

CORNISH YEARS



Anne
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author of *School House in the Wind*, etc.

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THE SEA IN ENGLISH LITERATURE
CHARLES M. DOUGHTY
THIS WORLD'S BLISS
SCHOOL HOUSE IN THE WIND

CORNISH YEARS

by

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To

SUSAN

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Cornish Years

CHAPTER I

TWO PARISHES

An open primrose
And an exquisite feather;
What wing and what star
Have brushed earth together!

February in Trevennen Wood

When I was a child I did not know that Gorrán in South Cornwall where I was born was beautiful, nor St. Michael Caerhays, the neighbouring parish to which we moved when I was ten.^[1] It was my sister Susan who whispered to me that we need not mind if the Cody-Coats, a family of boys who came to stay at Gorrán Haven in summer, and whom we called Cody-Coats because they wore Eton jackets to church on Sundays—we need not mind if the Cody-Coats stole our saucepan and our frying-pan from the cave at Hemmick. They would go away with August, she said, but we should live in Gorrán and Caerhays for ever and ever.

We always seemed to belong to the two parishes because, while my father was head master of Gorrán school, he used to drive our pony, Dart, to Caerhays on Sundays, and play the little organ there. And when he left Gorrán school for Caerhays, and we transferred ourselves from the schoolhouse on high ground near Menagwins, to the schoolhouse on high ground between Sentries Lane and St. Michael Caerhays Church, we still felt like Gorrán people and were interested in Gorrán news. News travelled like lightning in Gorrán. It used to be said that if you cut your finger in Gorrán Haven it was hanging at Cooks, and cut off clean as a whistle in Gorrán Churchtown. Our letters at Caerhays were brought from Gorrán by Jabez Grose, and we always had a little chat with Jabez. Mevagissey news was carried by Thomas Hicks as he dealt out from his van his golden-brown loaves, and saffron cakes crowded with currants and lemon peel. Nicky Liddicoat, the fish-jouster, often went through St. Ewe and Veryan before he reached Caerhays; by then his news was ripe for the telling. Johnny Johns

from Portholland went to St. Austell once a week, on Fridays, market day. We had St. Austell news from Johnny or from anyone he took up and back in his wagonette. When Mr. and Mrs. Kneebone at the Barton went to Truro market on Wednesdays, they kept us in touch with that region of the outside world. Having heard all the local news by word of mouth we liked to read it confirmed in print in the local papers. I loved the Cornish local papers and love them still. Wherever I am I can read the *St. Austell Guardian*, the *West Briton* or the *Cornishman* with pleasure. They are the only papers I ever read right through from Births, Deaths and Marriages to the projected movements of the Stud Bull. I like the story of the lady rider to hounds who, when asked at a Hunt Ball if she had read *Gone with the Wind* replied, 'No; is it in the *West Briton*?'

Southward, Gorran and Caerhays parishes were bounded by the sea. To the west Veryan and Cuby bordered Caerhays; to the east Mevagissey bordered Gorran. The large pastoral parish of St. Ewe, and St. Austell which gave its name to our market town, lay between us and Cornwall's ridgy backbone. There in the distance, hazy on hot summer days, or clearly outlined when rain threatened, we could see the Arch Beacon, Hensbarrow, a thousand feet up. Sharp-eyed folk standing on the Dodman, or gazing through a five-barred gate, or mounted on a hedge or up a tree would say they could spy Roche Rock. I have said I could spy Roche Rock when in truth I was not sure even in which direction to look. The rock was only sixteen or so miles away and yet it seemed to me immensely distant. To us the whole upland region was fabulous, with its camp of great white tents, not tents really but dumped china-clay waste fashioned into constant shape by wind and weather. I have seen these glistening pyramids in summer seeming to sail between earth and air. In the distance the sides of the pyramids appear smooth; nearby they are seen to be grooved, furrowed and channelled, patched with gorse and more grey than white.

From our bedroom windows at Caerhays we could look across the valley to Gorran or more correctly, St. Goran Church tower; and Gorran cricket team was still our cricket team. My father often went over to umpire for it on Saturdays. Caerhays, though the boys and girls played cricket in the field behind the school, and the men came to play in the evenings and to criticize us, was too small to support a regular eleven like its neighbours Veryan, on the one side, or its Gorran neighbour on the other. Gorran and Veryan were special rivals. Gorran would do anything to beat Veryan. It was better to beat Veryan than to beat town teams like St. Austell, and Truro, or good school teams like Probus, though Gorran had fixtures with them. 'We'm playing Vuryan. We'm going lick 'em this time sure as taties. We could ate Vuryan

this year.’ Parishes like St. Ewe and Mevagissey hardly counted in cricket. But Gorran counted and still counts. My elder brothers, Maurice, Howard, Stanley and Wilfrid (known as Cap’n) all played for Gorran in their day. Maurice played less than the others for he went early away from home to school. Cap’n was the best all-round cricketer, Stan the best bowler and Howard, my father used to say, was erratic. He would make a fine score one week and be out for a duck the next. When the little demon within him concurred he could hit out with impunity. He still thinks that his proudest moment was when on one of his good days he made so many runs for Gorran that he was chaired, and old Parson Sowell said, ‘Take off your cap, my boy; take off your cap.’ And my father, who always hummed a snatch of Anglican chant or hymn tune when he was agitated, came towards him over the grass humming, ‘Lord I am not high-minded’, and said, ‘You did well, boy.’

And Will Richards praised him. Will Richards, who died two years ago at the age of seventy-six, was a man whose word of praise meant much to my brothers. His photograph always takes my eye on my brother Howard’s desk. He stands as he used to stand by the forge near the elder bush at Menagwins, his arms folded, the neck-band of his shirt unbuttoned, his sleeves rolled up, his cap on his head. His father had been blacksmith at Menagwins before him, and his grandfather before that. Later his son Lowry, at school with me, was to join him in a perfect partnership. The forge was stone-built. It had a window of small overlapping panes, and a door in two separate parts, so that on occasion the bottom could be closed and the top open and Will could lean out. In the yard, where an old harrow rusted, grew the elder tree. The yard wall curved with the curving road. As we began to round it we heard the champ of a bit or the jingle of iron traces. Some great cart-horses were so big that the yard would hardly contain them; we might see a brown tail jutting out of the gap, or a shining rump as we approached; and we heard Will shouting, ‘Woa-up!’ or ‘Woa-back!’ People not working themselves like to watch other people working. Nearly always there was someone at the forge watching Will and Lowry, and waiting to blow the bellows. Then from the blackness fire would wake and sparks would sparkle. Will would take out glowing iron, beat it into shape, and quench it sizzling in black water. The smell of quenched iron filled the forge; the air was thick with it. Between jobs, Will and Lowry would always be ready to talk, Will wrinkling up his forehead which ran back into corrugated lines like the sand at Hemmick as the tide went out. Proverbial sayings in Gorran contained metaphors from shoeing. When in recent years I was giving my opinion as to how a difficult evacuee child should be treated

Polly Burley observed, 'Everybody do know what to do with a kicking horse except he that got un.' And when I thought of borrowing money to buy a house in Mevagissey Nellie Watty said, 'A big horse, you know, Anne, do need big shoes.'

