yourself. However, for your age and with your lack of education and experience, you are not too bad! At least you do grasp that there is more in most things than meets the eye. You have that advantage but you would not have me always at hand to explain things to you – much as I would like to be able to do."

The little breeze that suddenly sprang up chilled me, in spite of the intense warmth of the evening.

"Surely this wind is not a 'Golden Wind'," I ventured to ask him.

"I think it is," he replied, "and I think that you will think so too, one of these days. Earlier on, while we laughed, it was delightfully golden for a short time. Perhaps it has now veered round to silver, but it will swing round again to gold – for you."

I think we rode back very silently.

Halfway down the drive he pulled up his horse and put a hand on the rein of mine.

"I'm not coming any further. I'm going to say goodbye to you here, so dismount and I'll lead your horse back. Come on, gather up your skirt and jump."

I rode side-saddle so, lifting my knee over the pommel and gathering my skirt, I slipped down and into his arms.

The drive was shaded by a group of blue-gums and was nearly dark just there. He only held me in his arms for a moment whilst he kissed the top of my head.

"This isn't really goodbye, is it?" I asked.

"Yes."

"I thought you would come to the station to see us off tomorrow. You told Mummie you would, and she will think it rude and unfriendly if you don't."

"Let her think what she likes. There is nothing I should hate more than to be one of a milling crowd of you and your sister's admirers! I prefer to remember you as you look now. So this is goodbye."

I watched him mount his horse and then, leading mine, slowly disappear round a bend in the drive.

It was the last time I ever saw him.

It was some years later when I read Siegfried Sassoon's 'War Poems', that the

lines:

Horror of wounds and anger at the foe,
And a loss of things desired; all these must pass,
We are the happy legion, for we know
Time's but a golden wind that shakes the grass.

– reminded me so poignantly of R Having used the words "A Golden Wind", and the way he said them to me. In a flash I realised the deeper meaning and significance of the lines he had quoted which I had not fully taken in at the time.

Margaret was waiting for me on the verandah. She said: "I watched R ride away just now. Mounted on his grey charger he somehow had the look of a knight in armour. The set of his shoulders and the way he carries his head makes me think that there is something very brave and gallant about him. In spite of his elegant, debonair, arrogant good looks and light-hearted manner, he has more feeling than you think."

"Oh! Darling, do you think there is going to be a war as he does?"

"Oh! darling, how could there be? It would be just too awful. Don't think about it, or you won't sleep tonight. Come and pack, and do please help me with mine. I'll never finish it without your help."

We went to Simla the following day to wait Father's return from the Turco-Persian Boundary Commission.

CHAPTER 8

To Simla and return to England

Simla was the hill station capital of India and the summer residence of the Viceroy, of the Commander-in-Chief and all their glittering staff. None of this appealed to me. There were too many houses packed too closely together, too many people and to be frank, too many parties and too much gaiety.

Father had been delayed on the Turco-Persian Boundary Commission which was taking far longer than had been estimated. He told us later on that much of the delay was due to the Russians who were most uncooperative and maddeningly unpunctual. In the evenings they liked to enjoy themselves by giving wonderful parties with thrilling horsemanship, music and Cossack dances, accompanied by much drinking of vodka!

During, or after, these parties they would assure my father that they would do anything he commanded them, so brave were they and prepared to lay down their lives for their country, for him and his country!

The only thing father asked them, again and again, was to be punctual at the arranged meeting place next morning – to decide on some boundary mark – for their constant unpunctuality was delaying the whole Commission.

"That small effort was easy for them," they would assure him, "for never would they fail to obey the commands of the brave English Colonel."

But were they there the next morning? NO!

The English and the Turks always arrived at the given time. They were followed by the French, rather late and in a disorderly hurry, unshaven and with their uniforms crumpled.

Hours they would wait for the Russians who, if they turned up at all, would arrive late in the afternoon too late for any work to be done that day. Or they would fail to make an appearance at all and when the party returned to the camp, they would be profuse in their apologies and explanations that they had mistaken the meeting place and had been up since the crack of dawn galloping in all directions searching for the place. Or they would turn nasty and say they had never been informed of any meeting to take place anywhere.

Father had a great admiration for the Turks but a poor opinion of the reliability of the Russians.

So while this Boundary Commission dawdled on, we awaited Father's return to Simla and, as it was uncertain where he would be sent then, we went to stay at an hotel.

Disappointed at Father's failure to return, missing our friends in Lucknow and having to stay in an hotel, all combined to make me dislike Simla.

The Cecil Hotel was a very smart new one and might almost be described as a luxury hotel. But how ugly! Built of red brick and looking like a biscuit factory. It

was about five Storeys high on the side facing the Mall and at least eight or ten on the side facing the steep Khud¹.

We had a delightful suite of rooms and as usual Mummie quickly transformed our sitting room into a very pretty room where we did a lot of entertaining. But in spite of all the parties and gaiety, I never liked Simla.

Mummie enjoyed hotel life, saying one saw everything that was going on. That was true. The Cecil Hotel was like a club, a general meeting place for everyone. A band played at lunch and again in the evenings for dancing.

After two months of this hectic social life, even Mummie began to wilt! Margaret felt tired and I not only looked but felt 'washed out'! So we all jumped at the chance of going into the wilds. A friend of ours, Major K N easily persuaded us to go for a trek on the road to Tibet.

Out came our drill khaki jackets and skirts, our khaki topees and strong walking boots. We hardened our feet by rubbing them with eau de cologne as a guard against blistering. We said goodbye to our young men – with some regret! – and started off on our daily marches further and further into the heart of the Himalayas.

Our average day's march was not long, probably only ten or twelve miles, as we had to consider our servants and the coolies who carried the necessary baggage. Also that was roughly the distance between the forest rest-bungalows.

Every day the country became more beautiful. The mountains gave out a feeling of an even more wild and untamed spirit of aloof grandeur.

I often thought how little people realised what gave us real happiness. Many people had said to me before we left: "But, my dear! you can't leave Simla at the height of the season. You will miss the Viceroy's ball, you will miss this and that..." And, in answer to some vague reply of mine about liking the wild places of the world, they would say in astonishment: "But you can look at the mountains from here and have a gay time as well."

On we marched sixty miles. We planned to go much further but when we reached Narkunda it was so indescribably beautiful that we decided to stay there ten days or so, then make our way back. Also K N – the experienced mountaineer! – had a poisoned blistered heel and we were all suffering in varying degrees from having drunk contaminated water – not so funny!

Narkunda was a very small hill village consisting of a cluster of native huts and a general bazaar shop at which could be bought grain, potatoes, etc. The country around was quite different to any we had yet seen. We had risen gradually from eight to over ten thousand feet and the mountains were magnificent in their rugged grandeur. There were grassy slopes of brilliant green, outcrops of rock and forests of colossal pines. When I see a Canadian redwood it takes me back to Narkunda and I see again those pines with their rough orange-red bark and great height. In the sunset their trunks were flame colour, almost as though on fire.

Scattered about the hillsides were a few wood huts used to shelter cattle or store fodder. These huts and those in the village were built of pine logs, just log huts,

¹ A deep ravine.

strong and picturesque in their natural simplicity. The roofs were of split pine trunks and were kept from being blown off in the winter gales by great rock boulders which were placed on them (*Plate 4*). I thought with disgust of those ugly red brick, tin roofed houses and bungalows so much admired by the inhabitants of Simla and Mussoorie.

Our ten days at Narkunda were lazy ones, spent in wandering about the hillsides, or penetrating deep into the forest with our books and sketching things.

Our return was left to the last possible day, just allowing time for K N to get to Peshawar by the time his leave was up. Owing to some unforeseen hitch we had one day to do a double march – 21 miles – which we all agreed was wonderful and only wished it had been away from Simla instead of towards it.

Back in Simla after three weeks in the wilds – it must have been about the third week in July – we first heard people talking about the serious situation in Europe and the probability of a war. We had had no papers nor heard any news of the outside world whilst we had been away, and before we left Simla no one there had talked of war, at least not to us. Now we heard rumours, vague at first and then more serious, and then in a few days, fighting had started in Europe and on August 4th England declared war on Germany.

Men had been recalled from leave during the previous few days and were leaving Simla by every available train. We saw many of our friends off on these trains, saying goodbye to them. Their one anxiety was to get to the fighting before Christmas when the war would be over – or so they thought.

In a very few days Simla was empty.

We were terribly worried and anxious about Father's safety in Persia. Turkey entered the war and all exits from Persia were barred in one way or another.

Margaret's husband to be (though she was not yet engaged to him) was in England and might be sent to the front at any moment.

R wrote to me saying he had wangled a quick transfer and was off to France. He had written to me many times in the last few months, always cheerful and amusing letters. Now he wrote to say he was leaving India and how glad he was that, as war had to come, it had already started. I had several letters from him during his journey to Bombay, and then from France. Gay and as amusing as ever, he reminded me of my promise (which I had not given) not to become engaged without first asking his permission!

Getting no news of Father worried us more than anything.

First Aid lectures were started and a work party which of course we joined.

Appallingly long casualty lists appeared in the papers every day and we saw many of our friends' names in them. In one list we read the names of twenty or more, for amongst the regiments which were nearly wiped out, was the H. L. I., who in one day lost all but two of their officers and a handful of men.

When I saw R's name among so many others I was completely stunned and I don't think I ever felt young again.

Before Christmas we had lost two of our uncles, thirteen of our cousins and so

many many friends. But we did hear that Father was safe. He had managed to escape by making his way very slowly through Russia up to Archangel where he boarded a cargo boat to England. The first news we had was of his safe arrival at Hull, for he had not been able to communicate with the India Office, the Foreign Office or anyone else. After just a fortnight in England, to see his four younger children, he returned to India and joined us in Simla.

For a relatively short time we were happily together again and then Mummie began getting anxious to go to England and see her other children. The rumours now were that it might not be such a short war after all and that if we did not get back soon, no passages would be available. So passages for the three of us were applied for but we did not get them until the beginning of the hot weather.

Whilst waiting for the troop-ship passages, we had to be ready to accept them, if granted, and leave at twenty-four hours' notice. Weeks passed and there we waited, with our boxes more or less packed, not knowing if, or when, we might get our passages.

When, finally, the telegram came saying we had been given passages on H M Troopship 'Teesta' – 'Proceed immediately to Karachi' – we had to leave at once, for it was a journey of three days to Karachi.

And what a journey!

It was I suppose in the month of June¹, at the beginning of the hot weather before the monsoon broke. At Lahore the guard of the train told us to shut all our carriage windows – white glass, blue glass, wire gauze, shutters and all – to keep out the heat and the dust (dust! he meant sand!) for we were soon to enter the devilish Sind Desert.

I suppose a certain amount of heat and sand was kept out and certainly all air was! Occasionally when, nearly at suffocation point, either Mummie or Margaret opened the carriage door for a moment during a stop at some station, great gusts of burning air and sand filled our carriage in a matter of seconds.

Father had ordered an ice-box to be given to us at Lahore but it failed to turn up and the electric fan in the carriage was out of order. That day was HELL. We thought that when night fell it might get better but on the contrary now it was INFERNO. We were well and truly in the notorious Sind Desert, and all that night the train thundered on without a stop.

