

RECOLLECTIONS

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Chile 1890 - 1900

Tony has often asked me to write down a few of my early memories, and indeed of later ones also. I cannot think that such recollections as I still have of an uneventful, and I think very happy, early childhood can be of much interest to anyone except myself. But as I am at present unoccupied and have long days on my hands it seems as good a time as any to see whether I can write down anything that will interest and amuse; and in any case the fact of writing may help me to remember more than I expect.

I was born in 1890 at Vina del Mar, in those days a very pleasant country town just east of Valparaiso. The house had a verandah, was in a tree lined road and was covered with flowers - but I remember little of it. My first visual recollection must be of a scene that took place when I was 15 or 16 months old. It is of a room with a window on the right side (of me) and of my mother sitting at the head of the table and one or two ladies at the sides, shredding old linen up to make padding swabs and bandages for the wounded. My sister Flo aged two and a half is there in the room - I can see her but I cannot place her. I believe this to be a visual memory because it is not the sort of scene that would have been described to me later on - and I date it because there was a civil war of some sort in 1891. My sister Gertie was born to the sound of guns at (I think) the final battle, at Placilla. (Placilla means 'peace' and many suggested that Gertie should be christened that.)

[Childhood dialogue repeated to MOH:

to Gertie: 'You were not born, you were shot out of a cannon.' Gertie: 'Well anyway, it was a silver cannon covered with flowers!']

The dressings being made in the picture in my memory must have been needed in that year. There are pictures of the battlefields in one of my albums.

Another early recollection is of being swept out of my cot in the middle of the night, wrapped in a blanket and rushed outside the house in a severe earthquake.

In 1893 we were all brought over to England to be inspected by my Grandmother. I cannot say that I remember her at that time. My most vivid recollection in England is of Freddie standing in a little stiff white frock beside a sofa covered with presents for his 1st birthday.

I remember that a blue and gilt bound copy of Pilgrims Progress was read to us on the journey home, and how interested I was, though far too small to understand. But the intensely vivid recollection of that journey was of seeing a sailing ship on fire. I must have been allowed to be up during my parents' meal - I imagine a sort of high tea. I remember seeing an officer come and speak to the captain, who sat at the head of a shaped table, and then we all went out on deck and watched this truly terrifying and awe inspiring sight - I can see the ship now, all aflame, and the flames leaping up the masts and rigging - against a very black sky. She was of course a total loss - I cannot remember whether on that occasion we picked up any of the crew - but I had nightmares for a long time, thinking she would drift into us and set us on fire.

At about this time, either before or after this journey to England, we left Vina-del-Mar and went to the White House at Miramar - a little further east. These were palmy days - it was a lovely big house

on the top of a hill and must have had wonderful views. I dimly remember the Andes. The house had a big hall with a polished floor and a billiard table - we used to lie underneath this and kick off and slide along, the floor. There was a long stairway up the far side from the hall, but at the moment I can remember none of the rooms. I learned to ride there, and remember taking my Father out to show him that I could manage without a leading rein, taking a jump over a stream and coming off well and truly. Alejandro - our man of all jobs - taught us to ride and we used to go long rides with him. He was with us until we left Chile - but I will write more about him later on. I think it was from the White House that I rode out with Father one day (we rode everywhere) and saw him plan out the first golf course in Valparaiso.

Perhaps this is the best place to describe the Cancha, on part of which the golf course was planned. It was a lovely big stretch of green grass, if I remember right, with the sea along one side. Here racing took place, and for the meetings booths of branches (called ranchos) were built in a row on the side of a hill overlooking the course, and gaily decorated with flowers. Father's picture of this is one of which I am very proud. Beyond the Cancha, through a gap in the low hills near the sea was a place (called Salinas?) with a lovely beach and high sandhills. We used to ride there sometimes for picnics. I don't remember if we were ever allowed to bathe in the sea.

Riding was practically the only means of getting about, and at one time we had horses enough to mount us all. (Vide photograph in sewing room). Father was for a time very keen on steeple chasing, and I think while at the White House he was thrown and pretty badly injured. After that he still rode everywhere, but I think did no more jumping. I remember him telling me of the wonderful dream he had when given morphia, of floating away on lovely clouds; but the second dose, alas! had no such effect.

I remember starting out for a ride with Alejandro to a little wood we called the 'cup of tea', and being stopped by an enormous rift across the road caused by an earthquake of which I have no particular memory. I think of it as being about 15 feet across, a great long crack, I suppose about 20 feet deep. Earthquakes were very common, but seldom severe: but Valparaiso was wrecked by the big one in 1906 after we had left Chile.

In 1897 we moved to Salto - about 7 miles from Valparaiso - and there came for me some of the happiest times I can remember. There was a tiny railway station (on the railway line which ran from Valparaiso to Santiago, about 100 miles) - and behind the station a long peron (avenue) on which were three houses. Ours was the last. It was a fairly large one storied house, built above cellars, and round a patio - a large stone quadrangle open to the sky except for a roof running round the sides and giving a covered way round the rooms. The rooms almost all opened in to one another, and on to the patio. One entered the house by a double flight of steps, which led on to the verandah and thence into a sort of passage hall which took one through into the patio. There was a flower garden in front of the house and a large round ornamental pond with a stone surround that we used to run round (and fall in). There was no indoor sanitation - there were two E.C.'s across the back yard but Father built a brick W.C. for Mother at the back of the house, and we were soon allowed to use it. It was kept locked. On the right of the house as you looked at it, was a drive leading to the back yard and stables etc. and on the left was an uncultivated space and then the paddock where the horses were kept most of the time. Beyond that were woods of Eucalyptus trees, and a lovely little waterfall that came down from the *questrada*. (Valley?)