Will was genial in dealing with people, but not so tactful as to be tame or smooth. His feelings showed, and he could be hot-hearted; but there was something in him immensely reassuring and kind. He was at once human and Godfearing without a trace of cant. His personality made things go. When he arranged cricket teams people quarrelled but played; while he was captain of ringers the bells rang merrily; while he was church warden the church seemed established for good. Children felt safe and not silly with Will. 'Hullo! my dear!' he would say. 'Hullo!' We were reassured and knew we were welcome. He used to whistle hymn tunes; not a few confined favourites, but dozens of different hymns. With them he carried his Sunday into his weekdays, but he never carried his weekdays into Sundays. He would no more have thought of carrying corn on a Sunday than of mending a plough. Not the finest hot dry Sunday in a cold wet week could tempt him. He might regret the day; he might complain of the weather; but he kept his rhythmical period of repose. He was philosophical about climate. Like the local preacher he would have said, 'Tidn' no good for 'ee to pray for fine weather with the wind where 'tis.' His wife, Ellen Kate, happily still living at Menagwins, had a laugh tilting upwards and upwards till it drew you out to laugh too. It was ha-ha-ha-ha on an ascending scale. What she thought at the moment she said; every sentence was full of pith.

Will Richards has a son in Gorran. My parents have no son living in Gorran, and no daughter either. Yet we still belong. We belong because we remember every detail. We remember the ice splintering white under our heels in the wheel-rutted farm-lanes in winter as well as the honeysuckle scenting the summer hedges; the great hoof-prints filled with water in the churned February mud by the mowhay gates as well as the primroses and violets; the rabbit-droppings on the Greeb as well as the wild thyme. We know the stinging-nettles in the ditches with the soothing dock-leaves hard by; the penny-worts in the patterned stone hedges flanking the stiles; the veined ivies and the oak-leaf ferns. August makes us see again the cracks in the parched, hard path leading down to Hemmick. We were there when Walter Ford, cutting the trash in the hedges, chose one or two favourites among the thorns on top, and spared them each year, and tended them, and let them grow into trees bearing the leaves we called green-cheese in early spring, then pearly buds, then flowers with watch-like, open, innocent faces, then the polished, dark red berries we called aglets. We know the lanes. If

two of us meet as we did recently in Indiana where my eldest brother lives, we can walk together in memory the deep hidden lanes, almost like leafy caverns, that link Streets, Treninnick, Tregerrick, Polsue (the Gorran Polsue), Bennets, Metherose, Galowras and Lancallen. The primroses in Polsue Lane are moons in beauty. We saunter down Cotna Lane and by the field path to Sentries; and through Scotland Wood, and turn right to Portmellon, or left over the uplands to Penwarne and Mevagissey, coming out by what used to be Mr. Howard Dunn's house, and taking the coloured harbour full into our eyes.

All my brothers belong more to Gorran than to Caerhays. By the time we went to Caerhays to live they had all left home and only came back for holidays. But to my sister Susan and me Caerhays lanes and fields and cliffs are as dear as Gorran, and as familiar. Caerhays is a compact, secluded parish, all owned, except the rectory, by Mr. John Charles Williams when I was young, and by his son, Mr. Charles Williams of Caerhays Castle now. Caerhays Castle! A good sound it has, much better than Caerhays House would be. And Mr. Williams's house is a castle. Not an ancient castle; it was built by the last of the Trevanions at the beginning of the nineteenth century; the ruin above the battery walk was placed there to suit the fashion of the time. But I would rather hear the rooks caw about that fanciful ivy-mantled tower than about all the true old ivy-mantleds in the world. I have an image in my mind of the castle itself as I write. I imagine I am standing in the park which leads to Tregavarras. I look down at the pond with its grey-green rushes and its water-lilies. I see the bullocks feeding on the level pasture as though all time was theirs; I see the grey walls and the symmetrical towers, and the battlements, and the woods enfolding secret fairy-lands of flowering trees and shrubs. And there, right by the castle—so near that I suppose Mr. Williams could walk out of his bed and into the sea in five minutes, if he wanted to—is Portluney, which has its name from the fishfull, brown, little river Luney.

Many farms have passed to families with new names. More than any other family now gone from Caerhays I miss the Rhoddas at Polsue. (There is a Polsue Farm in Gorran parish too.) At Polsue, beyond Treberrick on the road to Fair Cross, Ruth Rhodda used to have her friends to tea on Sundays, and entertain them in a room quite independently of her parents and of her sisters, who dispensed tea and smiles to their young men in other rooms still. Ruth, Alice Blandford and I, as though we were grown-ups visiting one another, would feast alone on spiced cake, and rice cakes, and jam tarts with a crust of yellow cream daintily deposited on the jam. Ruth was a dainty person. She laid the tea grandly with doilies starched and goffered on the

dishes, and flowers in a red glass vase with fluted trimmings round a stem rising from a shallow stand. The window looked on to the mowhay. I rarely see hens jutting their heads without thinking of Polsue. I liked to feel the maize grains slide through my fingers in the bowl as I played with them before I scattered them wide to the cocks and hens. Polsue fowls were active, stringy birds who laid their eggs in all sorts of wild places. There were never such hens for stealing their nests; in soft spring sunshine I can see the primroses in Polsue Lane and a hen coming down with a whole brood of unexpected chickens. Animals did more as they liked at Polsue than at other farms; the ducks brought themselves up. Even the calves were very independent. We fed them after tea, and helped to milk. I learnt to milk at Polsue. Then we used to walk to church for evensong, hurrying up the last two hills as the bells were being rung down. If we were in church early we used to hear Mr. Charlie Dustow shout 'Stand' between the peals; and sometimes the six ringers would take so long turning down their sleeves and putting on their coats that, before they had reached the north aisle, Mr. Bellamy would be waiting to begin, 'When the wicked man turneth away from the wickedness which he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.' Bert Paddy, a well-knit, square-shouldered figure, used to lurch as he turned into the narrow space between the front seat of the nave and the pulpit. On festival days our hearts would beat for the safety of our decorations.

Lanes and paths led to the church. Polgrain Lane was one of my favourites. On hot August days I used to go up Sentries Lane, just at the back of our house to the left of the pump, and go down through Sentries^[2] fields to Polgrain Valley and sit on the little bridge over the river with my feet in the brown water round the rushes, and weave myself hats of meadowsweet and ferns. Susan was by this time too big for such occupations, and I was too big really. So I made and wore my hats secretly. It was easy to be secret at Caerhays in the lanes and the woods, or on the cliffs, or in the fields through which ran the church paths linking scattered souls. Caerhays Church and Gorran Church held and hold the parishes in their keeping. Wherever you walk the church towers may rise suddenly into the distant view. Gorran, in particular, is a noble tower; whether you are walking by Scotland Wood to Mevagissey, or back to Gorran by Penare from the Dodman, the pinnacles of the tower are a recurring theme. Caerhays tower, less elegant, is solid and sound against the weather. What it lacks in height it makes up for in situation. It is like a wayside chapel to which a knight might come in Arthurian romance.

My brothers used to drive over to Caerhays with my father when we lived at Gorran. But they did not go to Caerhays Church as Susan and I did in their late teens. Not one of my four brothers found work near home, although my youngest brother used to say he was going to be a farmer like old Mr. Lanyon, and my brother Stan used to say he would be a carpenter like George Martin and make Cap'n's gates and wheels for nothing. That was when we used to go over to Highlanes to watch George Martin making wheels; and to play with the curly shavings, and sniff the woody smell; and when we used to see Mr. Lanyon driving Dinah into market from Lamledra.