I do not remember much about it because I think I was at times unconscious, but I do remember that towards morning the train stopped at a station and the brave Margaret somehow got hold of a drink which she tried to get me to swallow. This I couldn't do because my tongue was so swollen. It was a funny feeling having a tongue which felt the size of a fat porpoise in my mouth – and most uncomfortable.

At that station ice was procured and the fan in the carriage repaired. We recovered.

The week we spent at Karachi was refreshing in spite of the great heat; there were at least sea breezes.

The train that had brought us had a tragic return journey when carrying troops up country. No less than fifty men died from the effects of the heat while crossing

¹ Year 1915.

the Sind Desert. It was known as the Death Train.

Whilst waiting at Karachi we watched the great monsoon clouds roll up – and then break. When we finally embarked the monsoon had broken with all its force and we went into such rough weather that we were at once battered down. That, in great heat, is not such a happy memory.

The India that we had sailed to, to meet with all our happy hopes of a lovely future, the India which we had seen draw nearer in the beauty of a calm pearly dawn, we now left with hardly a backward glance.

We could not have seen much, even if we had wished to do so, for in a rain-and-sea-sprayed launch we were taken out to the 'Teesta' riding a mile or so out to sea, hurried on board and down below.

India was invisible then behind a blanket of greyness.

The 'Teesta' was old, dilapidated and overrun with rats. As soon as we were allowed, we took our bedding on deck at night. Whilst we slept the rats ate our shoes in the cabin, so finally we had to take our remaining shoes up with us.

Our cabin opened out of the saloon and as Mummie still considered it immodest for us to be seen in our night attire on our way to bed on deck, we had to do as we had done on the voyage out – wait till the saloon was completely empty and then make a dash for it, enveloped in dressing gowns and boudoir caps. Actually I did not wear a boudoir cap, though I did sometimes – under protest – submit to putting my long plaits inside my dressing gown. It looked, Mummie said, 'less suggestive' of going to bed.

The troops on board consisted of Gurkhas and British troops and except for one or two, the officers were the new 'temporary gentlemen'. The war had been on for nearly a year and the old type of officer was rapidly killed off.

As we neared Aden rumours started flying about – "Aden had been attacked, had been taken, etc..." When we reached it and tied up, a pale young officer boarded the ship with a bloodstained rag tied round his hand. Aden had been attacked and our troops were to be taken off to help defend it (*Plate 5a*).

Before he left, I washed and bandaged his hand. The lectures and practice in First Aid in Simla had made me feel competent to cope with ghastly war wounds. Luckily for him this was only a graze!

All our troops were taken off. My ex-fiancé had taught us signalling so now we amused ourselves by practising it and soon became experts. We could read what the ships and fort were saying to each other.

At some time during the latter part of 1914 I had become engaged. It had not been a very satisfactory or successful engagement and I'm not very clear in my mind why.

He was a distant cousin of ours¹ and came to Simla on leave and stayed at the Cecil Hotel. We had not met before but soon became friends – by we, I mean Margaret, he and I. He often sat at our table for meals, we danced together and in the

¹ This would have been Wigram Money whom she was to marry in 1956, after she had been widowed.

late afternoons we three happily went for long walks. Margaret and I agreed that we liked our cousin and that it was such a nice easy and natural friendship.

When his leave was up and he returned to his regiment, he wrote and asked me to marry him.

"Oh! Bother," I said to Margaret, "now this spoils our simple friendship."

"Don't you like him?"

"Of course. We both do, but I like things to stay as they are."

Finally Margaret persuaded me that in my heart of hearts I did feel a bit more than just 'liking' him and, knowing that she knew me so well and was always right, I agreed to say 'Yes'.

Not long after he came up again on leave – a very short one – during which I felt shy and I think he did too. Margaret refused to stay in the room with us and would not agree that we three went for a walk together. I had a cold (or said I had) and did not want to be kissed.

When he left he wrote me long letters every day and they were wonderful letters, but I only wrote to him from time to time in spite of Margaret's efforts to keep me up to the mark. Finally, after a few months I had a letter from him saying that I obviously did not care for him – at least that was the excuse he made – and suggested that our engagement should be in abeyance.

I wrote back at once to say that I didn't quite know what 'abeyance' meant but it sounded an unsatisfactory word to me and as far as I was concerned our engagement was at an end 'so here is your ring'.

All his letters I burnt: stacked upright in an empty grate, with an occasional leverage with a poker they burnt merrily and I sat on my heels and warmed my hands – for it was a cold night.

'I took his photo out of its frame,
And out of my prayers I took his name.'

'Vanity Fair', which he had given me was too large and heavy to burn and the grate was by now too full of black paper ash. The signalling lamp was unbearable and my practical mind thought it might come in useful. It did.

It had not been at all a satisfactory engagement and he soon forgot me and married someone else. I had the relief of knowing I had not made him unhappy and anyhow he had taught me to signal – that was something.

It was fun being able to signal and read messages.

The Arabs had dug their trenches just outside Aden and seemed content to stay there. Our troops and those already in Aden had dug trenches opposite. One evening we were taken on shore to dine at the Club and later visited the first line of trenches. We followed an officer with a torch and had to bend low so that we should not be seen and fired at. It was all very quiet and not a shot was fired. It all seemed very thrilling and quite a friendly sort of war.

About three weeks later several Australian troop ships arrived bringing the 12th Australian Light Horse. We soon got to know them by signalling and held long

conversations with them. We got to know each other's names, ages, colour of eyes, etc. They asked us to come and dine on board and we were all for it as some of them were amusing and such fun from the way they signalled. Unfortunately some officious old 'Colonel Blimp' on our ship advised Mummie not to let her daughters go anywhere near the Australians. "They were very rough. Even if she went with us it would not be safe."

We regretfully and primly refused their kind invitation and they sent a crate of Australian apples 'to the little signalling ladies'.

Australians, as I later found out, are the nicest, bravest and kindest men in the world.

One evening when sitting on deck I noticed that the fort was signalling 'Teesta' and getting no reply and, having my lamp with me, I signalled back that I would take the message. The message was: "'Teesta' to move out of the line of fire of the fort at once."

I ask them to repeat it to make sure and then went excitedly to the Captain's cabin to tell him. At first he wouldn't believe me but I begged him to signal the Fort and get the message himself. This he finally did and found it was correct.

Our ship hurriedly moved out of the line of fire and the guns started their bombardment.

Shortly after this our troops returned on board, their places at Aden were taken by the Australians and we continued our voyage home.

At Ismailia, at the beginning of the Suez Canal, C¹ came on board and travelled with us to Port Said, 'to try his luck with me again'. He had joined the newly formed Air Force, or else he had been seconded to it from his regiment.

As the ship glided silently through the canal I sat with him till late at night talking things over.

I would, I promised, think of it – I couldn't say 'Yes' or 'No' now – but I would write.

"Why can't you love someone if they love you as much as C does?" Asked Margaret.

So I tried. The result was that I was half engaged to him for several months and I never really knew if I was engaged or not because contradictory letters went backwards and forwards between us.

I accepted him in one letter, then regretted it and hurriedly wrote a second, cancelling it: then I got an answer to my first one. "Help," I thought, "am I really engaged?" But no, I couldn't be because by now he would have had my second letter. However, his reply would be so happy and enthusiastic that I would write and tell him that after all I would agree to being engaged to him, then he would answer my second letter – and so it went on, I had to keep trying to work out if he had got the 'Yes' letter or the 'No' letter, and whether I was engaged or whether I wasn't!

Poor dear, kind, lovable C was killed whilst night flying in Egypt.

¹ Capt. Conran.

There were a few submarine scares in the Mediterranean and off the coast of Portugal. The alarm siren would call all hands and people on deck to their boat stations.

The little Gurkhas' eyes would gleam; out would come their 'kukris' and an added edge would be put to their already devilishly sharp killing knives.

One day I was standing beside their Colonel and he translated for me the conversation he was having with them.

He asked them: "What would you do if you saw a submarine?"

Their answer was: "Follow our Colonel. Do what he does."

"And if I jumped into the sea, what would you do?"

"Follow our Colonel with our kukris in our mouths – so –" (suiting the action to the words), "and kill submarine."

"And if the ship sinks, what will you do then?"

With a broad grin on their faces they replied: "Follow our Colonel who will swim to France and there we will kill the enemy, with him to lead us."

"And, by Jove," said the Colonel, "I bet you they would try, though they know they can't swim, and of course had never seen the sea before they left India."

"He and they looked at each other with great affection and understanding. Then he said something to make them laugh for, being Gurkhas, they had a great sense of humour and were always ready for a joke and a laugh.

It was generally known that more real love and admiration existed between officers and men in the Gurkha regiments than in any others of the Indian Army, not only were these little hill-men (mostly from near the Tibetan border) brave and loyal, but they had an endearing sense of humour and could laugh with their officers. They were also fine judges of character.

If for some good reason they took a dislike to a newly joined subaltern he would have to leave, however efficient he appeared to be. They saw to it that, as long as he remained, everything went wrong.

If they approved of one newly joined they saved him from making mistakes, guarded him as they might a younger brother, and put him wise in many ways. They even disobeyed his orders if they were wrong so that he should not be found out to have made a mistake and later, they would come to him and have a good laugh whilst they explained what he should, or should not have done.

Oh! Yes, they were great little men, the Gurkhas.

We berthed at Tilbury and went straight down to our little home at Eastbourne. We were very excited at seeing our sister and little brothers again, also our dear old governess Fenny¹, and Spot our faithful old fox terrier who, by the way he hurled himself into our open arms, showed that he had in no way forgotten us.

It was home. The home of our happy childhood: and once again Margaret, Violet and I slept in our room with our three beds in a row. Violet was now fifteen. She had

¹ Miss Fenn.

always been the beauty of the family and certainly promised to continue to be so. Bobby the youngest was six, Ernle seven-and-a-half and Lisle about eleven.

Within a week of our arrival home, Margaret's husband-to-be got leave and came to stay with us and she, who had refused him when he had proposed to her in the romantic setting of the old Residency grounds at Lucknow, accepted him in an ugly and very public shelter on the seafront at Eastbourne.

Mummie and I joined the Red Cross as V.A.Ds (photo 8.03 being sought) and went daily to a large house which had been turned into a hospital.

Margaret and Claud married during his next leave¹ and went to Ireland. I was happy for her happiness, but oh! how I missed her near companionship, though never did we cease to feel close to each other in our thoughts and feelings however wide the oceans that were to separate us, by their thousands of miles.

After a few months of V.A.D. work, the family financial situation became rather acute, for Father was now in Mesopotamia and the money he sent home was irregular owing to war conditions – also, who knew what might happen.

It seemed obvious that Mummie and I had better go out and earn our living. It would be two less mouths for Father to feed.

Margaret would come to live at home, to look after it and my brothers during the holidays and Violet, who was at a day school. Claud was fighting in France.

Hearing that women might before long be required for factory work, we decided on that, and through a friend of Mummie's applied for jobs and got them.

So once again we left our home. The first time it was to go to India to lead a gay, happy and carefree life, never dreaming of a war to come.

Now we would be leaving home during a war to take up a life of very strenuous factory work, entailing long hours of heavy manual labour, the very thought of which made me realise what a happy childhood hours had been.

So before beginning 'Factory Days' let me recall some memories of the days when we were just 'As Children'.