I have Father's picture of the *questrada* - and that was what made Salto for me. A path ran along the rocks immediately behind the house, and took one to the waterfall - and after a perilous jump from wall to wall it wound up the valley. To me it was a place of unfathomable and incredible beauty. There were palm trees, lovely flowers, red lilies and Soldado and hummingbirds - tiny, brilliantly coloured and incredibly swift. There was a tiny little cave hung with maidenhair ferns and minute flowers - near enough to the house for me to go to it alone - and here I dreamed my dreams and wrote poetry - and it was for me an awakening of mind and soul and a passionate love.

The climate in Chile was ideal, never too hot or too cold. For eight months of the year there was continual sunshine by day, and frequent showers at night which kept things fresh. Then for about four months it would rain pretty solidly. There was only the one earth road from Salto to Vina and very little wheeled traffic - we had a pony trap (vide photograph), and produce etc. was carried by oxen-carts, lovely things as I remember with high sides made of wooden slats and drawn by two gentle big-eyed oxen. On my 8th or 9th birthday I remember a lovely picnic to which we and our friends went in oxen carts.

Salto consisted (or at least so it appears in my memory,) of the railway station, a hotel and the three houses on the *peron* on the hill (south) side of the railway. Across the railway there was a small row of very poor cottages and then you came to the Estero. This appears in my memory as a very wide river bed of white sand - whether Estero means an estuary or whether it was the name of the river I cannot remember. It was the scene of very many happy afternoons with Father, who used to make us wonderful little water wheels with his penknife - and we ourselves made tiny *rancos* (booths made of twigs). Little streams and bushes and flowers grew on the sand in summer and Father used to sketch in his little book with the silver pencil that I now have. In winter the Estero was a rapid river and sometimes a raging torrent bringing down trees and dead cows and debris of all kinds.

Life was very free and easy and time didn't seem to matter very much. A few trains went in and out of Valparaiso; and if Mother wanted to get one and was not ready in time to start, a message was sent to Arratio, the engine driver, to keep the train waiting for her; which he did. The railway was a single line, and the engines had tall black funnels, behind which was a large brass bell, and they carried a cow catcher in front. The road, as far as I can remember, did not run alongside the railway beyond Salto, and we often used to walk with Father along the railway to a bridge over the Estero which we called the Cuchero (spoon) bridge - I imagine we once found a spoon there. We used to put our ears down on the line and see if we could hear the vibration of a distant train. Heneage used to put copper cents on the line and have them squashed flat by a passing train. Of the road to Salto I have several recollections - it ran alongside the railway and then there was a level crossing, ungated, to the Hotel and to the *peron* where we lived. One day I was galloping along towards the crossing when my rein broke just at the bridle: I was momentarily terrified but managed to drag the horse's head round before we got to the crossing, and stopped him. Another is of seeing a Chileno riding across the crossing with a big puma slung across the horse in front of him - a lovely tawny cat, about three feet high - it had been shot quite close to Salto. We always called pumas lions, but apart from the smaller size I believe there is another distinction.

One ride when I was alone with Father stands out as a very blissful one. We went fairly high into the hills and lost our way. Father stopped at some tiny village and bought a loaf of bread and a tin of sardines, and we ate this together in the sun on the hill. One of my very best picnics. I wish I could remember the views, because they must have been wonderful - from Salto we looked up a range towards a conical peak which was called the Bell mountain - I don't know if that was its proper name. Another ride took me up above cloud level, and so I learnt what clouds were really like.

Now I feel I must try and describe the family - Mother and Father and us five children, all born within six years. And first, Mother. I have lain here for days trying to think how to give a description of her that would convey some idea of her to my children but now, even though I cannot succeed I feel I must make an effort to put something down on paper. In appearance she was tall and rather stately, with lovely features, grey eyes and soft brown hair taken straight back from her face and done in a bun behind. In later life this hair, which even then fell to her waist, became pure shining silver. It never got thin. She never used any cosmetics - even powder. I think she could more truly be called beautiful than anyone else I have known. She was deeply, passionately religious - her faith was the core of things; and she loved my Father and all of us children with devotion. In fact I think no children were ever loved more. But she was a sad person, with little sense of humour and power of relaxation. She suffered physically a good deal even in Chile days, what with child-bearing, and arthritic feet; but the essential sadness was more of a '*Weldschmerz*' - a suffering for the wrongs and miseries of the world. I remember her saying, when about my present age, to a dear friend -

'You know what my life has been' - implying great grief; and my wondering what she could mean, when life had given her so very much - a devoted husband and children, and wealth and comfort which to us seems utter luxury. But to get back to Chile - she was often very occupied with Flo, who had some kidney infection and with Freddie, who had bouts of bronchitis, and that terrible eczema which scarred him for life. But she would not spare herself if she could do anything for her children or for others. I loved her so deeply at that time, and always, that I find it difficult to write more; she was the background and the foreground of my life.