Susan and I used to think that the most perfect way of life would be for two of our brothers to have farms near enough for visiting and we would keep house for them; I for Howard and she for Maurice; or I for Cap'n and she for Stan. This neat arrangement for pure content was actually exemplified for us in Gorran by the Lawrys. Mr. Billy farmed Treveor with his sister, Miss Elizabeth; and Mr. John farmed Tregarten with his sister Miss Susan. But neither my sister nor I could ever have emulated Miss Elizabeth and Miss Susan, most notable housekeepers. There is a strong tradition of good housekeeping and good cookery in Gorran parish. Not that Miss Elizabeth and Miss Susan were extravagant. I have heard that when a pig was killed at Treveor Miss Elizabeth would gather up every eye of fat to run down for lard, so that when the table and utensils came to be washed the dish-water was hardly greasy. It was said that Miss Susan disliked to 'tap' a fresh half-pound of butter for the family. If there were not sufficient left over for home use after the last half-pound had been patted, she preferred to wait till the next butter-making. And this frugality was admired. It was felt that the sisters were not 'near' but orderly; warriors in the grand style against waste and dirt. Husbands held them up as patterns to their wives. Certainly things minded them. I best remember Miss Elizabeth, as upstanding as the monkey-puzzle on her lawn. Treveor was trim; its iron gate painted white as snow, its lawn with hardly a daisy showing—a dandelion would never dare. Miss Elizabeth was the opposite of the sun-drinking dandelions. Her wide flower border, to the right of the lawn and of the white gate as we looked in from the road, had all the flowers in their season—all the garden not the common flowers. Her marguerites did not look like horse-daisies; they were elegant, elongated, slender, growing white and gold and green in a beautiful colony near the house. What delighted us in Treveor lawn was that it spread smoothly to the veranda from an unfenced bank; all its green surface open to view. Treveor was a good farm or rather (according to Mr. Kneebone of Caerhays Barton) Treveor was made good by Mr. Billy Lawry. He put good things into it. A farm, says Mr. Kneebone, can be filled up, and plumped,

and rounded like a good stomach; and contrariwise, by another type of farmer, the goodness can be taken out of it, and taken out of it, until there is nothing left but an old wrinkled skin. Mr. Billy left his land in far better heart and stomach than he found it. So did his neighbour Mr. Thomas Grose of Trevarrick where our pony, Dart, had been a colt.

Many friends of mine and Susan's married farmers or men who, like Lowry Richards, had fields in addition to some other such job as blacksmithing. I like to think of Ella Richards standing by a window that looks out into a network of sky and blade and branch above a green bank. When she makes a special little sound all the feathered creatures come gobbling, and quacking, and clucking—the turkeys, and the ducks, the ducklings, the hens and the handsome cocks. If I had turkeys and ducks and hens and handsome cocks I should probably forget to feed them; and the milking of cows is not my favourite occupation. When I did have a garden I let more weeds grow than garden flowers, and I never planted rows of peas and beans and a gooseberry bush, or red and white currants. Yet my fancy has always been for a few acres with creatures and apple trees; and a house with jars of jam in the pantry, and sections of honey; with a cool place for primrose and cowslip wine, and cherry brandy, and sloe gin. I wish that all my brothers had been farmers and had farms at Gorran; then I need have owned nothing. I could have visited them all in turn, milking an occasional cow, and picking the blackberries for the jam, and the mushrooms for the ketchup, and the sloes for the sloe gin. But none of us stayed at Gorran or Caerhays. All my brothers went away on this pursuit or that. By the time I was fourteen Maurice, the most intellectual of us, was chasing chemistry in London; he was to settle in America, though he came joyfully home as often as he could afford it, and never seemed really apart from us. Howard, the most artistic of my brothers, and the most ready to help people, had become an organist and schoolmaster in Exeter. He earned his living by doing work which he both enjoyed and knew to be worth while, an enviable thing. But then he, like my parents, was religious. Stan, the most philosophical of my brothers, and the most modern in his outlook, considered and still considers that the best thing, in a machine age, is for everyone to do his measure of dull work and keep his darling leisure for himself and his affectionate family. In a properly run world no one need do dull work to the point of becoming dull himself he says. But the world is naturally slow to change; and it is no use to shoot people in order to make it change quicker. Men must live. That it is better to live in a muddle than die in an orderly fashion my brother has steadily perceived. If I were God I should design a little corner of heaven where my father and his third son might meet and go to a

cricket match together, and then light their pipes and walk in one another's gardens, considering one another's early broccoli, spring onions or sweet peas. There should be no children for my father to teach, and no post offices for my brother to go and look at—Stan went into the post office. My father and my third brother were perfect characters to enjoy leisure and ease. But so, indeed, was my youngest brother also. He, the most sporting of us was, by this time, dreaming in a London warehouse of getting rich quickly and coming home to buy Beeparks, so as to spend his time shooting over Dodman and fishing off Long Rock. Stan, too, had a hankering for Beeparks; but Beeparks belongs to John Grose who had the sense to stay in Gorran and keep his eye on what he wanted. We, who were all considered so clever when we were young, have no land.

But land often causes disruption in families. Perhaps because he had nothing to leave, my father, if there were that sunny spot in heaven, would enjoy meeting all his four sons, a not so common thing in families. I have said what pleasures he would enjoy with Stan; with Howard he would listen to the heavenly harmony; with Cap'n he would cap St. Peter's fishing stories; with Maurice he would argue. Maurice used to say that before coming home on one of his visits from America he used to give himself more than ordinarily to current affairs so as to have ammunition for the endless talks and arguments in which he and my father indulged. My mother would be there to keep an eye on them. She was one for loving and giving and not for changeful opinion. Almost any sunny heaven would do for her if my father were there; indeed if my father were there I am not sure that she would even mind if the nook faced north. Whereas my father, whoever was with him, would be conscious of the absence of the sun. He always thought he would like to live at Little Polgrain where he would be facing due south.

My brothers all had an idea of what they wanted to do. Susan and I were more elusive; secretly we merely wanted to stay where and as we were. But soon, even Susan was going to St. Austell on Saturdays for music lessons, and I had to do something. I did not, like my brother Howard, choose teaching because I wanted to teach. It seems to me, on looking back, that I chose a life which involved telling other people what to do because I did not know what to do myself. In as far as I can be said to have chosen teaching at all it was the thought of the long holidays that prompted me, and the absence of any alternative. Tommy Johns, whose shop at Portholland I have described in *School House in the Wind*, held me in derision when I suggested that I might do well in the grocery business. I should not put the sweet-bottles back in their proper places, he said. The lemon-drops would get mixed up with the Barcelona-balls, and the scales, true as the Day of

Judgment in the right hands, yes, true as the Day of Judgment, would not be used to a nicety by me. ‘You’d never have the patience for it, my dear maid, never have the patience for it,’ said Tommy. ‘And’—he began nearly every sentence with *and*, balancing on the word a second or two before venturing on the further stepping-stones of his speech—‘And . . . you’d better follow in yer feyther’s footsteps; tha’s what you’d better do; follow in yer feyther’s footsteps. You cean’t do bettern that; no, you cean’t do bettern that. And . . . you’d never knaw; there may be something in ’ee; iss, there may be something in ’ee . . . Now.’ The word *now* pronounced some little time after the conclusion of a sentence always signified that Tommy had finished his say as for that time; no more was to be hoped from him.