¹ Margaret married Claud Riall on 9th November 1915.

CHAPTER 9

As Children

Some people can describe the first thing they ever remember. I can't. For having a sister only eighteen months older than myself, I always felt that what she remembered – so did I.

I always told her everything. She was the easiest person to confide in. Childish hopes, fears, sorrows – anything and everything I told her – either spontaneously or she persuaded me – not out of curiosity, but by the feeling she gave me of such loving interest that I just had to tell her. She made me feel a wonderful person, and she surrounded me with a feeling of protection. She had never lost these characteristics. In return she told me everything (or I thought she did), shared all she had and giving me, I am sure, the larger share.

So when grown-ups used to say to me: "You can't possibly remember that – you were far too young," Margaret would flare up in my defence with: "Of course Enid can, just as much as I can," and to me, "You tell them – you describe it," which of course I could, because there was nothing she had seen, heard or done that I didn't know and genuinely thought I remembered too.

I must have been about four years old before I remembered things by myself without her help and for a consecutive period of time – a whole afternoon, or perhaps for some hours on end.

This was during a visit when Margaret and I stayed with our Grannie ('dear Julia'¹) by ourselves, except for a Nannie.

Grannie had a little old Manor House near Bath half way up a steep hill slope². The terraced garden was full of interest to us, also the house and especially the drawing room, which had many delightful and unusual things with which we were allowed to play. We arranged rows of china Dresden figures on the carpet amongst fragile ornaments and made patterns with cowrie shells. She never told us 'not to touch things', and if we wanted treasures out of cabinets or off high shelves she would give them to us with a happy smile, and perhaps tell us 'to be careful, because she loved them'. She had the art of storytelling and used to tell or invent delightful little stories about her treasures. Sometimes Nannie would say she shouldn't let us play with china and things we could so easily break, and be told by her, "One must trust children, if one expects them to trust us."

On one occasion when we were brought down to the drawing room after tea – dressed in our frilly white frocks – Grannie was busy at her writing table and told us to find something to play with and be her 'quiet little kittens' till she had finished her letters.

Margaret and I were blissfully happy – we had found a new and entrancing game

¹ Julia Money (1831-1902) widow of Spencer Charles Dudley Ryder (1825-1873).

² Murhill House, Murhill, Limpley Stoke, west of Bradford on Avon.

– dividing the contents of the coal scuttle lump by lump into two nice heaps on the pale carpet. How beautiful they looked on the dove grey ground!

Grannie must have looked round, I suppose, to see what was keeping her 'kittens' so quiet. Perhaps the expression on her face told us that she was not as thrilled as we were at the result of our new game, for I remember Margaret saying – "But Grannie we have shared them between us, Enid as got as many lumps of coal in her heap as I have," (I am sure Margaret had let me choose the bigger and better lumps), and Grannie saying: "I am very pleased that you share everything – you must always do that – but tomorrow we will find something better than coal to play with."

I have that letter she must have been writing to my Father in India, while we were so happy playing with the coal, for towards the end of it, she gives him an amusing description of how we had been employing ourselves while she had her back to us.

Her letter began with: "Your little ones have been with me now for some days, and I think I can say we are already good friends and companions. Margaret shows much of your character, in her unselfish disposition, goodness and willingness to help (though not always in ways that a person of my age finds the most helpful!). Enid has far more initiative and spirit of adventure, but I think will always be influenced for the good by Margaret, whom she truly loves. I find Margaret's love and protectiveness towards her little sister very touching... Both little girls show a delicious inquisitiveness and delight in all that grows in the garden, lanes and fields, rather unusually so, I am inclined to think, for ones of their tender years, but one I hope they will never lose, for it will give them happiness all their lives." These are extracts from her letter.

The next morning (true to her word) she did find something more attractive than coal to amuse us. She invited us into her greenhouse. There she divided a pot of musk. In those days the little yellow musk had a delicious scent, which for some reason, never explained, it lost during the 1914 war, never to return. Margaret and I were given a small pot of musk each. They were our most treasured possessions. Would we be parted from them? No. We took them to bed with us, for our afternoon rest, and there, to be quite fair, we re-potted them – Margaret's in my pot – mine in hers – (and a nice lot of Earth was spilled in the blankets! What did we care?). We potted and re-potted – with more and more earth in the bed and less and less in the pots. The gardening urge had caught us and was never to leave us.

Not only must things be re-potted to grow, they must be watered. So Margaret watered me in the hopes of my growing as tall as herself, but the results were disappointing! I remained the same height, but very wet and we both had a cross Nannie.

But darling Grannie always came to our rescue with explanations of how we meant it with the best of intentions.

Grannie had grown a palm from a seed sent by some distant brother or uncle. It was an enormous palm growing happily out of doors in a sheltered part of the garden. It was Margaret's and my ambition to grow a bigger and better palm one day. We used to gaze up underneath its fronds and plan – Margaret's would be a date palm and mine would be a banana palm, and we would share the fruit.

Grannie died when I was five¹, and young as I was I felt the loss of her. I resolved I would be like her when I grew up, but I am afraid all I thought of – at that age – was how lovely it would be to get up as early as I liked in the mornings and spend the time in the garden, as she did, before breakfast. I would spend as long as I liked playing with the earth, preferably the kind kept in the compartments under the greenhouse staging or potting shed – leaf mould, sifted loam, and silver sand which trickled through one's fingers in a fascinating way and smelt delicious.

When our Nannie complained to Grannie of how filthy our hands got by 'scratching in the dirt', she would calmly reply: "It's only good clean earth and little hands will wash, won't they?"

I suppose the last time we stayed with her – shortly before she died – I must have been five, but I can visualise so clearly everything in that charming terraced garden, with its ancient mulberry tree, propped with forked staves, guarded with iron chains and around its gnarled trunk, a wooden seat.

Grannie had always seemed to have so much time to spend slowly walking round the garden and lanes, with as many stops as we wanted to examine ferns and moss growing in old stone walls and banks.

Actually she was an extremely busy woman, running innumerable village activities as well as her house and she was – so Father told us later – an exceptionally well read and brilliantly clever person. So wise and understanding that everyone came to her, or wrote to her when they were in difficulties.

She must have had the type of brain and character that could calmly cope with whatever she had to do, for I never remember her in a hurry or impatient. She seemed to have plenty of time to spare.

My youngest sister was born when I was four and a half years old. She was a lovely baby, with big blue eyes and such a mop of curls that she had to wear a bonnet of real lace to keep them from becoming hopelessly tangled. This is all I can remember of her till she became a personality – able to walk and talk. She was born in the Curzon Street house of a rich uncle of my Mother.

The only incident of that time I can remember was taking my Aunt's pampered Persian cat's chicken bones and having a delicious meal of the remains, under the dining room table. Tables were covered with enveloping cloths – white damask for meals, dark serge between meals – long enough to cover the otherwise immodest show of table legs. It was a wonderful hiding place for children and there Margaret and I had many a tasty meal from what the cat was not allowed to finish! The cat was fed in the dining room after lunch. It was easy for us to sneak down there after a meal while everyone was busy with the new baby, and when the cat had removed a morsel of chicken from its plate to eat with more comfort on the carpet, one of us would creep out, grab the plate, have a satisfactory meal under the table, and then return the plate of well cleaned bones to the haughty disgruntled cat.

My poor little Mummie must have been going through an anxious time then. Father was on an exploring expedition in Tibet and when the furthest agreed point

¹ 24th March 1902 when Enid would have been two months short of seven.

was reached, went on still further to find a way into China. Being a Royal Engineer, he joined the British attacking force helping to blow an entry into Peking – through the Great Wall of China. When the Boxer Rebellion was over and Father returned to England on leave, my parents took a small furnished house in Bedford and it was there the first effort was made to educate us.

Father took Margaret and me firmly (one by each hand), to the local kindergarten. I did not want to go and resisted with all my force – for a child of five is, either to sit on the ground and be pulled along, causing great damage to frilly dress, petticoat and panties, or to be lifted up and carried.

Mummie was no good at being firm. Her eyes would fill with tears and I would hear her say: "I can't bear it, my poor little darlings – oh! how cruel." But once up, sitting on Father's shoulder, with good little Margaret trotting along beside him, it wasn't so bad. But being disentangled from my vice like grip round his neck, when the kindergarten was reached, was an awful struggle.

However, when Father came to collect us in a couple of hours time, he had nearly as much difficulty in getting me away as he had had in bringing me there, and no trouble at all in persuading me to run along beside him next morning.

What childish 'lesson-games' we played I suppose I had enjoyed, but the highlight was – I made a boy friend! He chose me to be his partner in the opening march round the room to the accompaniment of a thud-thud on a tinkling piano.

All the children took with them was a couple of biscuits, to eat at 11 o'clock. My boy friend commanded me – in a lordly manner – to eat mine with him. We sat together in a corner of the room with our back to everyone else. Then he proudly produced his surprise treat for me – a bit of incredibly hard dog biscuit.

"Like it?" He asked me, "It's got real meat in it. I always give our dog my silly biscuits and take a bit of his."

"Delicious," I mumbled, trying hard to melt the rock-like square in my mouth, for it was impossible to bite it.

"I'll bring you some every morning. You will soon grow big and strong if you eat the right food. Dog biscuits are what you need." He looked kindly but not very hopefully at my lack of brawn and muscle.

I was too polite – or to be truthful, too flattered – not to accept his revolting dog biscuits every morning. We agreed that dogs and cats (I with my previous experience favoured the latter) had much better food than children.

Luckily before long the secret eating of dog biscuits every morning was discovered and forbidden. Margaret, in whom I had naturally confided, could no longer refrain from dropping a hint – for the good of my health. Secretly I was greatly relieved and my boy friend also I think, whose generosity I suspect was only to have someone to help him eat those awful biscuits. But I thought then, and still do, dog biscuits smell rather good.

From Bedford we went to Eastbourne. Mummie went out to India to spend some months together with Father.

We little girls were left in the charge of a sweet young nursery governess at the

house of one of my Father's many aunts and her unmarried daughter (a dull nonentity) and Aunt Mary¹ was a drab personality herself.

We were told never to ask questions about her husband, Uncle Mowbray. We were told the exciting story that during the Indian mutiny, at the Massacre of Cawnpore, he and a few remaining men left alive, were captured, put on a raft on the Ganges River, which was then set on fire. As the men leapt off the burning raft in a vain endeavour to swim ashore all were shot or drowned, except a sergeant and Uncle Mowbray.

They swam under water for long spells, but on one occasion when coming up for a breather, Uncle Mowbray was shot in the head. Helped by the sergeant, those two men (the sole survivors of that terrible massacre) managed somehow to escape.

Uncle Mowbray had to have a copper plate put in his skull and this we were told had made him an invalid. Years afterwards we unearthed the spicy truth! Uncle Mowbray was a spry old dog. No maid – not even the plainest – was safe in Aunt Mary's household while he was there. So he lived in his London Club and happily indulged in amorous adventures to his heart's, or body's, content².

The red shirt that he had worn while swimming three miles down the Ganges, till he landed and made his escape, was exhibited at Madame Tussauds. We saw it there, but on a future visit when we asked where it was, were told 'Eaten by moths'. So ended Uncle Mowbray, copper plate, moth-eaten shirt and all!