But there was of course the reverse side of that very shining medal. She was inflexible, uncompromising and intolerant. She was determined to make us good and for both of us this meant much bitterness. I probably was naughty, obstinate and self-willed - but for anything that she judged wrong - possibly a squabble with Gertie - I was ostracized until I had confessed and apologised. Sometimes I would think I was in the right and try and last out for two or three days - but in the end I couldn't bear the feeling of being kept outside Mother's love - and would usually go to Father, burst into tears and own up to things that I had possibly never done; then I was at once reinstated in grace.

In Chile there were small upsets - or were they? Sometimes I think not: and I know that earnest strife to mould and bend was wrong. Heneage suffered, and I did. I don't think Flo was ever hurt at all - Gertie I think also suffered but without realising it as acutely as Heneage and I did. In later life - in adolescence, at Balmacara and Dovercourt, these differences became terribly acute. But they never made the least difference to my love for Mother or my knowledge that she was doing what she believed right and for my good. She was a wonderful woman, a darling mother, and - as Father wrote on her tombstone 'She walked with God'. And how she has been justified in her children. For Heneage as for me, these early bitteresses just bruised but they also stiffened; and when I think of what her sons became and what they have done for their fellow men I know that her prayers have been fulfilled. And I know they would admit that they owed a great debt to the driving force of her character. I wish I could feel that I had given to my children some of the things that she gave to me.

Father was very different. He was a most affectionate and easygoing Father and husband, devoted to Mother all her life, and very fond of us children. He liked things to go smoothly and happily and consequently gave in to Mother doing what pleased her and what she thought right. I never remember him in Chile as being angry with us children. Except on one occasion when he heard me say 'Caramba' - and I think sent me to bed in disgrace. To this day I do not know what the word means, but it has a lovely sound !

I remember also being sent to bed for a day on bread and water because I called Flo a fool - but this was by Mother. (Literal interpretation of the New Testament.)

Another row - though who was guilty I don't know. We had a large family Bible, as big as a church one on a lectern, and on the front page all our names - and I expect dates of our christenings - had been inscribed. One day it was discovered that one of us had written in pencil below Freddie's name that of 'Alice Maude' - a nearly life-size doll of Flo's. Parents took a very dim view of this sacrilege.

I suppose we only saw him at the weekends, when he used to take us walks and rides. But I remember him when I had typhoid and was recovering coming to my cot in the evenings and drawing lovely pictures with this same silver pencil. He went with us on his horse Principe - a lovely animal. He was really very gifted artistically - painting in oils, sketching in pencil, woodcarving and later on in life engraving. Of all the family Heneage is most like him. He had a great sense of humour, and a fund of stories, and a twinkle in his eye that lasted until the end. He must have been a good businessman too - and good at sport and at cards. He also had a very pleasant voice and used to sing songs in the evening after dinner which I loved listening to, first from bed and later from the corner of the drawing room.

This drawing room was pure Victorian - a very big room, scattered with small tables, tiered whatnots, lamp standards and endless ornaments. There was a double armchair somewhere in the centre (I forget what they are called, shaped like this) and in the corner, where I took my retreat, was a rectangular sofa with curtains. I used to draw these, take a book, and I suppose hope I would be forgotten as long as Father was singing.

As to us children - Heneage had and still has my deepest love and admiration. He must have been a kind brother to a small girl three years younger - and I looked up to him in everything. One of the excitingly happy times of my life was when he was sent up into the hills to recover strength after some illness, to a place called Limachi, and I was chosen to be his companion. We played endlessly in a river-bed at the back of the small hotel, the usual things I suppose - darns and waterwheels. But I was full of pride. The break, when he was sent to England to go to Packwood Haugh was a great sorrow - and I probably, still have a letter that he wrote me from school which I treasured as a child.

Of the others I can't say I remember very much. Flo always had the rights of seniority and was delicate and therefore specially beloved. Gertie was a fascinating small child, as I realise now - but not then. She used to fly in tantrums, but was so loving, and enchantingly gay. Freddie, so often ill, was a very solemn little boy. I remember one adventure with him - we went on our tricycles to the Hotel and proceeded to ride round the wooden balcony which ran all the way round the Hotel. Then we decided we'd like to look into one of the bedrooms, so we climbed (I suppose on a seat) and peered through the window into a room that seemed dark and empty when suddenly a pink blob appeared out of nothing as it seemed - the face of an old man who had been reading with his head down. We fled rather frightened. I supposed we shouldn't have been there at all - but the incident brings back both Freddie and the Hotel to my memory.

As for me, I will if I can find it enclose a letter that Mother wrote about me to Aunt Minnie. I only wish that I knew what had happened to a portrait Father painted of me - in a white coat and a large white hat with a pale blue silk lining. It shows a solemn and possibly slightly wistful little girl - but looking back over sixty years I think she was rather nice. It was life size, more or less, and somewhere in the various moves from the Glade it has been lost. I think Heneage has still got the one he painted of him in a sailor suit. These are the only portraits of his that I remember.