So I drifted towards teaching. These things are managed better now. One of the most promising of recent developments in education is the provision made for mature persons with experience in other walks of life to receive training as teachers. I was inexperienced, but I had some true knowledge. I do not know at what period I saw the primrose and the feather recalled at the beginning of this chapter. I saw a primrose newly opened, the first of the year, and a feather lying on the moss beside it, a feather not bedraggled but perfect. I saw them as complete in themselves, magical, different from the primroses among whose cold stalks I had insinuated my fingers as a child, and different from the feathers I had picked up and drawn softly along my cheek to try and make the sprung barbs lock into the web again. I recognized their glory with a sudden transporting delight, such as at odd moments I had experienced before: seeing two wild white roses one Whitsunday morning full out in Crooked Lane, or a great bush of honeysuckle on the lower hedge in Furzy Brake. These unpredictable enchantments were mine while I still lived in the two parishes; before I set out one fine morning in our pony-trap for St. Austell, where there was an improvised secondary school to which I had won, at second go, an Intending Teacher’s Scholarship.

[1] I have described our lucky childhood in *School House in the Wind*.

[2] There are Sentries [Sanctuaries] Fields in both Gorran and Caerhays parishes.

CHAPTER II

ANOTHER DAY

In my neat body,
Smooth as a rush,
Pliant as willow,
See how I fare
Over the earth,
Through the clear air,
A-top the green billow
In my neat body,
Smooth as a rush,
Pliant as willow.

Mr. W. D. Raynor, tall in his black scholar's gown, prayed every morning in a detached voice: 'O Lord, our Heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, who has brought us safely to the beginning of another day . . .' *Another* day, not *this* day, as I had always heard it in church. For three years I heard this prayer and for three years I tried to imitate Mr. Raynor's scholarly stoop. I was away from home. I could imitate anyone I liked; for here nobody knew how I ought to look. The only person I had ever tried to imitate before was Janey Yelland. I had heard my brother Maurice say that she had an attractive scowl. I thought I would have an attractive scowl too; but had quickly been told by my mother, 'Stop making up faces, Anne.'

At St. Austell County School, nobody said, 'Stop making up faces, Anne.' I could try out anything. Home and school did not know one another. They were ten miles apart, a long way measured in foot-lengths or pony-foot-lengths. And, mercifully, there were no parents' meetings and no terminal reports. 'You don't like being talked about behind your back, does one?' as a parent once put it to me in later years; yet the only time I saw Mr. Raynor and my father have much talk together I burned to know what had been said about me. It was after a Saturday cricket match between St. Austell and Gorran on Gorran ground in which my father had been umpire, and in which Mr. Raynor had played as a substitute for a member of the St. Austell eleven. I had been as astonished when he entered the field in his white flannels, and carrying a bat, as if Achilles in shining armour had presented himself for combat. That Mr. Raynor should come to Gorran! That he should slightly lift his hand in recognition as he passed me near the

scoring-board! I hoped with all my heart that, when the tea-interval came, the tea would be smoking-hot, and Thomas Hicks's saffron cake be new and crisp and full of fruit. I fancied myself pouring out a steaming cup for a Mr. Raynor who had knocked up fifty runs or so. I did not care if Gorran was licked. But alas! alas! My brother Stan, who happened to be home for a holiday, and was playing for Gorran, bowled my chosen clean for two. And in the tea-interval I replenished other cups but could not for the life of me venture on Mr. Raynor's. Instead I pretended I did not see him. I avoided his cup and through the tail of my eye watched, in mortification, its being filled by Mrs. Drew. She was wife to tall Mr. Drew who always licked his finger while he awaited the bowling. The action was automatic. The bowler took his hop, skip and jump and delivered the ball, and Mr. Drew licked his finger and smote.

I had not spoken to Mr. Raynor, but my father and the hero had certainly had considerable chat together. Walking back to Caerhays with my father after the match, I hoped to have some report of this conversation, but my father said nothing, and I did not like to inquire. At last going up Portluney Hill I could bear it no longer. 'Did Mr. Raynor say anything about me?' I asked.

'About you?' said my father absently—he generally forgot to answer our questions for a quarter of a mile or so. At last he remembered to reply. 'About you? No; we didn't say anything about you. I told him that Stan's bowling was very simple really. Raynor is a poor bat. But he's seen a lot of good cricket. At Lords he saw . . .' When I asked Susan what she thought of Mr. Raynor she said he hadn't pressed his flannels. Stan at supper remarked that Raynor seemed a nice enough fellow, but that St. Austell must have been hard up for a man to play him. My Mr. Raynor a nice enough fellow! After that I kept my admiration to myself and practised my scholarly stoop only when walking through St. Austell Fore Street.

There was no need for me to walk through Fore Street to school. I made a circuit so as to come into that street and fall in behind Mr. Raynor. With stooping shoulders and eyes bent he hunched along in the middle of the street and I, with stooping shoulders and eyes more bent, hunched along on the near pavement. I lodged in a little house in Grant's Walk. There was no boarding house attached to the school; those of us who lived too far away to go home every night became independent lodgers in St. Austell during the week, and went home for weekends. I lodged with Miss Susan Varcoe and her father, old Mr. Varcoe, who made and mended shoes in a wooden shop in the back garden. The house was shared by two tremendous cats, much

pampered by Miss Varcoe. She was a grand woman. Open-hearted as charity, she turned out her toes, praised the Lord, and salted the food. Every dish she salted with equal generosity. 'It's a little salt, isn't it, Miss Varcoe?' I sometimes ventured, eyeing the steak and kidney pie remaining on my plate. 'Food is nothing without a bit of savour, my dear,' Miss Varcoe would reply, adding another pinch of salt to her greens, and vigorously shaking the pepper-pot. Either the salt or a good disposition gave her a wonderful vitality. She could mimic half St. Austell, and was a great stand-by at Pleasant Evenings in connection with the chapel. To me she was a surprise. I had never before lived with a person so ready to give herself to everything human. The talk was always of people and their doings; never of any idea under the sun as in my father's house. There we all argued for arguing's sake my mother said. I have seen my father and my brother Howard push one another from the music-stool in order to illustrate a vindication of some cherished theory. My mother had principles; she was a conservative and a churchwoman in grain, and would never take another side for fun. 'You don't mean what you are saying, my dear,' she would admonish my father if she considered he was going too far in trying to shock some visitor's fundamentalism. Or, 'You have talked enough, Maurice,' to my eldest brother if he was pressing my father too hotly with the foils.

Miss Varcoe did not argue at all. She was content to be, and to observe other people as they were. She lived a life of kindness. Her recreations were going out to visit an uncle—Uncle Penrose she called him—and to various chapel functions. When she was out I had the house to myself, for the old man, Mr. Varcoe, preferred his shop to the house. Like my Great-Uncle Tommy, he had a fringe of whisker around the smooth table-land of his chin, but, unlike Uncle Tommy, he talked very little. However, I made a silent conquest of him, and he sometimes brought me tribute of sweet apples.

I had a fire of my own and a little room to work in at night if I wanted to work. But there was no planned home-work at St. Austell when I was there. We did as much or as little as we liked. The school when I first went to it was in process of being converted from a pupil-teachers' centre into a secondary school. All of us, except a few 'Minor Scholars' who came in at an earlier age, were intending teachers. We were housed on West Hill in a disused Methodist chapel, as bad for its purpose, I imagine, from the point of view of the staff, as could be conceived; but to us more fun than an ordinary school building. There were three main rooms—the old chapel itself with the pews still there; a middle room which had been made partly into a laboratory, and partly into a lecture room; and an upstairs room reached by strange routes. There were one or two little rooms into which we

did not penetrate often. No doubt Mr. Raynor robed himself in what had been the vestry and the mistresses may have had the organ loft. Certainly they were invisible to the student eyes when in retreat.