I suppose it was while living with Aunt Mary that I had my first insight and appreciation of Margaret's unselfish character. She and I had been taken and left to have lunch with a depressing female cousin one day.

The first course was silver-side of beef, surrounded by turnips and dumplings, swimming about in pale gravy with wobbly globules of fat. Being on the whole well-behaved little girls we ate up our overfilled plates with a stupendous effort. Worse was to follow. The pudding was tapioca (frog's spawn) with not even jam to help to disguise it. Margaret sprang to my rescue with: "Please only give Enid a tiny bit, she is is not allowed to have large helpings of puddings, it always makes her sick."

"And you dear?" Turning to Margaret.

"Oh yes please, I am never sick."

I struggled through my small helping and Margaret finished her plate which had been filled to the brim.

"A second helping, Margaret dear?"

"Oh yes please. It's my favourite pudding."

Nobly she finished that too.

"How could you eat that disgusting stuff?" I asked as we walked back. "You know you hate it as much as I do." Her answer was: "I thought it might make Cousin D unhappy if she guessed she had given us food to eat we didn't like."

¹ Great Aunt Mary Ironside Money died in 1903, her husband Mowbray Thomson was born in 1832.

² This might have been due to disinhibition consequent upon his brain injury.

She was always like that – her unselfishness and wish to please others was done so spontaneously and cheerfully, that it made everyone around her happy. Added to which she had inherited Father's and Grannie's sense of humour – dry and witty but never unkind.

"But that awful fatty gravy," I went on, determined she should join me in an orgy of self-pity.

I thought of the floating bits of grease as funny faces – "You draw me some when we get home."

"I will, but the largest and most disgusting bit will be like Cousin D." I felt better.

When Mummie came back from India, she took an unfurnished house in Eastbourne. It was one of a row of houses all joined together. Very tall and narrow, starting with a basement schoolroom for us in the front, with a fascinating view of constantly moving head-less and body-less 'Legs', passing to and fro. Behind the schoolroom was the kitchen, opening onto a narrow cat run of a garden. Above the basement was the dining room and a small sitting room. Next floor, the drawing room and spare room. Up again to Mummie's bedroom and bathroom. Above that our large bedroom with nursery behind. Still higher were, I suppose, the servants' rooms.

As the natural result of Mummie joining Father in India, an addition to the family was expected (though of course we didn't know).

With a family of four it would no longer be possible to park them on kind relations. So from then onwards my parents had to have a home in England. Mummie had been left a legacy, with which she was able to furnish the house. In addition there were twelve enormous wooden cases containing 'Loot', sent home by Father during his time in China. Actually he bought the things at the 'Loot Auctions'.

There were china, jade, bronzes, panels of embroidery, and innumerable treasures. These were wrapped round and round in hundreds of yards of Chinese silks, used by the Chinese for packing instead of paper.

Margaret and I sat on the floor and rolled up these fascinating coloured silks, with their queer oriental smell, while Mummie unpacked box after box of treasures. One box contained only fur coats – eight of them. Mummie kept only two of them – a sable which had belonged to the Empress of China and a superbly embroidered Mandarin's coat, lined with white fox. The others she sold from time to time to help the exchequer.

What sacrilege it was that ruthless 'Looting' – when one comes to think about it now. The personal clothes and possessions of the Empress of China! The religious treasures from the 'Temple of Heaven', down to the contents of private houses and shops.

But in those days they were the rightful spoils of winning a war. So our house was not only furnished but filled, with every conceivable Chinese ornament, gay, beautiful and exotic.

Lisle¹, my eldest brother, was born in this house. I think that Margaret and I were

¹ 31st August 1902.

as thrilled, in our own way, as my parents were in theirs, in having a boy baby. Our only disappointment was we were not allowed to see nearly as much of him as we wished.

He had a Nannie of his own. She was, no doubt, an excellent baby's nurse, but very stand-offish to us, and most un-friendly. She was forever telling us how much more important boy babies were than little girls!

I took it as truth of course, because she rubbed it in so often and also that he was the most important person in the house. I thought how wonderful it was that such a very important person should condescend to give me such friendly smiles, and later when he could sit up in his pram hold out his arms to me. The nurse was a possessive and jealous woman and, as I learned later, grudged even Mummie holding her own baby or going into the nursery.

So the nurse went, and darling, plump, ugly Nannie took her place. Rightly named, Nannie Joy, she was all smiles and was a warm welcome to the nursery; happy to let me push the pram and even to run with it and make Lisle gurgle with laughter. As I sat proudly on the floor holding Lisle, she would say: "Now don't you just know how to hold a baby," or some other complimentary remark.

Before Lisle was born, the governess arrived, who was to stay with us for many years. 'Fenny' (Miss Fenn) who was adored by us all, taught me all I ever learnt – not much by modern standards! She was elderly and old-fashioned, but she understood children, never wasted time in what she thought we would make no progress in, but concentrated on subjects we liked. So we happily learnt, except for the bare essentials, what really interested us.

Margaret was clever, so was Violet, but I was not.

"Never mind dear, you are capable and that will help you through life." A nice comforting thought!

Our school room was a mouldy, damp, dark basement, but our bedroom was a good, large, light room and in it we three sisters slept. How sorry I have always felt for an only child, trying to go to sleep in a room by itself, or until the Nannie came to share it, not perhaps till 10 o'clock.

How grateful I have always been that I had sisters and that, for so many years, we shared a room. Especially at the age when we, like most children, suffered from bad dreams and childish fears, and could comfort and protect each other in a way no grown-up person could. For a child knows how 'real' things are and feels with you instead of for you.

We each had our own dreams and fears and they never impinged on the others. For this reason we could be of far more comfort and protection, for not to be afraid of what others feared gave one a feeling of bravery.

At one time Margaret's worst fear was of fire, mine of wolves, and Violet's of MAGGOTS!

A little round patch of light came through a hole in the blind and appeared on the wall, unfortunately just above Margaret's bed. At her agitated cry of: "The house is on fire!" I would get out of my bed and putting my hand over the light spot assure her that it was not burning, that my hand wasn't even beginning to get warm. This

was usually repeated many times and if I failed to convince her, in desperation I would tell her that she had better say her prayers again.

Margaret would do this, but no sooner had she got back into bed again and told me that she was quite happy and sleepy, than I became quite positive that there was a wolf under my bed and it was no good her telling me that it couldn't have got into the house. It COULD have got in sometime during the day, when the front door was open and no one was looking, and slunk up the many flights of stairs and was now under my bed. I could hear it breathing! Neither was it any good Margaret telling me to say my prayers again: prayers were not effective unless one knelt down beside one's bed and how could God expect me to do that with a wolf under it? To prove there was no wolf, Margaret would bravely crawl under the bed, right under and out the other side.

At last, safe from fire and wolves, we too would settle down – but not for long! for it was Violet's turn now to have both our attentions, with one of her recurrent bad dreams of maggots. This must have been a truly awful dream, for the maggots were the size of dachshunds, their black faces appearing over the foot of her bed and as she watched the horrid, long, soft monsters made their undulating way slowly but surely up the bed with the unmistakable intention of eating her.

The maggots were explainable for they were real and lived in the bottom shelf of our toy cupboard in the basement schoolroom. We took it in turns to use that shelf and I know that when it was my turn I hardly dared get anything out of it, for in it were maggots, grubs or clothes moths, which were large and white with black faces – quite revolting.

I don't know what we kept in that cupboard on which those horrors thrived, and may be they were only clothes moth grubs amongst the bits and pieces of scrap material we kept for making dolls clothes; anyway there they were and they were a nightmare.

When Fenny – our governess who stayed with us for seventeen years – came to us, one of the first things she did was to cope with the maggots and arrange things so that no one needed to use that horrific bottom shelf.

My mother had what would now be called glamour. She was young, quite lovely, gay, vivacious and very talented. She sang beautifully, painted and did exquisite needlework, made many of her own clothes and most of ours. The little dresses she made for us had miles of fine sewing in them, rows of little tucks, lace insertion and and feather-stitching. She even made three little party frocks out of the very full silk sleeves once worn by my great-grandfather who was a Bishop!

She surrounded herself with everything that was beautiful. Not because she had money but because she chose beauty instinctively. Her drawing room and bedroom were very feminine and everything about her, all her cupboards and drawers were generally a billowing mass of dainty untidiness and she was always losing things and calling for help to find them.

"Darling, help me to find that blue chiffon, (my gloves, a certain veil, a lost earring,) they are somewhere about I know but I can't find them and I shall be so late."

Her clothes were lovely and she took infinite pains and trouble, converting, contriving and making them so that she always looked beautifully and expensively dressed. She was most generous and loving and loved, and we felt very proud of our lovely little mother and our tall good looking father. How sorry we were for children who hadn't got parents like ours!

Some of our holidays were spent with my aunts in Somerset. These Aunts were my father's very much older sisters. Aunt Mary¹ was a 'washout' to us, but Aunt Una² was a unique and wonderful character and had both brains and charm. Her only fault – it was quite a serious one – was that she was never able to 'manage money', unlike my father who had a wonderful flare for it.

Dear Aunt Una shuddered at the thought of money. Bills piled up while she generously gave to charities. She gave her inherited 'Lisle' pearl necklace to the Red Cross. She gave to any hard luck case in the village; employed lads who were out of work to do useless jobs. She employed old women who were long beyond work, as her 'dailies'. It was quite usual to see two or three dear old souls sitting in her kitchen and Aunt Una telling them: "On no account do any work, but just rest and have a good meal," for which of course they got paid!

Father sent her home a chest of tea from India. It was at once shared with all the village. On Christmas Day, the very large turkey which we had produced to help out with the rations was much appreciated by the extra number of dear old 'dailies', who came to see if they could help, and stayed to lunch. Not only did they have lunch but were told to take home to their families what was left over of the turkey! Of course they must not work on Christmas Day! (Or on any other day, as far as I could see.)

The dirt and dust and disorder piled up in dear old 'Stembridge House'. It was one of those attractive stone-built and stone-roofed houses typical of that part of Somerset and could have been made quite fascinating (*Plate 5b*).

We tried to help but were not allowed to. "It might hurt dear old Ellen or Jane's feelings. They might think they were beyond their work if they saw us with a brush or duster."

Lisle wanted to fix a curtain pole that was off its bracket, a job that the capable Lisle could have done in a few minutes, but No! that job would be given to one of the lads in the village – perhaps old Ellen's grandson – a 'lad' of forty. Old Ellen was rather worried about him. He wasn't keen on steady work and a little job like this would just suit him. Perhaps it would keep him out of trouble and he could have lunch with Ellen in the kitchen afterwards.

He was a huge, hefty man. Ellen, with whom he was living at the moment, had great difficulty in feeding him. He had an appetite to suit his size.

Dear Aunt Una! As long as she had, she gave. She was generous to a fault and she procrastinated facing the fact of her diminishing income.

Now for the other side of her character. She was, as I have said, clever and charming. She could paint miniatures, do exquisite needlework and write wonderful letters. She had an original mind and good wit and was an excellent raconteur.

¹ 1862-1937.

² 1857-1941.