Now to the rest of the household, our servants. I have already mentioned Alejandro - a bronzed Chileno with a perpetual smile and a black moustache. He taught us all to ride and was our companion and dear friend. The other servants were nearly all his relatives. I think that Peta, the cook, was his wife and Manuela, the parlourmaid, Peta's sister. Panchita was our children's maid and was Manuela's illegitimate daughter - and I think Alejandro was the father - there was a great mix up anyway and some rows, but of course we were never told. Delfina was the housemaid and there was a sewing maid whose name I don't remember. Those that I have mentioned were all devoted and loyal servants, and were with us till we left. I loved Alejandro, Panchita and Delfina - but Peta and Manuela were rather forbidding. What an informal and happy go lucky sort of household it was. As children, or I should say as a child - I only seem to have met and to remember the Chileans of the lower and illiterate classes, and a most delightful people they were, happy go lucky and affectionate and loyal. I remember the men on horseback - farmers I suppose or vintners - were very striking in appearance; tall, bronzed, moustaches, earrings I think, and wearing large straw hats (sombros) and brilliantly coloured ponchos and saddlebags, carved wooden stirrups and lovely trappings. Smallpox was a scourge at that time and many of the women were badly pitted. Women used to stand on the platforms of the long railway stations, wearing large floppy hats and offering big flat posies of wildflowers, about a foot across - I suppose for sale. Strawberries were a pale pink in colour and sold by number (2 or 3 dozen for instance) and were delicious but I suppose not as good as our best English strawberries. We had fruit in plenty, custard apples, avocado pears, grenadines, passion fruit and of course bananas - I think these were all grown in the area. I remember the banana tree, also the orange groves in Salto.

Life I think followed the same routine of most British children. We had lessons, first with Mother, later with a Miss Johnston for a short time and finally with a Miss Sykes, a governess imported from England. I think we were quite well taught, and on the whole I remember I was fond of Miss Sykes. But I remember she got across Heneage and consequently me one day, and we put some tiny tacks in a piece of bread and butter at tea time, put the piece on the top of the plate, and passed it to her hoping for the direst results. I expect we led her a life. She accompanied Heneage when he came over to England to go to Packwood Haugh, but came back and was with us when we left Chile. I think I could read when I was about 4. I had a gift of imagination and for storytelling, and after we had gone to bed and the light was out, (we three girls slept together) I used to take a book from under my pillow and tell the others stories, pretending to read them and turning over the pages. One night when thus occupied I saw a huge shape travelling across the wall (by the light from a skylight over the door into the patio). I screamed and Father came and disposed of a big tarantula, the only one I ever saw of that size.

I don't remember anything in the way of games. We used to rush round and across the patio on tricycles, and we had riding. We also collected 'gold' with much energy - some gold coloured metal was in the rocks behind the house and we used to try and dig it out. I believe this was real gold, but not worth excavating. There was a deposit (of the same stuff probably) in the sand in the streams, and we used to put a handful in a basin of water and swish the water round. When it settled we would find a few specks of gold on the top of the little pile of sand.

In the evenings we used to sing songs, recite or play the piano. Every member of the family was expected to contribute something. (Did we sing 'Pinafore' then, or was it later?). We also performed small plays - I remember being Arthur in a scene from King John.

Sundays were a very serious day. Very occasionally - about three times a year, and I imagine for F & M to have communion - we were taken by train into Valparaiso to church. After matins and sermon we were taken to a friend's house to wait for our parents, and then back home by train. - a very long morning. At 11.00 a.m. we sat solemnly round in a circle, and with the exception of the Absolution, read the whole of the morning service - Father of course taking the service, Mother reading the second lesson, and all the psalms being read verse about. In the afternoon Mother gave us a Bible lesson, and we had to recite (and be word perfect in) the collect for the day and a portion of Scripture. (For this insistence on learning by heart I just cannot be too thankful). Then in the evening we had hymns (I think following a shorter evening service). We each chose a hymn in turn. Sometimes we had some of Sankey and Moody, I remember two - 'Shall we gather at the river' and 'Let us scatter seeds of kindness'. Also I remember a hymn I loved very dearly, beginning:

'We would see Jesus: for the shadows lengthen
Across the little landscape of our life' etc.

You'll think I was a sentimental and silly little girl but I wasn't. This was a time of awakening and I felt everything very deeply. I wish I could recapture that intensity of devotion.

Our last year in Chile we had a wonderful summer (Christmas) holiday. We went in a small coasting steamer down to Valdivia, and on to a tiny port called I think Puerto Vara. The journey took about a week. The river to Valdivia was thickly Wooded on both sides and I saw little green and scarlet parrots flying about and monkeys in the trees. Valdivia itself I have completely forgotten. From Puerto Varas (?) we went on, by cart I should imagine, to Lake Llanquihue, where we spent about a month. This was a heavenly spot - a large blue lake lying under the shadow of two extinct volcanoes - one a beautiful snow-capped conical shape called Osorno. The wooden one-storied hotel is the only building I can remember - was a tiny and isolated place then. There were wonderful deep cathedral like forests with some brilliant flowered creeper hanging from some of the trees. We used to ride in the forests, and one day heard a terrific bellowing in the distance, and across a big sort of marsh saw two wild bulls fighting, with their horns interlocked. A little steamer used to go across the lake, and we went in it to the foot of Osorno, hoping we might manage to scramble up

to the snow line, it looked so near; but the whole surface of the ground was covered with rocky lava, and one couldn't traverse it. It was a most beautiful holiday.

And on the way back - at some port or other - Father got news of Tom Balfour's death. We called him Uncle Tom, he was a relation by marriage of a Balfour to Rachel Ogilvie, Father's sister. I remember how upset Father and Mother were at the news. But Uncle Tom (who was Father's senior partner in Balfour Lyon) left Father his share in the business, and Father became in consequence well enough off to decide to leave Chile and come home to England. This decision must have been come to within a few months, as we left Chile on Dec. 4 1900.