Until we moved into our new building, when additional masters were appointed, three mistresses made up Mr. Raynor's staff, as excellent a three as ever taught under difficulties. Miss Passmore was small in stature, but with more energy to the square inch than anybody else I have ever encountered. She had an idiosyncrasy in speech, more individual than a lisp; her words were faintly explosive on the lips. She wore pince-nez, and when she placed them in position she could have subdued a herd of buffalo with her indomitable eye. No one ever ragged Miss Passmore. The only time I encountered her in the career of her displeasure was for jumping the pews from the front door to the rostrum. This sport was a favourite one with the boys and I, who had been used to flying over the rocks at Portholland, found it easy to imitate them, though I could not, like one of the Mevagissey girls, ride a bicycle round the gallery. Jumping the pews was my one distinction and I made the most of it. But one day there was a sudden silence in the applause that greeted my turn, and when I reached the rostrum, and looked round, it was to see Miss Passmore at the back of the room. She was lightning in attack and I did not again jump the pews when she could possibly be expected. As a teacher she was lucid and convinced, driving always eagerly to the point; whereas Miss Flamank, more romantic, was diffuse and filled with enthusiasm. She taught history, and her first lesson on the ancient inhabitants of these islands has something to do with my interest in beehive huts and erected stones to this day. I did not try to imitate either Miss Passmore or Miss Flamank, while Miss Gough, whom gladly I would have imitated, was, I knew, beyond my range. I could never hope for auburn hair, a tall figure, and a blouse that never slipped from its moorings at the back. Her leather belt sat her figure so well that all was comely. Her safety-pin, if safety-pin she used, did not, like mine, work its way forward to the common gaze. Miss Passmore also was a model of neatness at the waist, whereas Miss Flamank's blouse had been known to work loose in moments of generous historic gesture. Miss Flamank had all the human frailties. It was even said that she had a young man, and enterprising boys, when asked to compose a sentence containing an adjectival clause, would try to make her blush with some such sentence as, 'The lady who was engaged to Mr. Brown of Aberdeen . . .' It was rumoured that he was indeed a Mr. Brown, but of a city nearer home than Aberdeen.

I had been more used to boys than girls and at first I eyed the girls with some timidity. At Caerhays village school there had only been two girls of

my age; here there were several, and to me they looked wonderful. Their hair was elaborately done whereas mine was still tied in a childish way. The older girls wore frames and puffed their hair at the front and sides, tying the remainder at the nape of the neck with an enormous black ribbon bow. This was the most fashionable mode. Milly Turner was an exception. She wore her golden-brown hair short and curled; and Vicky Stauffer wore her long brown hair in two unfashionable but, to her, becoming pigtails. Gladys Pawline had naturally wavy hair and her black bow, uncreased and crisp, stood out like wings. Winnie Salmon alone did her hair like mine, but it reached nearly to her waist as did Winnie Evans's tawny pony's mane. Doris Furze outbid her name in a bush of fox-red hair, a veritable burning bush almost too thick and curly to tie. It seemed to have a life of its own and to strive perpetually against its bond. I remember heads more clearly than faces though faces, too, were very individual. No one attempted make-up so that faces did not all seem to be impressionist copies of one intended face. I made friends with Vic, Gladys, the two Winnies and Milly, but especially and particularly with Vic. For the first time I experienced the pleasure of having a very close friend outside the family and of being a member of a club—the Âne Club we called it, our crest being a donkey. Like all secret societies its exclusiveness was its attraction and the donkey club, though there was no initiation ceremony and we had no rules and no set meetings, served its turn. Interest in it waxed and waned. Sometimes it seemed entirely extinct, and then it would flicker up again like a picnic fire. Its freedom to die down or brighten up was its merit. Attempts to make these natural and amusing adolescent groupings rigid and lasting, above all the effort to make them serve some useful social purpose seems to me quite a perversion of the instinct, like trying to make poetry do a person good. If a club needs an outside leader it is not a club.

Another pleasure I had at St. Austell which I had not known at Caerhays was team games. In my first summer, while we were still in the chapel, though we had been up to the site of the proposed new school to see the foundation stones laid, we formed a girls' cricket club. The boys played in a field near the new site, we girls decided to play too and have a team of our own. In one or two preliminary games my training under my youngest brother, by whom as a cricketer I had been rightly despised, stood me in such stead that I made one or two catches and found the bowling so simple after the bowling of 'the boys' that I even scored runs. To my intense rapture and glorification I was elected captain of the budding club. Milly was secretary, and I made a bloomer by writing to ask Mrs. Raynor to play for us in our first match against the boys. To me was addressed the reply in which

Mrs. Raynor promised to play and hoped we should give the boys a good beating—to me, not to the secretary. She was my ‘sincerely, Alice Raynor’ not Milly’s. For this indiscretion I was reprimanded by the secretary and told to mind the business of my own office. It wasn’t for the captain to write and receive notes. However, our friendship rode this wilful misconception of duty on my part. The Hon. Sec. henceforward ran the business of the cricket club and of pretty well every other society started at the school. She was even then, in embryo, the chairman of an urban district council, which she was later destined to become. No other intending teacher had quite that charm and ease, that air of being at home in her clothes, that sparkle in the eye, that ready wit with which to discomfit an opponent in debate. Among us she was the least introspective, the readiest to give herself without reserve to some cause or interest. She took people to heart. The first time I ever heard her speak she asked to have the windows open in an examination room. She has been asking for windows to be opened ever since, and has ventilated many a stuffy corner. I can see her now turn upon a disputant with, ‘Well, really, Mr. Hobba,’ or, pushing back the curls from an emotional forehead, merely take a breath and, as though words were beyond the reach of her exasperation, look at the person.

After cricket—when we had moved into our fine new granite building on the hill, with its view over the distant sea^[1]—came hockey and tennis. My passion for hockey now seems to me unaccountable. But when I first had a stick in my hand and dribbled a ball up the field and whacked at it for a goal I was as one possessed. That first season I had no real notion of team play at all. Other people had to hit the ball at times of course, but Anne was the mainspring of the action, and ready to sneak the rolling treasure from under any stick and usurp any place as she ranged the field. I had always loved running; now I had something to run for. The first time I played I got the ball in front of my stick, raced madly up the field never yielding it to friend or foe, and shot a goal before the other twenty-one had well recovered from their surprise at my velocity. I shall never forget my mortification when told this was not hockey. What were a ball and stick for, I thought, what were the goal posts for? I had shot a goal, hadn’t I? My only previous experience had been in a family game we called ‘pallets’ in which with a bent stick from the hedge, and a cricket ball, each member of the party had fought madly for himself and the opportunity to smack at the leather. I think really the old Cornish game of ‘hurling’ would be the ideal game for me. I never read the description of it in Carew’s *Survey of Cornwall* without longing to be up and at it for myself and for my parish.