She must have had a wonderful memory, allied to a vivid imagination. She could tell the most fascinating tales of our ancestors, of family pictures and furniture. Even the smallest bit of old china had a story attached to it. As she unwrapped an old Paisley shawl, one lived in the days of the East India Company, travelled back to England around the Cape in a sailing ship, and saw dear great grand mama's joy as she received her present of a beautiful shawl from her brother¹ who had gone 'out East' as a boy of sixteen. Now twenty years later he had returned for his first leave home with presents for all the family.

Tales of her dear Mama and Papa and all her dear uncles (twelve of them²); tales of the Indian Mutiny (it was hard to believe that Aunt Una had not been besieged in the Residency at Lucknow herself!); tales of her grandparents' life in France³, and so on.

I used to wish that I could take down in shorthand much that she told us or that I was gifted with her wonderful memory. She made everything romantic and adventurous. With her, we lived in another age. We would be escaping from Paris in the French Revolution, as we drove with her in the ancient village cab. A flooded road would become one of the Gates of Paris, a barrier, the other side of which was safety. Could we pass through without being stopped, searched, discovered and thrown back into prison? My small brothers would scarcely dare to breathe until safety was reached.

Aunt Una understood the love of adventure for she had it herself. For many days she took the greatest interest and encouraged my brothers to try to find a mythical secret way hidden in the house. She even climbed up to the loft to admire an enormous hole they had made in one of the old chimneys. She was all for them pulling down more bricks – they, nothing loath to do so. We had as much difficulty in persuading Aunt Una to give up the search as my brothers.

Instead of a Christmas tree, she made one Christmas a full-rigged sailing ship, correct in every detail and loaded it with presents. It looked most beautiful on the table with its ship's lanterns all lit up. How clever she was, for it was a work of art and showed what a wonderful nautical knowledge she had.

Aunt Mary was as dull and uninteresting as Aunt Una was original and full of ideas. Aunt Una had tremendous loyalty to her sister and it was always: "Your dear Aunt Mary and I have thought you would like to do this – or that." She included her in everything.

Aunt Mary had been delicate as a baby, 'reared on the milk of a white ass', – or so Aunt Una said. She was considered a beauty in her young days.

Our last visit to that old Somerset village was to attend Aunt Mary's funeral many years later⁴. My mother, Violet and I had motored a long distance and arrived

¹ This would probably have been Spencer (the father of Una and Charles) returning to Sophia the widow of Bishop Henry Ryder.

² Actually Bishop Henry and Sophia had tens sons and three daughters.

³ The Reverend William Money (married to Julia Ironside) was Chaplain to the English community in St Servan in Brittany.

⁴ 1937.

at the beautiful old church rather early. We sat in the car outside the gate and had a fascinating view of the verger changing in front of the window of his cottage. The window was so small that only the middle part of him could be seen, fastening his braces and doing a bit of buttoning up. Finally he bent down, looked out of the window and called out to us that we might wait in the church porch if we liked: "For the 'cawpse' is already waiting for you there!"

At the graveside, Violet nudged me and drew my attention to the usefulness as a hat-stand of a cross on an adjoining grave. The verger and his fellow pallbearers had hung their bowler hats on it! We hurriedly held our handkerchiefs to our faces to stifle our laughter. Later Aunt Una told us how touched she was by what she thought was our emotion!

Going home we were remorseful that our thoughts had not been more reverent, so we stopped near a wood and dug up some primrose roots and planted them in our gardens in her memory. Aunt Mary had been fond of wild flowers.

Though many of our holidays were spent with my maternal grandparents who had a large house in Hertfordshire¹, with all the staff of indoor and outdoor servants, such as coachman and groom, and gardeners, that went with a house of that size in those days, they made little lasting impression on me. For some reason holidays there lacked a spice of adventure.

On our return from one long visit we found waiting for us at home a second baby brother!² Not long after that the house with the dark and dismal basement school room was given up and a very charming little new house was taken on the outskirts of Eastbourne³. This was our home for many years.

When my second brother was a few months old, my mother took him out to India to join my father and our governess – dear old Fenny – was left in charge to run the house, teach us four children and look after everything.

She must have been very capable to do all that she did and she certainly had a great love for and an understanding of children, realising the differences in our characters and trying to bring out the best in each of us. We certainly adored her.

The house, which we always thought of as small, might not be considered so today; it might even be called large, for it had six bedrooms, three sitting rooms, etc. We had a resident cook and a maid who were with us for years.

I think Fenny had £20 a month on which to manage. She had to pay all expenses, which included the rent of £60 a year, her own salary of £35 a year (not much higher than that of the cook), the servants' wages, food for a household of seven, lighting, fuel, laundry and all the other costs of running a house, as well as our clothes and everything else. She always managed on this allowance and was proud of the fact that she never had to ask my father for more. Even in those days when living was cheap, it needed careful planning, or budgeting as it is now called, and very strict economy. Careful accounts were sent to my father every month, with explanations

¹ Edward Evans Grigg (1844-1909) and his wife Josephine (Roberts) (1846-1918) lived at Westlands, Rothsay Gardens, Bedford.

² Ernle, born 18th April 1906.

³ Murhill House, Prideaux Road, Eastbourne, named after the home of Charles' mother Julia.

that if she had saved anything it went towards our much needed new winter coats or the coal bill due the following month, and so on.

Besides running the home and keeping everything in perfect order, mending the household linen and our clothes, or teaching us to do so, which probably took longer, she taught four children and always took us for two long walks a day.

During lesson time Fenny would be busily darning whilst she questioned us or set us something to learn.

I wasted time admiring the quickness with which Margaret and Violet (and Violet so much younger than I) finished their lessons, or did more of them than I was capable of.

History I loved, but 'wasted time' picturing the characters, what they looked like, what they wore, the castles and houses in which they lived, the appearance of the country in those days when it was all wild forest and open spaces, and no hedges, fences or gates to prevent one going where one wished. I didn't concentrate on the dates of the Kings and Queens of England, or of the battles and the other things which usually formed part of our lessons.

Geography I also liked but there again I didn't concentrate on learning the capitals of countries or the principal towns and rivers but 'wasted time' visualising them, from picture books plus a lot of imagination. Drawing maps and painting them was fun, and being good and quick at it, I had time to draw and paint the islands of my dreams which were based on a deserted coral Island always hot and sunny, with palms, lagoons and coral reefs, as well as snow-capped mountains and cool damp primrose woods. I told Margaret they were my idea of heaven.

She and I were a bit worried in those days about the idea of heaven and whether we should really like it. She said that the people who played harps would enjoy it but we didn't do that, and there was no mention of gardens or people who liked painting pictures. I agreed with her that it was a depressing outlook and added: "Think of the cold 'around the glassy sea' – all that ice and we can't even skate." Hell would at least be warm with the Fiery Furnace, if only one would be permitted to sit beside it and warm one's hands and make toast and not have to be thrown into the midst of it to burn. There was no doubt the future life seemed as if it might be rather strange experience.

I suppose it was about this time that I had a bad dream which I have never forgotten. I dreamt I was in hell and it was neither hot nor cold, it was worse – it was empty. There was not a single soul there except myself. I ran frantically along long empty tunnels trying to find someone else, even the devil would be better than no one but I was alone and that fear of the possibility of utter alone-ness has never left me.

The morning walk was not of any great interest to us for it was mainly for shopping. It was a long walk to the town and we generally had to go to the cheaper and less fashionable end for shopping. I used to dart ahead and then back again to Fenny to report that at the greengrocer further on pears were a farthing cheaper, and by my quick ready reckoning tell her how much we could save. Nothing was bought in the vegetable line until it became plentiful and thus cheap. Strawberries had to

wait until they dropped to 4d a pound. It made one's mouth water to see them at 6d, then 5d, and still have to wait until they came down further.

After short afternoon lessons Fenny again took us for a walk, but this one was for pleasure for it meant going as far into the country as time and weather permitted. The most countrified place we could find was the marsh land with its lush meadows and broad dykes. There was much exploration to be done here and finding out the best way to cross these dykes. Dear old Fenny never fussed however muddy we got our boots or her own either – in the afternoon! – and looking back I am very sure she enjoyed those country walks.

Except in winter, the evening after tea we spent in the garden, weeding, digging and planting, according to the season, until Fenny called us in one by one in order of our ages, to go to bed.

On our birthdays, or for some excuse, or just because it was a lovely day, we would have the treat of an excursion and picnic further afield. Sometimes to woods near Pevensey where the primroses were more abundant, had longer stalks and smelt more like spring than any I have since picked (*Plate 6a*).

Fenny would sit under an oak tree surrounded by picnic baskets and our extra coats, with our faithful dog leaning up beside her whilst we ran in all directions to find and pick primroses, tying them up in bunches and filling our baskets. We also liked to fill Fenny's for her. They were her favourite flower but she did not find it as easy as we did to squat down and pick and pick and pick.

I always think that children who are so much nearer the ground than grown-ups see more of the beauty of flowers; or is it that they are constantly making new and thrilling discoveries? I know that for many years I was filled afresh at each season with the beauty of them. I used to think to myself, "Last year I was too young to know how lovely they are, but this year I DO know." Children, in height, are on a level with so many flowers and with others such as foxgloves they can look up and into the hanging bells and examine them in minutest detail.

When summer was at its warmest we used to go more often to the sea. Not to the fashionable Parade where people bathed between breakwaters and dressed and undressed in bathing-machines, for which they had to pay – not us! We went beyond Beachy Head to a little place called Cow Gap, to which hardly anyone came in those days for it could only be reached by climbing down a very steep slippery and narrow path from the cliffs above. Actually there was little if any beach: it was mostly rocks and pools. Here, having found a suitable place in which to leave our picnic baskets etc. we looked for large rocks to shelter us whilst we got into our bathing dresses.

To shelter us from whom? I don't think the most watchful coastguard with the most powerful spyglass could have seen us, and would it have mattered if he had seen us undressing? Yes, very much in those days!

But it was rather fun for each of us to find our own undressing place amongst the slimy, slippery, seaweed-covered rocks and the pools with crabs and sea and anemones in them.

Not much bathing was done, but it didn't matter bathing-dresses getting wet while we shrimped and prawned amongst the rocky pools, often slipping into them.

Fenny would sit resting her back against some dry rock while we ran backwards and forwards with our catches in glass jam jars giving her some of our shrimps and prawns to help fill her jar.

How delicious food tasted by the sea; the salt on one's lips added such a flavour to a rock cake or a jam sandwich.

The shrimps and prawns were cooked at home and I remember many arguments taking place as we ate them. Who had caught this or that prawn? I could swear I caught that one: never would I forget its size, length of its feelers, how it had nearly escaped me, and so on: until Fenny would calmly eat the disputed prawn herself.

We liked our grown-up friends; several kind old ladies who gave us plants for our garden, and our dear old family doctor who would take us for drives in his motorcar – almost the first, I should think to make its appearance in Eastbourne.

As children we were a complete unit. We wanted no outsiders, children's parties were an anathema to us and there were 'black looks' when we had to go to tea with other children or have them to tea with us. We had all the companionship we wanted with each other, our parents when at home and Fenny always at home. So we grew up very unsociable and very very happy.

Children had pets in those days and so did we. Nowadays so many are often deprived of that pleasure, for it is impossible to keep pets in a flat and, in a house, the harassed mother doing practically all the work does not want to cope with looking after pets and taking the dog for a walk whilst the children are at school. And who is going to look after the dog, cat or birds when the house has to be left empty for a day or longer? I know in our young days there was always a cook or someone left to look after the house and the animals.