Before I finish I would like to try and describe Valparaiso, as I remember it. Of the town itself I remember very little, a large square paved with cobbles, a funicular railway, and houses built on terraces on the hills of the town.

Our friends the Fontaines lived in one of these, and their garden was on three different levels below the house; each level about 4 ft. lower than the one above. Some of the streets on the hill had open ditches for sewers. But the bay itself was a splendid sight, almost circular, with the opening to the sea to the N. (or N. W.). It had several floating docks, and always many ships, both sailing and steam. The Valparaiso shore was protected by a 'malecon', wooden piles etc. on a sort of embankment. Father constructed some of this, and I remember how upset he was when a part under construction gave way in a storm. The far horizon beyond the bay was the long line of snowcapped Andes. Valparaiso was a wonderful protected harbour except in a 'Norther', and when these were gale force it could become very dangerous. The big ships of today would I imagine ride out anything - but then ships were small. The P.S.R.C. S.S. Liguria on which we returned to England was I think 4000 tons (or that may have been the one in 1894, and the Liguria 11,000?). One night either just before or just after we left Chile a Norther got up unexpectedly, the ships had not time to steam out of the bay to ride it out, and eleven ships went down. On board one (I forget its name) was a very dear friend of Mother's (and mine) who had gone to spend the night on board with her husband, the Captain of the ship. This was the first time that someone very dear to me died.

I must hurry and finish this very disjointed memoir, written at odd times over many days. The memory of the end has made me very sad, and I have postponed writing about it for that very reason. The utter desolation that I felt at leaving Chile was so great a factor I think in my development that I refer to it and will then try to forget it again. Mother may possibly have guessed it, but I wonder? How often I cried myself to sleep and how bitterly I hated those first few months in England. The joy of my first morning in Scotland makes me think that I must have begun to get reconciled then (about 8 months later). But those three years in Salto (quite possibly exaggerated and glorified by the long passage of time) were for me a time of full living, of the awakening of mind and spirit - a flowering time. And the uprooting checked much spontaneity - I am sure that as a girl I must have been difficult - moody, self-centred, dull and unresponsive. No true flowering came again until I went to Oxford.

Chile has so much of my love - but I would rather keep my memories of the freedom and peace of Salto than see what it will have surely become by now - a modern suburb of Valparaiso. But I am sure that one would still find in the country places the quiet and charm, the cheerfulness of the inhabitants and - perhaps - see the lovely ponchos and trappings of the caballeros.

Alice Meynell wrote a 'Letter from a girl to her own old age'. I would like to do the opposite, and across the space of sixty years to speak to the little girl who looks so solemnly out of that long vanished portrait of Father's. And I would like to say something like this:

'Try not to be afraid. Life will bring you great sorrow, and great happiness; meet both alike with fortitude. Try to create and keep in yourself an inner core of serenity, a quiet mind. 'Give to God a heart of flame, to yourself a heart of steel.' Judge yourself, but try not to judge others. Be kind to all, and love without stint or ceasing. And all through life try and keep yourself in readiness, when the signal comes, to

'Away O soul! Hoist instantly the anchor!
Cut the hawsers, haul out, shake out every sail,
Steer forth. '

[Walt Whitman]

('O daring joy, but safe. Are they not all the seas of God?')

The year 1914 opened for me in a blaze of glory. Whether the actual New Year was greeted in Switzerland or at home I cannot remember - but I think it was in Switzerland and that Gertie and I had gone out to Engleberg in the last week in December. We joined our Aunt Ada - an Australian, widow of Uncle Andrew, and then a Mrs Birkbeck, and her son, Max Ogilvie, a brilliant and most attractive boy in his last year at Harrow. Those of you who ski - and those who know Switzerland in winter - will understand the revelation of that month to me. The incredible beauty of it all - the heightening of all one's powers and perceptions that skiing in those surroundings can give. Gertie and I started of course on the nursery slopes - but soon ventured further afield. There was only one funicular railway, which took skiers up to a place called Trubsee, where there were wonderful slopes, and a nice little restaurant.

Skiing was not yet the crowded sport it has now become and it was easy to find quite fresh fields of snow. I was never very good or venturesome as regards speed - but managed to win a beginner's race because I was more cautious than my competitors and had fewer spills: Max spent most time bob-sleighing.

Gertie and I did a little lugeing - once behind a sleigh on a lake, and once or twice down the famous bob-sleigh run, but otherwise it was skiing all the time. Max and Aunt Ada went off when school term was due, and Gertie and I remained behind. I am often surprised that this was allowed - and am quite sure that the Parents had no idea of our subsequent proceedings. Even now I wonder sometimes at our undertaking what still seems to be a great adventure.

When and where we got to know our guide, Eugen Kuster, I cannot remember - I imagine he gave us lessons on the nursery slopes. He was one of the truest gentlemen and best companions it is possible to imagine. I think the suggestion of a three days' tour in the mountains came from him - but it may have been from us. Anyway, if I were to be given three days of my life to live again I would choose those three days.

The day before the tour I fell and sprained the left thumb on my ski-stick, and it was so painful that I went to the doctor's in the morning and while he was doing it up in plaster I fainted. Not an auspicious start.