In time I learnt to play hockey in accordance with rules and even enjoyed the science of passing and outwitting the disposition of the opposing team. But, although I became captain of the eleven, and sometimes played centre-forward, my chosen place was left wing; I was a born loose skirmisher. At work, too, I skirmished; though I skirmished hard I was a picker and chooser. Science under Mr. Lodge was not my forte. Nothing I ever weighed or measured weighed or measured the same the second time. At my lodgings in Grant's Walk it was easy to follow my own pursuits; I was an independent lodger, not a boarding-school miss. My first discovery at St. Austell was the pleasure of verse. When I first opened a paper-backed copy of Scott's *Marmion* and Miss Gough directed Winnie Evans to begin reading it aloud I thought how foolish! When she might have chosen *Quentin Durward*, when I might have displayed my intimate knowledge of *Anne of Geierstein*, to be set to read a thing cut up into lines with rhymes and twisted sentences. I began to scribble a note to Winnie Evans and to tweak Vic's plaits. I was in a thoroughly idle mood when it came to my turn to read aloud and I had suddenly the experience of floating on a tide of words. I looked forward to my turn to read again so that I could again feel something inside me flowing into something without. That evening in my lodgings, when the old man was safe in his garden shop, and Miss Varcoe was at her Uncle Penrose's, I shut the door and surprised the black cat and the tabby by standing up and shouting out *Marmion*. From bobbing on the short lines I swung into the main of the story. Constance Beverley! The grim consistory court in which, to the distant and fearful roar of the waves on a rocky northern coast, she was sentenced to be immured for vows broke and convent fled! I could not lose myself in Constance's rhetorical denunciation of her judges and her threat of Lord Marmion's vengeance now, but I could then. Priest, palmer and paladin; knights and bowmen; portcullised castle and savage battlefield; denunciation, defiance and defeat—these were my opportunity. Lord Marmion turned . . . In class I always hoped with all my heart that certain passages would fall to my share. I would even, as we proceeded, make calculations of pages and lines and be bitterly disappointed if a passage I wanted fell to one of the boys, to Nancarrow or Edwards; or if Jules Stauffer, Vic's brother, forded his way through. We were taught nothing of elocution; Miss Gough had far too much sense. The only time I ever heard anyone 'put in the expression' in poetry was Lizzie George in reciting *Napoleon*. We had all chosen something to say by heart from an anthology. I had chosen *Waterloo*. 'There was a sound of revelry by night.' Lizzie had learnt, 'Farewell to thee, France'. We said it to Miss Gough in the usual way, Lizzie being as circumspect as the rest of us. But one day a Mr. Cherril, an inspector, came in and asked to hear our poems. Most of us

muffed them. The mere presence of the irascible Cherril drove our lines from our heads. He was complaining that we mumbled when Lizzie arose as a Mother in Israel. ‘Farewell to thee, France,’ she shouted, standing dramatically like Napoleon himself on deck, ‘When thy diadem crowned me, I made thee the gem and the wonder of earth.’ We looked, we listened. Lizzie went on, growing every moment more intense and more falsetto. Mr. Cherril was stunned. Then suddenly it began to seem funny. Vic and I gave a preliminary heave and in a moment were struggling with great gusts of suppressed laughter. They rose in the abdomen, convulsed our side walls, and issued forth in water at the eyes. The agony of keeping some sort of still surface above the quakes was rending us when Mr. Cherril fixed us with his gold-rimmed glasses. The poem ended, he said to Vic, ‘What have you been reading lately, Victoria?’

‘*King Solomon’s Mines,*’ said Vic in a kind of volcanic burst.

‘And what can you remember of it?’

‘He had . . . he had . . . a glass eye,’ said she.

‘And what have you been reading?’ snapped the inspector at me.

‘*King Solomon’s Mines,*’ I said.

‘And what do you remember?’

‘He . . . he . . . had false teeth.’

Mine was the shot which sent the stopper out of the bottle. We were helpless to the growing blasts of laughter in us. We gave ourselves up for lost. Mr. Cherril with a glare which included us all, even the undefeated Lizzie George, went out of the room.

From Scott we passed to Shakespeare. My first experience of Shakespeare was disappointing. I had already read Lamb’s *Tales* and cherished most the stories of the least successful plays. *Cymbeline* was my favourite of all. The *Winter’s Tale* came next and *Timon of Athens* next. The plays themselves I had neither seen nor read. I had sometimes looked into a complete Shakespeare when hard up for something to read, but had never got beyond, ‘ ’Tis bitter cold and I am sick at heart’ or ‘When shall we three meet again?’ The absence of narrative repelled me. Now we were to read a whole play taking parts, but I doubt if *As You Like It* is a good choice of play for the unsophisticated. I did not find it funny; I was untouched by the poetry of the greenwood. And then all this talk of love! I made it loudly known that Shakespeare was, in my high opinion, vastly over-rated.

But when it came to *Richard II* it was another matter. Nothing I had ever read before in my life could compare with it. I mouthed John of Gaunt. With prophetic and awful hand outstretched I thundered out the Bishop of Carlisle. But although as John of Gaunt I fiercely admonished Richard, Richard was, even in his petulant, unscrupulous youth, my darling. Every time I re-read the play I trembled for him. Success would never be his, but Bolingbroke's. Not for him was hateful Northumberland thrusting on. I think I glimpsed what has seemed to me since a central theme of Shakespearean tragedy—that a man who glitters as a god, and imposes his single will as though heaven and earth were at his beck, must come to know and confess his mere humanity. It is not that the terms of mortal state are so fickle that 'life is loss, and death felicity'. It is not the fickleness of life, but in the discovery of its significance that pity and comprehension are born. When Richard says,

I live with bread like you, feel want, taste grief,
Need friends . . .

he has discovered what Cleopatra was to discover when she said at last—she who had been royal Egypt, she whose hand kings had lipped trembling:

No more, but e'en a woman, and commanded
By such poor passion as the maid that milks
And does the meanest chares.

Lear, the strongest of them all, so strong that he could not break, was driven mad by the intolerable wrongs of men, and the fury of earth and sky, before pity for all men was born in his heart, as he realized that he too was one with poor houseless wretches and came to his tremendous words, 'take pity, pomp'.

I feel that I can never be sufficiently grateful to Miss Passmore for having shown me Shakespeare. Not to have felt his glory when I was young would have been to grow up an altogether poorer creature. We read plays and we acted at least some scenes from them. When we acted *Richard II* to me was assigned the role of the well-meaning, loyal, two-minded neuter the Duke of York. I might have learnt much from him. He is the prototype of many a later one among our elder statesmen—men with a more earnest and loyal desire to play fair and do right than intellect to discover what is right to be done or will to do it. But I knew nothing of that. I despised my role and envied others theirs as, clothed mainly in one of our blue dining-room curtains, but bearing in my unarmed state a shield in silver on which I had painted a cross of St. George, I strove to endow the Duke with more significance than Shakespeare had assigned to him. In my bedroom at home

I played all the parts I wished were mine. The number of pieces of glass I shattered while enacting in private every single part in the deposition scene would have re-glazed a house.

It was not until we came to do *Macbeth* that I had a grand part. When I heard that I was to play Macbeth to Betty Atkinson's Lady Macbeth my heart danced for joy. But being by that time a bewildering person even to myself, I pretended I was not. I pretended to be afraid of my life to try, and nearly got turned out of rehearsals for mumbling. I had a confused notion that I should shine more bright at last by seeming smirched at the start. I would be poor at rehearsals but on the night I would dizzy them. As a result I nearly lost the chance of playing on the night at all. Yet this narrow shave did not teach me a lesson.

As a child at home I never posed. No child could very well pose in Gorran or Caerhays; criticism would have been too familiar and deflating. I always like a story of Gorran-Haven criticism told me by my friend May Grose. She was at a concert held in Gorran school. A Sticker man was singing. May's neighbour poked her head so as to place her mouth on a level with May's ear and said,

'Wake, idn' a?'

They listened again.

'Wake as watter!' said May's neighbour. The song went on.

'Waker'n watter!' she said. Still the song went on.

Then May's neighbour said:

'I wish I was home with me knetten!'

And that was the end of that.