We had the usual collection of pets. The goldfish came lowest in the scale of the 'loved ones'; they never lived long enough for us to get really attached to them, sometimes only just long enough to be christened. Fenny was the best at choosing names – and she was godmother to all our pets.

You cannot really love a fish which can neither be cuddled or stroked, but they looked pretty and the bowl seemed so empty without them. I got to know only too well that 'look' they had when their end was approaching. A healthy fish swam energetically round and round halfway up the bowl, sometimes going to the bottom to guzzle about in the sand and stones, sometimes coming to the top and 'making mouths' for ants' eggs. A sick fish swam nearer and nearer the top, then swam more and more on its side, till finally it floated on the surface with a blue haze surrounding it. Shortly after, a grave was dug.

After a few days of looking at the empty bowl, we would decide to buy another. They cost sixpence each: so we four and Fenny contributed a penny each, and a penny taken from the household money enabled us to buy a new one. Some lasted longer than others, but on the whole it was rather a drain on our financial resources of two pence a week pocket-money as we had to buy the ants' eggs as well. The goldfish and the ants' eggs never came to a simultaneous end. It meant either buying more eggs to feed the fish, or buying a fish to eat up the eggs.

Next on the list came the birds. The Canary belonged to us all and lived for years, singing with such sweet shrillness that its cage had to be covered with a cloth during lesson hours. The bullfinch was my very own and I could take what risks I liked with it. This meant opening its cage (for even in those days I felt a sadness at seeing anything caged) and letting it fly round the room and perch on my finger. Alas! a day came when my bullfinch and Violet's cat were alone and loose in the room together. So died my bullfinch. Now there was only one cage to clean out and only half the quantity of soiled sand to collect for our garden – guano, Fenny told us, had valuable fertilising qualities.

Then came the guinea pigs and rabbits, the former less popular than the latter, probably because they were so difficult when put on the lawn for an outing.

We always had guinea pigs in pairs; because they were so small two could go in one hutch. 'Triphena' and 'Triphosa' were little devils to catch. We put them in the middle of the lawn and immediately they scuttled like lightning (and you have no idea how fast those fat shapeless little bodies can move!) Straight for the flower, or vegetable borders where they divided, each going in the opposite direction. That meant having to run about on the borders ourselves and, as we hated trampling on our well-kept garden with its newly planted seeds and precious plants, the guinea pigs were not then very popular.

Owing to their shape, they are extremely difficult to clutch and hold. Even when squeezed in both hands a guinea pig manages to slip out backwards or forwards for it has no waist or neck and its head end and back end are both alike! The little transparent mouse-like ears cannot be grasped: it has no tail, and what legs it has are invisible under its body.

Now rabbits are delightfully tame and are happy on the lawn, with their lettuce leaves, for a long time. They will even share a leaf. We used to lie on the lawn with a rabbit starting at one end of a long cos-lettuce leaf and one of us at the other, eating like a rabbit without the aid of hands, to see who could get to the middle first! Rabbit always won with a final tweak as nose met nose. And what a delicious feeling it was when the soft wiffly nose touched one's own.

When the time came to catch it and put it back in its hutch, it could either be gathered up quietly after some preliminary stroking or, if it chose to be playful and, with a hop, skip and jump, make towards forbidden territory, it could be seized by its long ears and held at arms length until it had stopped kicking, then it could be cuddled up and put quietly back in its hutch, where it would put its nose to the wire netting for a good night kiss. Yes, rabbits were nicer than guinea pigs.

I suppose cats and dogs should be bracketed as top of the list of 'loved ones'. Cat lovers would put cats first and dog lovers, dogs.

Violet was a passionate cat lover, so the succession of kittens were looked upon as hers. I love them very much but a dog far more. Margaret always kept to her own opinion that she loved cats and dogs equally.

We only had one dog as children. He was young when he came to us and twelve years old when he died. One happy morning, he was waiting to greet us in the schoolroom, smuggled in the night before, a Christmas present – a complete surprise

from a beloved old cousin of ours and quite the best Christmas present we children ever had. We couldn't believe it was true – a real live dog of our own – one of my prayers had been granted and I was happy beyond words.

'Spot' (he came with a name so did not have to be christened), was just an ordinary smooth coated old-fashioned fox terrier, with a prettily marked black and tan head and a black spot near his tail. He would never have won a prize at a show, his head was too broad and intelligent, and his chest too wide. In our eyes he was the most beautiful dog in the world and so he remained for all the years of his long life.

His spontaneous greeting that Christmas morning, was one of having at last found his long lost friends, as he jumped up and licked our faces all over and we flung our arms around him and kissed him in return. He must have been about a year old when he came to us, and even then he had what we called – 'a most comfortable figure'. Actually it was his natural build and remained the same all his life, with perhaps a slight thickening of his waist line when he reached old age. His stocky figure gave one the feeling of being able to rely on him. We could sit on the floor and use him as a book prop and he wouldn't wriggle or slide away but merely lent harder and firmer up against you – with a determination not to let you down. His was a very cheerful nature; his smiling face often had a laugh on it, and never a growl or never a snap came from him. He never had moods, but was always the same cheerful, faithful darling dog. He went everywhere with us and never got lost. He followed us through crowded streets, waited outside shops, waited outside the church for us, waited outside the School of Art (when Margaret and I became old enough to go there for art lessons), which was in the big building of the Town Hall. This had two exits – one in one street, the other in another. Sometimes we came out by one door and sometimes the other and would go round to collect Spot from the door at which we had left him. But late one afternoon we forgot to do so. Forgot poor Spot! and came home without him.

"Never mind," said Fenny, "it's too late now to go back and get him, he will come home on his own." But he didn't and although the gates and doors were left open for him all night – he never came. I spent a sick and sleepless night – picturing the 'worst' – he would have been run over.

Next morning after a hurried breakfast (and I was allowed to leave the lumps in my porridge), Fenny 'put off' lessons and hurriedly took us to the town to make enquiries at the Police Station. But the Town Hall came first; and there to our joy we saw dear old Spot leaning up against the shut door (where we had left him) faithfully waiting for us. As soon as we called, and he saw us, he hurled himself into our waiting arms. We sat on the pavement so that we could hug and kiss him, to his and our heart's content. Luckily Fenny didn't notice us. She was busily occupied in blowing her nose and taking a long time over it.

Then the door-keeper came along, saying how glad he was that we had come to fetch our dog, for he had been worried about him the night before, realising that we had gone out by another exit, he had tried to send him home – but he couldn't get him to budge, and later that night came along to see if he had gone. It was after 10 o'clock and he was still there, so as it was a bitterly cold winter's night, he tried to tie a piece of string to his collar so that he could take him back to his own home. "But he

wouldn't let me touch him, which surprised me, because he is always so friendly to me when you are there – aren't you old boy?" He gave him a pat and Spot promptly jumped up and licked his hand.

No lessons were done that day by way of celebration. We spent the afternoon trying to draw Spot's portrait – though not for the first time. He was a very good 'sitter' and would keep the same 'pose' for a very long time; unfortunately not a very elegant one. We would carefully arrange him sitting very upright, with his feet well placed together – as Fenny liked us to sit – in response to her so often, "Hold yourselves up, my dears, feet together and don't slouch or lean against the backs of your chairs." But no sooner had we started to draw him, than giving us a grin, he would shuffle back and lean against the wall, a chair, or Fenny's knees, and get into a comfortable position which he would contentedly 'hold' for ages – but he didn't look smart like that! He was definitely slouching. His hind legs had all gone sideways and his front legs were indecently apart. As soon as I put him straight and started drawing again – he slipped back into his well-known attitude.

"Don't bother, my dear, draw him just as he is," Fenny would say. But my result was most unflattering. Margaret, who had made him look like a dog, said: "Enid, you have made our darling Spot look just like a frog." Which was true, but rather damping.

"Never mind," dear Fenny would say, "Give it to me, I'll add it to my collection. I will always recognise it as Spot."

She kept a drawer full of our attempts at being artists. Some she pinned up in her bedroom – others found their way to my parents in India, enclosed in her weekly letters.

Such was Spot. I can still see his characteristic way of sitting and leaning, and hear him as he 'thundered' along a road to greet us (for he was no light and wispy weight), and feel him as he hurled himself into one's arms, and remember his cheerful, faithful personality, and the way – because we belonged to him – we felt 'safe'.

If any child had had a dog like ours (and I expect many did), they couldn't help but be dog lovers all their lives.

Fenny encouraged us in our love of gardens and was a keen and knowledgeable gardener herself. We had our gardens alongside one wall, a nice sunny wall, and they were divided off starting with Fenny's and so on according to age. The general garden consisted of a tennis lawn (so-called) and a border all round the wall; our flower border on one side and vegetables on the other two sides.

We 'did' the entire garden ourselves. Mowing the lawn was a great effort. The mowing machine was very old and very blunt and by the time we had mowed the lawn we had no energy left to play tennis – anyhow it wasn't much fun – and we far preferred to spend the time gardening in 'our gardens'.

As our 'private means' only consisted of two pence a week pocket money (and out of this we had to buy Christmas and birthday presents and had many other expenses, as well as having to 'save for the future') we couldn't afford much for seeds and plants.

We developed eyes like hawks in the autumn when other people were thinning out their herbaceous plants and throwing their rubbish over their back garden walls onto a piece of waste ground – conveniently near us. Here we scavenged happily. A few packets of seeds were bought every spring and an occasional pansy or pink plant was given to us, but on the whole ours had to be a 'long-term' policy, of patiently growing plants from seeds, cuttings or layering. We were very successful in layering pinks and outdoor carnations. A nice little heap of sandy road scrapings around and under the plant, the suitable shoots partly cut on their sides and pinned down by some of Fenny's 4" long hairpins – and in time they took.

Fenny, we thought, was not very generous with giving us her hairpins. What was the use of a few at a time? When we planned for a long border of Mrs Simkins all down the kitchen garden, we wanted dozens and if we didn't get them we would lose the layer-season. "I'm sorry, my dears, but I can't spare any more so you will have to wait till some of mine get more worn out." In vain we would tell her that we could see several in her hair that were getting silvery and she would say that those didn't matter as they matched her hair. So we had to keep a lookout amongst grown-up lady friends for those whose hairpins shewed signs of wearing out. Dear old Mrs Hawkins was our best source of supply. She had coils of heavy grey hair – the kind that needed long and strong hairpins – and she quite saw our point of view, when we tactfully told her that perhaps as she was rather short-sighted she hadn't noticed that her hairpins were getting rather shabby, and perhaps she would like to use new ones and, if so, would she please give us her old ones instead of throwing them away. We could 'do' with some hairpins we told her and Lisle added: "If you want to know the truth, we just can't do without them. We want them more than we want anything else just now. We want them with all our hearts."

As she looked rather mystified as to why one small boy and three girls should need hairpins, he went on to explain to her why we wanted them and how to layer pinks. She was most interested in the subject and told us if we came to see her next day she was sure she could sort out some old hairpins for us.

"Before you go to all that trouble", said Lisle, "wouldn't it be best if I extracted one of your hairpins first – just to make sure that it is long enough? I can take one out most carefully, so that your hair doesn't fall down." She allowed him to do this, asked for her magnifying glass, and after careful examination agreed that it was certainly a disgracefully shabby pin and how kind she thought it was of us to point it out to her.