(I have felt that joint all my life.) However the fresh air revived me, I met the others and off we started. From Trubsee (where I think we had lunch) we climbed hard - sometimes with seal skins, often just zig-zagging, over the Joch pass and up to a summer chalet village - used for the late summer pasturing of cattle - called Frutt. This village was entirely deserted in winter and it was getting dark. However Kuster opened a chalet and lit a stove and while we were thawing our things he also lit a stove in our bedroom - round which I tried to dry the sheets on our beds, in vain. However we slept well and I can still hear the knock on the door and Kuster's soft voice saying "It is seven o'clock and a beautiful morning." So it was with lovely sunshine (the sun never got to Engleberg until late because of the hills round it) and we started off as soon as we could. I remember few of the details of that day except coming down onto an avalanche, where we had to take off our skis and walk as best we could over that terribly crushed surface for what seemed a very long stay. Then skiing down the side of a forest. Towards dark we arrived at a little place called Meiringen, and here we put up at a little inn and had a blissful night. In the morning we started off to climb over the Juchli pass - and all the village turned out and shouted 'ski-heil' as we set off in the dark. We were making the first crossing that winter (so we believed !) and it was a long climb up, however we arrived at the top of the pass at about midday and had our lunch sitting outside the hut in the sun, with our skis stuck up in the snow beside us - (somewhere I have a snapshot of this). While we were having lunch two German youths came up and we tossed as to which of us

should go over first, and they won, started off a few minutes ahead of us - a snow cornice of about 25 feet formed the top of the descent and Kuster threw our skis down and then held a rope for us to slide down. I can so clearly see him, when I was below him, standing with the rope in his hand on the edge of the cornice with brilliant blue sky behind him about to follow us - when suddenly I saw his cheerful face suddenly change and look grim. As he joined us a moment later I asked him what was wrong - and he explained that he was watching the Germans and that they had gone far too far over to their left and could very easily have set off an avalanche. We had a wonderful long descent from the Juchli, and got into Engleberg late that afternoon. Unfortunately I fell on the hard road which we had to join outside the village and sprained my knee, so that was the end of my skiing. Anyway we were due to go home two days later.

We planned, before we left, to have three weeks or a month with Kuster in Frutt the following winter. He was to take a pack horse up and provision the house before the snow came. We hoped Freddie and perhaps others would Join us. I wanted to climb Titlis, which was not far off and could be done on skis until the last rocky peak - and there were marvellous ski-runs in all directions. But this was 1914 - and next winter we were sending a little money out to Kuster. The guides were terribly badly hit by the War, which of course put a stop to all tourist trade. I think we paid Kuster 89 francs (£4) for our three days, so it was an inexpensive tour.

In 1913 - 1914 I was working, in a somewhat spasmodic fashion, and unpaid, for Professor Adams (as he then was). He had planned (and brought out in 1914 I think) 'The Political Quarterly'. Three numbers were published before war brought the venture to an end. My job was to devil for him, looking out in particular for evidences of such things as the growing power of The Executive, the increasing strength of trade unions etc. etc. I read Hansard every day while the House was sitting, and visited Eyre and Spottiswode to buy any Bluebooks that seemed important. I made notes and reviews and either took these up to Oxford, or met Adams at the Authors' Club off Whitehall and went through them with him. Once I had notes from Neville Chamberlain on housing conditions in Birmingham to work up into a readable short article - (and was congratulated by him). Scrappy work, but interesting. I used to work in, and use, The Statistical Library - a most lovely room with a view over the Thames in the now vanished beautiful Adelphi Terrace.

In July I went up for a fortnight or three weeks to Iona, and spent some time sailing with Mr. MacPhail, and playing with the MacPhail children. We had no telephone of course, and I remember no newspapers or any talk of the threat of war. I had seen just before leaving London the evening newspaper bills announcing 'Murder of Archduke at Sarajevo' and remember thinking that there would be another Balkan crisis, (Heneage had been in the 1913 Balkan War) but I didn't worry. I came back in time to go down and help Miss Cameron with the end of term jobs (I had been matron of the School in the Sep. 1913 term, and was down fairly often in 1914): and in the train on my way down read the first newspaper I had seen for weeks, and realised with a horror which I could neither exaggerate or describe that War was upon us. It had never entered my imagination, and I foresaw even then in one moment the end of my world. But the full dreadfulness of the war of 1914 - 1918 was mercifully unconceived by us at the beginning.

As soon as war was declared - or rather on August 5th I think - I remember. Freddie coming in to the schoolroom and telling us that he was off to Oxford that afternoon - he was in the O.T.C. He and Gertie then went off and played duets - the Brahms waltzes - and soon off he went. Gertie and I, as soon as possible, took our St. Johns Ambulance classes and certificates in London. Then she went off to help with Belgian refugees in Harrow, and I had a fortnight at Harrow Cottage Hospital, and then (through Heneage) a few weeks at Guy's Hospital, living at the University Club (then in St. Georges St, Hanover Square). But at that time there seemed no call for nursing, and Adams asked me to take a job with Professor Orwiss in Oxford - so for a short time I lived in digs in the Broad and worked at Barnett House.

The job was to do with Land Reclamation and its object was to provide schemes of work for soldiers returning from the war which it was hoped would soon be over.

Freddie was wounded on Hill 60 in April '15. Father and Mother went out to Le Treport on receipt of a telegram, and wired for Gertie and me to join them - and Orwiss, always a most considerate chief, gave me leave at once.