Some such graded and final disapproval would certainly have been applied to any poor performer or affected person in Gorran. As a result we were very cautious of trying anything on. But in St. Austell I was always trying something on. Perhaps it was my age, or perhaps it was contrariness. It seemed to be almost impossible for me not to say no when I meant yes, and yes when I meant no, not to refuse what I wanted and want what I refused; not to pretend to despise good looks and pretty clothes when I secretly wished as much as anyone else to be admired; not to mock at love and yet fall into it. The discovery of Eve in herself lay heavily on the girls of my generation. Modern girls are lucky. For us, nurtured almost exclusively in a masculine tradition in reaction from the too feminine culture of the

women of the Victorian age, to pass from childhood to womanhood was to tread a devious and doubtful way. All our games, reading and endeavour directed us to be straightforward reasonable men, governed by our minds and will; yet we found ourselves in spite of all our endeavour subject to the unreasonable moon, set to dance a rhythm to which our mothers had given themselves up joyfully though fearfully, but against which we struggled. Now balance has returned again. Or has it? Are present-day girls under their more composed and delightful surfaces as uncertain as we were?

The more I read the more puzzled I grew. Milton's music conquered me even while I was being furiously angry at his treatment of Eve, dear Eve! I now hated Bible stories which as a child had enthralled me. And I shall never forget my impotently mixed feelings when I first read the ninth book of *Paradise Lost*—the beauty and the knot. And the Greeks were no better. When I came to read translations of the Classics there in the centre of the intricacy was Helen.

Perhaps women should not read. But how much I enjoyed it all! How much I enjoyed all the free pathways to knowledge opened up for me at St. Austell. We went up the several fields under separate guides and no single prospect was ever hinted at to which the paths might lead. Up to the age of fifteen my education had been broadly but religiously Christian; after that age, apart from my own family and some of my friends, no one I met whom I greatly admired ever spoke of these things. Had it not been that I went home every weekend, and that Cornwall was a naturally religious place, I might have come to consider the most profound mysteries childish. We were on the threshold of what might be called the cocky period of the human spirit; the period of H. G. Wells. It was fashionable to be irreverent and to reduce the subtle religion which had lighted generations of noble minds to the level of the derided Lord of H. G.'s poor old mother. Not that this was the spirit at St. Austell. Looking back I think that our unexpressed ideal was an Anarchy in which, while not seeking to love our neighbour, we were prepared to let him live in accordance with his own ideas as we would live in accordance with ours. It was an open-minded education which made us try to see both sides of every question. Its merit was that it would never turn young people into fanatics or persecutors; its demerit that it left us without conviction, we who were moving towards an age of positiveness. Yeats was to write in his later years:

The best lack all conviction and the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

How that tragedy could have been avoided I cannot tell. But if I have any conviction about what is known as higher education it is that St. Austell was right in according freedom. That in adolescence and maturity the mind and spirit must be free to explore and express is, with me, a matter of more profound faith than what is known as Faith. But it is in the Faith that I would have young children nurtured; in the Faith and at home. And in secondary schools it is mad to have divinity positively handicapped as at present. Thomas Traherne's sentence may be pondered by us all:

Nevertheless some things were defective too [in Oxford under the Commonwealth]. There was never a Tutor that did professedly teach Felicity, though that be the mistress of all other sciences. Nor did any of us study those things but as aliens, which we ought to have studied as our own enjoyments. We studied to inform our knowledge, but knew not for what we studied. And for lack of aiming at a certain end, we erred in the manner.

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- [1] The school at a later stage is memorably described in Mr. A. L. Rowse's book *A Cornish Childhood*; but by then, under an authoritarian head master, all was changed. Mr. Raynor had tried to run a free school.

CHAPTER III

MONDAY MORNING AND FRIDAY NIGHT

You spools that wind
The glittering light,
Turn slowly, slowly
In my sight.
Your various offering
Gradual bring,
No hastening!

No hastening,
But smooth and slow!
While stepping I
As softly go,
Thorough the white
To golden light,
And so to night.

To a Holiday: That its hours may pass slowly

While I was at St. Austell County School I went home for every weekend except once in the depth of winter. One other weekend I was supposed to spend at St. Austell, but at the last moment my father felt this to be impossible, and drove up for me. I can fling my heart up again at the memory of the sight of him in the trap waiting for me at the foot of West Hill. And I can fling my heels up too for, overcome with excitement at his unexpected and glorious appearance, I began to run full tilt, tripped and fell headlong, to the amusement of two of the boys who helped me up. I could have killed them.

In my first two terms it meant real hardship to my mother for me to come home weekends. I had to be driven back in the pony-trap each Monday morning, and on Fridays I was either fetched in the trap or I went home in Johnny Johns's bus. That my mother should thus have driven the pony in all weathers on Monday mornings in order that I might be at home for weekends fills me now with compunction. For my mother was not one who loved the wind and the rain. On the contrary, her devotion was to the house and hearth, to be dry and warm with everything handsome about her.

Nor did she like driving Dart; for, although now growing old and sober, he could still be frisky on occasion, and my mother had a real fear with which in those days I could not sympathize, of the lonely roads between Fair Cross and Caerhays. She was afraid a tramp might jump out of the hedge and ask for a ride. During my first September and October it was to me a joy to be out so early, to watch the sun rise and pour glory over the stubble fields. The deadest straw shines in the sun. But as the term drew on towards November and December the mornings grew darker and darker; Susan would get up early and light the kitchen fire, making the room warm and cosy for our breakfast. Then I would harness the pony, and my mother would come out wearing the old warm golf cape my Aunt Eliza had given her, a cape of horse-back brown with a plaid hood. Then, with the trap lamps chasing the shadows under the hedges, we would set off, I driving, and my mother, if it were a wet morning, holding the trap umbrella over us both. All kinds of weather I remember on those mornings, but soft, grey, misty weather predominates; or the fine Cornish rain which is one of the most wetting of rains, a rain which is never malicious but which seeps through all clothing with gentle persistence, and with a lulling soft sound which is not a pattering on the umbrella. On other mornings the wind might be up, blowing in the trees, and blowing my hair, and tossing Dart's mane; or it might be a frosty morning when the sun rose red and the cold numbed our fingers. My mother had the kind of fingers which went white and dead in the cold however warm the gloves she wore. I cannot imagine how she endured what I so thoughtlessly enjoyed. Every kind of weather was right for me as long as I was out in it.

My mother used to drive me to the foot of St. Mewan Hill from which I walked in to school. One morning as I was on the way a dog-cart which had gone spanking by me on previous Monday mornings drew up. The driver asked if I would like a lift. I mounted joyfully. A rubber-tyred dog-cart and a chestnut mare were to me the height of elegance and tone. I took a sidelong glance at the sanguine, ginger person on the box and approved. I regretted as we drew up opposite the school that there was no one about to see me descend; I loved Dart's curly coat, but he was not in winter an impressive pony to look at, whereas here was stabled gloss. However, no one was about to be astounded at my grandeur. Everyone except my tardy self was at work; and on no subsequent Monday morning was I ever able to show off. Yet on each Monday morning now, until I began to ride a bicycle to school, it was from the dog-cart that I descended to the chapel on West Hill. Mr. Thomson's road ran into ours near Fair Cross. We arranged to meet him there; I transferred myself regularly from our trap to his, and my mother was

saved many miles of road. I immensely enjoyed those drives and the explosive conversation of Mr. Thomson. After a preliminary rumble his words would issue from his lips with a pop as of a cork from a wine bottle. Once the stopper was out the vintage flowed freely. I learnt a good deal about the price of corn and cattle and the points of a bull. I contracted the habit of half-closing one eye in a professional, formerly, auctioneerish way when I encountered bullocks, and I always wished I could go on to some auction or fair with Mr. Thomson instead of proceeding to a French lesson with Miss Gough. But Mr. Thomson never invited me to michie.^[1]