"Something told me that you would like to know," said Lisle. "Fenny always likes me to tell her things like that about her personal appearance now that she is not as young as she was and can't see so well."

"Do you think hairpins this size are right for what you want?" she asked Lisle – carefully examining the one he had extracted.

"Yes," Lisle agreed, they are just about right and if you happen to find any longer ones we could do with them, but please don't give us any of those 'invisible' ones, because we can't use them very well."

Next day we called at Mrs Hawkins' house and waited outside while Lisle went

in to collect the promised hairpins. (He never minded 'calling on people' himself, he said he rather liked it.)

He came out with a wonderful present. Packets and packets of the longest and strongest hairpins we had ever seen.

"Yes," said Lisle with pride, she found them in a drawer and said she couldn't think why she had ever bought them, because they are too long even for her hair. She said that she must have bought them when she had forgotten to take her glasses with her when she went shopping and couldn't see they were so long. I've promised to go shopping with her one day if she wants help seeing things. And," rather defiantly, "I've asked her to tea one day because I thought it would be polite. I'll do all the talking for you. She wants to see our pinks and she says she would be most interested in seeing how we layer them."

As Lisle was generally our 'spokesman', we agreed to be friendly to Mrs Hawkins when she came to tea. Actually we rather liked her and she had certainly won our hearts with hairpins.

Lisle must have been about six then. He was the only one of us who didn't suffer from shyness. He liked making friends and he found them 'most interesting' and I think his many friends must have found him the same. All life was full of interest to him with his many talents and strong poetic and artistic feelings. Gardening was one of his many loves.

Our border of pinks, in time, reached the whole length of the kitchen garden. Luckily they were one of the things which did well on our chalky soil and did not need manure. Manure was financially out of our reach so we had to depend on the odd horse passing our house lifting its tail. On one glorious occasion a regiment of cavalry passed and with cries of: "Quick! Quick! Cavalry are passing," out we flew with baskets and trowels and scooped up the precious stuff!

"Children! What will the neighbours think!" said Fenny, as she joined us with a large paper bag and a kitchen spoon. No wonder we loved Fenny.

As I grew older I began to take more interest in people and their characters. It was, and always has been a subject that fascinated me. Up to a certain age one 'takes' people as they are, loving, disliking or being indifferent to them instinctively. Then it gradually dawns on one – 'Why is it one loves or dislikes this or that person?' – There must be a reason and it must be the way they are made. What made Margaret to be born with such a sweet unselfish nature, I quite different, Violet so clever and amusing, and Lisle with so much originality, so many gifts, as well as the sweetest of natures? What made people like that? Of course one could try and correct one's faults – but that came later – and what puzzled me was, why were babies born with such different natures? If I asked anyone, 'Why?' – if I asked Fenny for example – she would tell me that people inherited different characteristics from their parents and forebears or that it was 'environment' ('home life' was probably the word she used) and tell me that it would be a very dull world if everyone was alike.

But somehow that didn't answer the question. I had grown out of 'babies being found under gooseberry bushes' or being 'brought by storks'. Under gooseberry bushes would be much too cold in the winter for any baby to survive and storks didn't

visit every country. 'Floating down moonbeams,' was more romantic and slightly more practical, but didn't altogether please me. If children are not told what they want to know, or told they will know when they are older, they don't leave the unexplained gap as a blank but fill it in with some thought-out idea from their own imagination. So I filled in the blank by thinking that since God sent babies and they arrived from Him, very small, but complete, He obviously must have made them before launching them into the world of human beings. What did He make them from? The best answer I could think of was that as He was 'Lord of Heaven and Earth and all that therein is', he had a tremendous lot of ingredients with which to make them.

I pictured God as a kind of cook; mixing up in a bowl all the things that would make a baby and that His angels collected all He needed and kept them in jars and tins on shelves, conveniently near His throne. If He was 'extra busy' and rather cross because He had a lot to make in a short time – like Harriet our cook sometimes was – He did not take much trouble, but used a pile of town road sweepers' mud – the ready-made mixture – and dropped spoonfuls quickly into rather rusty 'patty-pans', popped them quickly into the oven and told one of His lesser angels to 'keep an eye on them' – which of course the lesser angel forgot to do and when taken out were as hard as rocks.

"Oh bother," said God, "Well! it takes all kinds to make a world, just take them down and drop them in people's houses. Don't be fussy and don't be too long about it."

When He was feeling in a particularly nice mood, He would take a lot of trouble and send the angels He could trust, here and there and everywhere to get all the little bits and pieces He fancied – a few stars, petals from the loveliest flowers, scent from the sweetest, damp moss from a wood, a tuft of the softest kittens' fur, and a song of a bird. Then to add colour, His angels would bring Him – without spoiling them – colours from butterflies and birds and still more flowers, and on their way back fly through a rose-pink cloud to collect just that extra bit of elusive beauty. These splendid things were not kept in the jars and tins but in little piles on vine leaves.

"Now leave me alone," God would say to His angels and then just as they were going: "Oh! you have forgotten to bring me any liquids, I can't make a baby without any liquid and I'm not going to use milk because it will get plenty in its nursery. Just pop down and bring me some dew and a wisp of salt sea spray." When they returned He was always thinking of just one more thing He wanted and sending them back again. The harp-playing angels tried not to show that they 'minded' having so many interruptions in their practising. They were preparing for the arrival of Melba, who had just given her first 'farewell' concert on earth, so it wouldn't be long now before she joined them – and they wanted to give her a good musical welcome.

However, when God called they must go, so they flew back to His throne and stood before Him, wings neatly folded and feet in the fifth position (a memory from when they had attended dancing classes on earth) and put the kind of 'sweet and willing' expression on their faces He liked to see.

"Please, Your Almighty Highness, can I go?" The newly joined, youngest and most angelic little angel would ask.

"Yes," God would say, for He knew how she longed for an excuse to fly down to earth for a second or two. It was only a short time ago she had left it and did so want to catch a glimpse of her happy home again.

The harp-playing angels gave her a look of gratitude as she flew off and they were able to return to their practising.

Finally when God had collected all He wanted He was left alone with only Jesus to help Him and together – in the dawn – they would make an extra specially beautiful baby and send him down to earth as a birthday treat.

I knew all this wasn't true but it was the best I could think of to satisfy me for the time being and I amused myself by thinking of all the different 'things' that God had put into His 'making of babies'.

Lisle was one of his His best efforts – so of course were Margaret, Violet, Father and Mummie and Fenny. Fenny was a little bit hard on the outside (perhaps that was because she was not so young) but she was soft and delicious in the middle. I thought He might have taken a little more trouble in making me! I would have been eternally grateful.

So the years passed and the time got excitingly nearer and nearer to my Mother's return from India, when she would bring back not only our second brother Ernle, but Bobby¹ the youngest and latest addition to the family, now totalling six.

We crossed off the days on our calendars till finally the exciting day actually arrived. The cab with Mummie and our two small brothers drew up at the gate. Out we rushed to welcome them, out of the cab they tumbled, into the house we all went.

Bobby came into our lives like a whirlwind. He was aged two, had a face like an angel and was small for his age, but in that small frame was more energy than was possible to believe. He was into the house before any one of us, flew into the drawing room in which we had spent hours arranging the flowers as well as a lovely tea spread.

"Help! Help! I can't stop Bobby," a cry we were to hear many times from dear, good little Ernle, as Bobby swept the contents of the tea table onto the floor – over went the flower vases!

Mummie had had a rough and trying voyage with him and was quite worn out. From then on Bobby was the centre of the picture. A nurse was got for him but he soon got rid of her, and then the next. He had five in seven months and they just couldn't manage him. Then I looked after him a good deal and by dint of keeping him endlessly occupied I could keep him 'in hand'.

Mummie was at home with us for about two years and during that time Father came home on a few months leave. That was the only time in all our lives that the six of us and our parents were together in our home (*see next page*).

Though Mummie was nominally at the head of the house, Fenny continued to run the home. It was easier for her to carry on as she was so used to it and its ways, to the housekeeping, managing and 'coping' with everything.

I suppose it was during this time that Mummie (or more likely Father) thought

¹ Bobby was born 16th February 1908 in Dehra Dun.



Enid, Charles, Ernle, Violet, Lisle, Bobby, Ida, Margaret.

that Margaret and I ought to have more education than dear old Fenny was capable of, or had the time to give us; for after Bobby had successfully got rid of his fifth Nannie in seven months, she took him on as well as Ernle. Lisle who was seven or eight went to preparatory school daily, and Margaret and I to a daily school not far from our home.

Fenny now had Violet and my two youngest brothers to teach and look after which she admitted was as much as she could manage, for really Bobby at the age of three was a whole time job.

Margaret naturally learnt more at school than I did and so after two terms there Father decided that I had better leave, as I could be of more help at home looking after Bobby! I was delighted and except for continuing music lessons and attending the Art School, both with poor results, I ceased my education before I was sixteen.

Looking after Bobby meant keeping him endlessly occupied and interested. He had what our old family doctor called 'a very active mind' and he certainly had that! Take your eye off Bobby for one moment and he had thought of something to do! He would go off to the marshes – a few fields off – behind our house and stay away from hours. We didn't worry much as long as Spot was with him, but it was rather a bore having to go and look for him when he didn't turn up for meals, for sometimes he would remain lost for the best part of the day – not that he minded! – he liked it! – But Mummie and Fenny got fussed if he was missing for too many hours on end.

Once the doorbell rang and a road workman asked Mummie if she had lost a little boy. (Bobby had not been seen for ages, so he was presumably lost) because a small

boy had gone down the road drain and he wouldn't – and they couldn't – get him out!

Bobby's explanation when he finally did come out, was that he wanted to see what the other end was like. You couldn't blame him. Father was an explorer and he had it in him even at that early age – to explore and see what was beyond.

There was nowhere he could safely be shut up. If he was locked into the bathroom as punishment, he would turn on the taps, having blocked the overflow and let the water run until it flowed over and out onto the floor and down the stairs. So he could not be shut in there. In any other room he would get out of it and appear on the roof, daring us to get up and get him. He was utterly fearless and born with a spirit of wild adventure.

Sometimes I could keep him quiet by telling him long stories out of my head, but they had to be full of adventures. When my brain failed I would fall back on 'The Little Revenge' of which he never tired, but when it came to 'Sink me the ship, Master Gunner, sink 'er and split her in twain', we managed to get into a raft and after appalling adventures reach a 'Coral Island' somewhere near 'Flores in the Azores'. This with many variations made a good story for hurrying him up in giving him his bath, for at the words 'Sink me the ship' – I would pull the plug and then as quick as possible dry him and then we would rush to his bed (the raft) for safety, before the 'Revenge' sank. Then we would look under his pillow for all those useful and necessary things we had collected for just such an emergency as having to live on a 'Coral Island'.

I secretly sympathised with Bobby's adventurous spirit, and life when he was there was never exactly dull! Even going to Church had an element of excitement about it if he was in the party.