Gertie and I got our passports through in one day by bombarding the Foreign Office with the various telegrams, and crossed to Le Treport and joined the Parents. I never saw anyone look as ill as Freddie did and yet recover. The tie between him and Mother was so close, I always feel he just lived from her one visit to the next, and so lived through. But the sight of the wards in France, some descriptions in the press of conditions of nursing, and the scheme for V.A.D.s which was put forward as an experiment that summer showed me what I ought to do. Orwiss released me at once, I passed a very searching interview at St John's H.Q. and was appointed one of the first fifty V.A.D.s and sailed for France on the anniversary of the outbreak of war, August 4 1915.

I had had orders a week before, and chits to buy all my kit (camp bed etc.) at the Army and Navy. I got everything through, and then went up to Edinburgh on the midnight train, coming down the following night - I just felt I had to go and say goodbye to it all.

I was at once fortunate in a friend - Bluebell Hooper - we shared a room at the Grosvenor Hotel the night before we sailed, were appointed to the same Hospital in Rouen, No.9 General, and shared a room there. She was engaged to a Lieut. Reay Parkinson R.N. whom she later married, and who was lost in a submarine soon after. Their son was born posthumously - and I was down staying with her at the time and nursed the child for hours after it was born. She later married again, a man whose young wife had died in the terrible influenza epidemic of 1918 - and unfortunately we have lost touch with each other.

To return to France:-

III

No.9 General was one of several large base hospitals situated on the edge of the pine forest about 6 miles (I think) south of Rouen. It consisted of strongly built and well designed wooden huts, raised above the ground, the wards each having about 40 beds. It was one of the largest base hospitals at the time. V.A.D.s were on the whole regarded with annoyance and suspicion by the trained nurses when we started, and at first I had little to do except orderly's work - tidying lockers and making beds, dusting, taking temperatures etc. But things were very slack in August. We went walks on off duty times in the lovely pine forests, the scent and the feel of these I can never forget. On half days I went down into Rouen and loved the old city more and more.

Then one morning - about Sep 17th I went over to the ward as usual at 7.30 a.m. to find every bed full with choking men, mostly still dressed, with all the brass in the wards - lamp brackets, men's uniform buttons - a bright green. These were the survivors from the first German gas attack at Loos on Sep 15 1915. Work from now on was very strenuous - I went to a surgical ward under a Scots Sister Osler, whom I loved - a true nurse and adored by the men - but not good at coping with the frantic rushes that we often had. Here I read one day in a paper of Robert Whyte's death at Loos. (Rhoda had been sent out to Alexandria).. Then, I think early in November, I developed an acute septic throat and was sent off to the Officer's hospital the other side of Rouen. After some weeks to my great chagrin I was sent home. That period in hospital is memorable because in the bed opposite me was a red headed Scots girl, Hilda Thompson - with whom I became very friendly. (Daddy has so often told the story of how he and George Donald met at Loch Maree in 1918, and owned up that they had both married - and went in search of their wives, to find us sitting together relating our experiences since we had been together in the ward at Rouen.) I went to a hospital in London and was then sent home to recuperate before my medical Board at Millbank. When I appeared for this, feeling perfectly well and just longing to get back to duty, the Colonel told me that he was sorry but I was not fit for active service and he was going to discharge me. Horrified, I ventured to ask why and he picked up my case sheet and said "Well you see, V.D.H. (Valvular Disease of the Heart) is a serious disability." I fortunately saw his mistake and pointed out that it was not V.D.H. but V.A.D. that was chalked on the top of the case sheet - so all was well, and I was sent on sick leave to await orders.

IV

I received orders in January to proceed to France, and at Boulogne found I had been posted to No.7 Stationary Hospital at Wimereux. This also was a hutted hospital and was laid out right on the cliffs on the Boulogne side of Wimereux. From our windows we could in clear weather see the cliffs of Dover and Sussex. In contrast to what I had seen of Rouen it was at all times an intensely busy hospital - and was supposed to take all fractured femurs and head injuries (as far as this was possible). There must have been about 1200 beds, so that with the medical and nursing staff and orderlies we must have been a population of about two thousand. The Medical lines consisted of I think ten huts of 40 beds each, and the Surgical of 16 huts, as well as the two acute surgical wards, called East and West, which connected at the far end with the theatres. Almost all my work for the next year was done in East Ward.

V.A.D's in No.7 were in a very different position from in No.9. Already when I went in January '16 they had established themselves as responsible nurses and as time went on were given more and more of the really difficult work to do. East was well-staffed when I first went there - a Redcape Sister, two senior trained nurses and 2 V.A.D.'s - but as nurses became more urgently needed at the C.C.S's and forward hospitals, we had to cope with less and less staff, and inexperienced staff at that. The M.O.'s preferred many of the V.A.D.'s to look after their cases than trained nurses out from England with no experience of those wounds or gas gangrene, and unable to forget their ideas that cleanliness and tidiness of wards was more important than kindness and gentleness and nursing. Time soon came when I was the only V.A.D. in East, with one Sister, therefore alone when she was off (with of course orderlies to do bedpans, meals etc.) and the culmination came when Matron appeared in East one morning to tell me to go off duty at 2.00 and take over East Ward alone for night duty. (This caused rather a sensation in the mess, but really it was an obvious appointment as I knew all the men and their wounds and possible complications.) Soon I think, orders came to evacuate every possible case to England, and I came on night duty to find the ward nearly empty. It was very ghostly for a night or two, I used to think I heard the men calling from the empty beds, and walk up the ward time after time knowing there was no one there. Then one night a heavy convoy came in - about 2.00 a.m. - and how the M.O., orderly and myself managed to get things fairly straight I don't know. But we did. These men arrived in uniform, terribly exhausted and dirty, with their wounds dressed at a C.C.S. and usually by the time they got to base in a terrible mess. We got them to bed, undressed, fed and their wounds attended to where necessary. I so well remember the sound of reveille that hectic morning. One of my very dear patients at this time of night duty - probably on this very convoy - was a fair young boy called MacLucas. He had a fractured femur, but not a very extensive wound and never uttered a word of complaint. He was the son of the harbour master at Oban, and we talked, when time gave us a moment, of the north. One night I noticed how pinched his nostrils looked, and in the morning he held out his hand and said Goodbye, Sister. He died that day - I tried to trace MacLucas when I went back north after the war, but he had left Oban. Another was a boy called Rogers, who died of tetanus. This is now almost unknown, but we had many cases - all of whom had somehow been overlooked at the C.C.S. and had not had the A.Ts. injection. He came from Methil, Fife - and I said I would try and see his Mother after the war - but alas: I never managed it. I wrote to her more than once. She asked me for a photograph of his grave - but in the terrible rush and casualty list that summer, there was just a lone trench dug, and bodies were laid in side by side. No case of tetanus recovered. Gas gangrene was one of the worst enemies. You would have a man apparently doing well, and quite cheerful - and then perhaps notice a little flutter in his pulse in the morning - and within twenty-four hours he was gone.

I was ticked off twice or more on night duty by the trained nurses on the day staff for taking too much on myself - once when I found a huge abscess in a man and knew he would require operation, so I stopped him having any breakfast; once when I boiled up some catheters to be in readiness for a man who was in great distress from retention. Some of those crisp young nurses thought we were not intended to use our brains. The compliment that perhaps has meant more to me than any other was indirectly paid me by a surgeon. He had just taken a man's leg off at the hip joint - really

a hopeless case - and he turned to sister and said 'If we could only get Matron to let Nurse Ogilvie special him, I believe he'd stand a chance.' The sister told me this afterwards.

I never wanted to do theatre work - and had a horror at the thought of seeing a severed limb. But one day a patient in East was rushed into the theatre after a femoral haemorrhage and I was sent in to get hot bottles for him, the first thing I saw was the leg in a bucket. So I lost all fear of such things and I think would probably have liked theatre work if it had come my way. But the work in East gave me all that I could do.

I remember one night going on night duty in complete darkness - it must have been about November and we were of course blacked out - and meeting a young Captain coming up from the Officers' mess whom I hardly knew but liked.

We walked up to the surgical block together, in silence - and suddenly he said 'As I came through the desert, thus it was, As I came through the desert' - and I replied 'In that same city of tremendous night.' We said nothing more that I remember, but such is the power of poetry (and I wonder if two other people in the camp knew the poem?) that it might well have led to a romance - but next day he went off with an acute appendix and I never saw him again.

One word about Eve. Eve Griffiths was the Red Cape Sister in charge of East when I first went there. She was unquestionably the best nurse I ever met. The ward was a different place when she was in it, full of sunshine. She came on duty, dainty, quiet, and after reading the night report went all round the ward and speaking to every man and sizing up at once how he was and what he most needed. She was an inspiration to us all. She and I became really very great friends and we had fun together, she often arranged that we had off duty and half days together. She became a R. Catholic that summer and I used to go down to the church in Wimereux and sit quietly there while she had her instruction from Father Aveling. I remember her happiness the day she was received into the Church. I think she was invalided home that Autumn. I saw her in England - she married and came to Heswall once but I much regret to say we have lost touch with each other and indeed I think she died some time ago.

I was not, of course, in East Ward the whole of my time, though it is what I remember best. I had a very short spell in one of the German Prisoners' wards, which I remember chiefly for three things, 1) giving my first general anaesthetic - open chloroform, 2) the disagreeableness of a German officer who had somehow got into a men's hospital and was very rude and truculent, 3) the absolute terror of the ward in an air raid. The men were so convinced of the invincibility and accuracy of their pilots; and though we pointed out that we were plastered with Red X signs they obviously thought that these would be disregarded.

Then I had a long spell (but I think not before 1917) in the Medical Lines and I suppose reached the height of V.A.D. responsibility when for a night or two (Sister must have been on leave) I was made Night Super - in charge of 400 beds - with both trained nurses and V.A.D.'s under me. Really more administrative work than anything else. But now for what will I think be of far more interest, if I can bring myself to write about it.

V

Dates are all rather vague, but I think it was in the beginning of December that I had a week's leave - and on coming back found I was posted to the Surgical 'Self-inflicteds' ward. The M.O. was Lieut. Carlisle whom I hadn't seen so I asked for opinions and gathered he was 'all right but very pernicketty' which didn't worry me. The ward however was depressing - the injuries were mostly fairly slight, hands or feet, but many of the men faced court martials - possibly to be shot - and no self-inflicted injury was evacuated to England (the hope of all the wounded).

I think I went on duty in the afternoon, did a round and tidied up etc. and then sat down (about 6.0 p.m.) in the Sister's Bunk to write the report and make up a drum of dressings. There was a knock at the door, a voice said 'Good evening, Sister' and I turned round and stood up to meet Daddy. He saluted and took off his coat, I picked up the treatment book, and we went round the ward...