Bobby was fond of me, but when on our way to Church he expressed extra affection for me with his – "I love you, I love you, darling, promise you will sit next to me. I want you to sit on one side of me and Ernle on the other." I would agree, suspicious but intrigued. All would go well until an opportune moment arrived during the service. The old gentleman in the pew in front of us would be rather slow in getting to his knees, Bobby very quick. Out from Bobby's pocket would come several strong and active caterpillars (the fast moving yellow and brown cottage variety in their prime). They would be placed quickly on the back of the dear old gentleman's coat, and Bobby's hand would slip tensely into mine.

We held hands and watched, fascinated, as the caterpillars crawled upwards. The crucial moment was when they reached the top of his stiff white collar. Would they or wouldn't they be able to cross that gap between the stiff collar and his thin neck? Yes! the leading caterpillar had succeeded! The dear old man would fidget. He had felt something and he would fumble at the back of his neck and with disgust remove the caterpillar.

It wouldn't matter very much, for we instinctively knew Ernle had a reserve to hand over!

How quickly and fascinatingly the service passed. After it was over we would listen with expressionless faces as some dear old lady would come up to my mother and say: "I couldn't take my eyes off your family in church, and I think it is

wonderful the way your youngest little boy concentrates on the service. I couldn't help watching him, he has the face of an angel."

On the way home Ernle would sidle up to me with: "That was a success, wasn't it? I didn't have to use my toad, but I had him in my pocket and was going to put him on the top of the man's hat (the hat was beside him on the seat) if the caterpillars didn't march properly. You love toads, don't you? Promise me you will sit next to me next Sunday. Bobby has a plan, a new one, a different one, but it mightn't work if you didn't sit next to us." Gaily I would promise.

Ernle loyally helped Bobby, and at the same time tried to look after him. He was the dearest little boy. Everyone loved him. He was the shyest of us all but so unselfish, kind and helpful. It was generally he who would volunteer to do the dull jobs in the garden, like weeding the gravel paths and cutting the grass edges.

Lisle, as I have said, was the only one of us who didn't suffer from shyness and so made many friends. He was quite happy to go about on his own. He didn't mind going on a visit by himself, and staying at some large baronial hall and would come back home full of ideas of how to make linen-fold oak panelling for the walls of our school room, and make our garden more park-like!

Amongst his friends were plumbers, workmen, gardeners, bold one-armed seamen – from the lowest to the highest, Lisle found interesting friends. He had the art of getting people to talk and from it all he acquired a vast store of general knowledge.

From his many friends we could always depend on Lisle finding someone to give him an unwanted packing case, a handful of nails, or a lump of putty. He was always a long time away when he had to 'collect' something, as he liked to repay the gifts by doing a bit of work for the 'giver', gardener, plumber or carpenter.

"Not only do I help them," Lisle would say, "but it is the only way I have of learning to do things properly."

Our tools were sadly inadequate: a blunt saw, an old shoe horn – which incidentally was the most useful tool of all for it acted as a screwdriver, wood-splitter and general wedger and the heel of a shoe as a hammer. With these tools we had to do our carpentry.

Not only was our garden to be made more interesting by Lisle – we couldn't aspire to park-like grounds – but we could make a water lily pool, a garden frame, keep hens and bees. The water lily pool held water. The hen house wasn't bad, and the garden frame we were proud of. The beehive, the most difficult of all to make, looked just like one to our eyes. It was placed in the most alluring position amongst the flowers and we waited patiently for the bees to come along and find their lovely home. Alas! no bees ever came!

Lisle found out from one of his friends where to get hens, and he produced two which occasionally produced a very small egg.

None of us was very keen on games, Lisle least of all. He didn't find them very interesting and far preferred his many hobbies.

I remember going on the top of a bus with him and one or two of his school friends. They produced from their pockets cricket score cards. Lisle, always the soul

of courtesy, listened politely to their talk on cricket, which secretly bored him, when I heard him say – "Now I will tell you something really interesting. I have found out the difference between a male and a female fern. Would you like me to explain it to you?" The boys didn't show any enthusiasm for Lisle's discovery, so with a sigh Lisle settled down to listen to more cricket talk.

Love of sailing was one of his many hobbies. When he was about fifteen and staying with an uncle and aunt of ours on Dartmoor¹ (*Plate 6b*), Lisle would walk the twenty-five miles to Plymouth and go out all night with the fishermen in their boat. He would then walk back the twenty-five miles next morning. So he learned how to sail.

When Lisle grew up he was able to achieve many of his ambitions. He joined the Norfolk Regiment and was lucky enough to be stationed at Colchester and Plymouth and so could keep his own boat. Then for the short time he went to India and had the joy of seeing that wonderful country. Then he went to the West Coast of Africa for a few months where he explored a part of the little known Gold Coast.

Bob, who was then in the Navy, was to go on an Antarctic expedition as Captain of the sailing ship 'Penola'². Lisle went with him as Second Mate and ship's carpenter. He had by then a fine collection of tools and was able to 'panel' the walls of the saloon of the ship in his spare time!

Nearly everywhere he went, except the Antarctic, he managed to make a garden from, at Sandhurst, growing bulbs and cacti on window sills, to having a part of or helping other officers' wives in their gardens. Also he made greenhouses for them or did any other form of carpentering they needed. Bees, he kept, parking them in the orchards of friends and looking after them. So Lisle soldiered with his plants and bees, moving them from place to place as he moved.

When Lisle went to the Antarctic he handed his bees to me to look after for him. I had kept bees myself for years and I kept his and they flourished. Not long after his return from the Antarctic, war came. I still kept his bees. They wintered well that first winter of the war – 1939. At the time of Dunkirk, May 1940, walking past the beehives one day I saw no sign of the bees. I lifted off the tops one after another, of the five hives. In them all the bees were dead. They were fat and well fed, no disease; just dead. Of course I knew the old fable – unless you tell the bees that their master has gone they will die or fly away. I felt very unhappy.

A few days later Lisle was reported missing, and then later, killed³.

Ernie went into the Indian Army, First Gurkha Regiment, and was stationed in one of the lovely parts of the Himalayas. When war came he was sent to Malaya and then to Java. He never returned. It was never known how he met his end but presumably in the hands of the Japs. How and when was never known – and does

¹ Wilfred and Tempé, Charles' elder brother and his wife.

² The British Graham Land Expedition 1934-37.

³ 27th May 1940 Lisle with some 90 others was lined up against a wall at Le Paradis and shot. A war crime was prosecuted on the evidence of two of the Royal Norfolk's who survived and escaped.

not bear thinking about¹.

Bob, as I have said, went into the Navy where he managed to get any amount of adventures. He and three other submarine officers sailed from Hong Kong to England in a small sailing boat. He was shipwrecked on one occasion. He spent three years in the Antarctic. During the war he was torpedoed and sunk in mid-Atlantic. He survived by holding onto a plank of wood for four days and nights, till he was picked up by a passing ship. He told me later that when he was clinging to that piece of wood, he would think back to the time when I had given him baths and put him to bed with tales of shipwrecks, coral islands, and rafts – 'And when the sun went down, and the stars came out far over the silvery sea' – but his sea was rough and very grey – he would say over and over again 'The Little Revenge' – which I had taught him.

Later in the war he won the Victoria Cross² and other decorations and had many grim experiences.

However, all this was ahead of us then. Two world wars were yet to come with all their tragic destruction, losses and sadness. In the first war we lost many of our relations and friends. In the second war we again lost more, and saddest of all was the loss of two of our brothers.

But of the time I am writing we were still a united family – without a sorrow or care in the world – and as happy as could be and with so much to look forward to.

Father returned early in 1911 to India, or rather Kashmir, to inspect and organise survey parties which came under him. The exciting thing that Margaret and I had to look forward to was that we were both to go out there with Mummie and join Father in the autumn. I had been terrified that I would be left at home but it was decided that as Margaret would then be eighteen and quite grown up and I over sixteen, and growing up as hard as I could, we were not to be parted.

In those days girls 'grew up' overnight as it were! You went to bed one night having taken off your 'girl's' clothes and the next morning you put on your 'grown up' clothes, put up your hair, and there you were – quite simple, just like that!

I was enormously impressed at the finished result of Margaret, the first time she came down to breakfast – fully 'grown up'. Of course I had helped her to dress and Violet too had bounced in with suggestions – since we shared the same bedroom.

Margaret was not in the best of tempers, I remember, having told me to pull the laces of her heavily boned corsets as tight as I could and then complained that they were too tight, and that she could hardly breathe.

"I'm sorry," I told her in my most governessy voice, "It's just one of those things you will have to get used to and when you have made a good impression, I'll loosen you a bit." I was determined to do my best to make her look as elegant as possible.

Putting up her hair was a bit of a struggle. When she put her hairpins in they fell

¹ He is believed to have been killed by the Japanese following the sinking of SS Ban Ho Guan off Sumatra.

² As Naval Commander of the Raid on St Nazaire 28th March 1942.

out with alarming rapidity. When I put them in, in a strong and determined way, she complained that I'd poked them into her head. It was all very trying and difficult!

However, with the help of a few of the 'layering' hairpins we got it to stay 'put-up'. Now she must step into her long, mauve and brown, striped tweed skirt – keeping her head well up. I buttoned her shoes for her as she couldn't bend down easily and if she had there was the danger of her hair falling down!

When she was completely dressed I made her slowly revolve round and round, as dressmakers do when they are pinning up the bottom of a skirt. The result in my eyes was good. She certainly looked quite different to what she did yesterday. I gave her some nice loving resounding smacks all round her firm bottom – just to cheer her up and took her into Fenny's bedroom for approval – on our way down to breakfast. Fenny approved and said that between us we had made a very good job of it.

"Now you must be careful," I instructed Margaret, "how to eat your food. You are not to bend down on any account. You must feel for what is on your plate and take it in your mouth and not even look down to see if you have left anything – or your hair may fall into it!" Violet had said that she could smell haddock and underdone poached eggs, and perhaps a 'hair dip' into these and some porridge might make it sticky enough to 'stick up'.

"You know I can't bend or even look down properly – I can't even eat much – everything is so uncomfortable and tight."

"Never mind darling, I'll loosen you a bit after breakfast and after you have made a good impression. Then you can go back to wearing your old corsets – it would be more economical to wear those out and keep these for going out to India." She agreed.

Lisle thought she looked nearly as nice and old as Fenny, which from him was a great compliment. Ernle said that she looked so funny he couldn't recognise her. Bobby, that he liked her like that because he could chase her with caterpillars (which she loathed) and she wouldn't be able to run away from him.

Once Margaret had 'grown up' she remained so. I was more lucky. I went 'up' and 'down' during those summer months. 'Up' on the occasion when Margaret and I had to be bridesmaids. 'Up' sometimes on Sundays, when I would practice putting up my hair and wear a long skirt (borrowed from Fenny) and tried to get into the habit of walking properly – not running – not 'skipping and jiggling about' as Fenny called it.

But I was always glad to go back to having my hair in plaits and wearing one of my shorter skirts again – with the excuse that it would be economical for me to wear them out.

Much time was spent in getting our outfits ready for India. Yards of calico, or some such material, was bought and we made our own nighties, petticoats, petticoat bodices and drawers (I carelessly cut mine out on the short side – can't think how it happened – but it did!).

Several expeditions were made to London with Mummie to get our evening dresses, garden party frocks and all sorts of exciting clothes and hats, etc.

Mummie took infinite trouble in choosing them and, always having to remember the financial situation, she and we went from shop to shop, and tailor to dressmaker