In my first two terms I often went home on Friday nights in Johnny Johns's bus. It was really a one-horse wagonette. When we hired it privately, as we did on rare occasions of financial flourish, in order to drive to Portscatho and Percuil, we called it a wagonette; but on Fridays it was Johnny's bus. Four o'clock! And I would come racing from school to assemble with other Caerhays people who had come up to shop and were laden with parcels outside the White Hart yard. Often we were so many that Johnny would say, 'I don't know where I'm going to put 'ee all to, I'm sure. Anne, my handsome, you'll have to ride on me knee again I b'lieve.' This manner of locomotion was even grander to me than driving with Mr. Thomson. Mr. Thomson never gave me the reins. Johnny did, and off I would go, flourishing the whip, and chaffing the passengers, or exchanging backchat with the drivers of familiar traps. At Pentewan Hill we were all turned out to walk up. We all knew one another and enjoyed details of purchasings and glimpses of the purchased. Old Mrs. Beard was once embarrassed by an 'article' which she had bought and which refused to conceal its form in the wrappings—a nice little article with roses round. Contrary to promise, Mr. Beard never came to meet and support her. She kept on saying, 'Where's feyther to? I cean't think why feyther idn' ere,' a saying we kept up in the family for years. Whenever any arrangement went awry we would say, 'Where's feyther to?' Exciting stories were told. Once I remember there had been a fire at Trevarrick at Charlie Coombe's. Charlie had a son David of whom Miss Oliver at the shop in Gorran Churchtown used to say she didn't like to see him coming in too well, his trousers looked so temporary. He tied them round with binder twine. It was Miss Oliver who used to say in precise tones, 'And what will you have with the farthing?' Well, Charlie Coombe's wife, Mary, had made a kind of ceiling under the rafters of the bedroom by sewing together white flour-bags. One night a candle caught the curtains afire and the flames leapt up and caught the flimsy flour-bags. Out ran David Coombe to the Notts and Groses of Trevarrick shouting, 'Our house is a ball o' fire; our house is a ball o' fire!'

Mr. Grose and Mr. Nott and all the Grose boys dashed to the rescue and with buckets of water put the fire out. But it was a near thing. I could listen all night now to John or May Grose or Tom or Elam telling the saga of Trevarrick, as it used to be at about the time when I drove home, on Friday nights, in Johnny Johns's bus.

When spring came I began to ride my bicycle to St. Austell on Monday mornings and back on Friday nights. It was less fun than driving with Mr. Thomson and coming home in the bus; but those early mornings, when I bicycled so silently that other creatures were not disturbed by me, provided a different pleasure. Birds live in an ecstasy of freedom in the morning; flowers are breathing—blackthorn and celandine; primroses and violets; then bluebells on the tops of the hedges deep in ferns. I did not take Johnny's route to St. Austell. He went Pentewan way; we usually drove or bicycled Fair Cross way. Down the two hills below the church I would skim; up to Treberrick; by Washaway to Fair Cross; on through Hewas Water, Sticker and St. Mewan until, flying down a hill, I would be carried by the impetus almost up the next hill to the chapel gates. As far as Hewas Water the way was solitary and solitude, says De Quincey 'though it may be silent as light is, like light, the mightiest of agencies; for solitude is essential to man'.

Quietness in communion I felt in the eight o'clock services to which now, having been confirmed, I went with my parents and Susan in St. Michael Caerhays Church on Sunday mornings. The little church, sanctified for centuries, stills the mind in a way peculiar to itself. It is a little wayside church overlooking the fields. Some churches seem to imprison the air, but at Caerhays the air wandered sweetly in and out through the open door. I wonder sometimes what might have been the history of ecclesiastical religion if all the churches had been sunny. At night with the dim lamps lit, it was very solemn. Sometimes, though, I laughed. Once during a Lenten service when only Howard and my mother and I were in church, a little mouse came out and played round Mr. Bellamy's feet and made as though to run up his trousers. We were reading the psalms, saying alternate verses with the Rector, and when we came to the versicle, 'Then stood up Phineas and prayed and behold the plague ceased'; the plague did cease, for the little mouse whisked off. Howard's voice quavered in his reading; mine quavered. My mother whispered under her breath: 'Be quiet, Howard; be quiet Anne,' and quavered herself. It was an intolerable moment. How we longed to be outside and able to tell Mr. Bellamy about the mouse, instead of being there with God between us and him, he unconscious and religious, we profane and full of uncontrollable laughter because of a mouse.

As soon as I began to ride a bicycle to St. Austell my weekends depended on myself. I never missed one. On very rough, wild Friday nights I was supposed to stay up in my lodgings; but I always used to say it wasn't raining at St. Austell. 'No rain; not a bit of wind,' became a joke. The long school holidays reinforced the weekends in keeping me closely in touch with home. During these holidays my sister and I spent some of the choicest times of our lives. For our brothers, too, came home for holidays. We liked it best when they came alone. But, alas! All my brothers very early in life began to go a-roving by the light of the moon. They began to bring girls home and soon, with one accord, they began to get married. Stan led the way; he married Kate. Then in course of the next few years Howard married Mary, Maurice married Helen, Cap'n married Edith, and Susan and I became aunts. I must say that all my brothers were fortunate, very fortunate. The pretty girls they married made them good wives; for all four, though they were so different from one another, had quality which matured well. Not one of my brothers married a Cornish girl. Kate was Wiltshire; Mary a Devonian; Edith a Londoner; Helen a Scot. My mother was a little sad, a little wistful that her sons married quite so early; it is not an easy time in a woman's life when her sons marry. It is a hurt which no philosophy can quite heal, a hurt repeated in successive generations. It could be the theme of a novel, a theme in which irony is inherent—if such a novel could be written with tenderness. Instead, it is the vulgar humour of the mother-in-law theme which has pervaded English writing and cartoons. My mother was easily wounded. For my part, although I admired and came to love my sisters-in-law, I was wildly jealous of them at first and a little jealous for years; indeed I have only recently become entirely free of jealousy. I expect the whole thing is summed up in a couplet May Grose's wise old Granny Nott used to quote:

It takes more grace than I can tell
To play the second fiddle well.

But I did not spend all my time being jealous; the feeling came and went in gusts. The holidays were wonderfully enjoyable and, long after my brothers had homes of their own, the tie with Caerhays remained very strong. Even my eldest brother whose work took him to New York—in those days he bought a ticket to America for £12 10s. 0d. and there were no more formalities than if he had taken a ticket to Looe—he came home at stated intervals for a holiday. I shall never forget his first homecoming, waiting by the gate to the left of the second hill below the church, and hearing Johnny Johns's Gipsy—there was too much luggage for our trap—trotting from as

far distant as Treberrick, bringing the travellers home on a quiet summer evening—home from America.

One afternoon of a summer holiday occurred the affair of the asters, which for some reason we have always remembered. My father hated to have the flowers in the garden picked. Even sweet peas which, he was assured on all sides, and especially by Susan who loved flowers in the house, flowered the more if constantly picked, he mourned over. Roses drank the dew till they were old, old roses in our garden. If Susan picked some for the house my father would say reproachfully, 'Susan has been picking my little roses again.' Asters escaped Susan, for Susan did not care for asters, though my father cherished them in special. One day there was to be a partial eclipse of the sun and we had all armed ourselves with little bits of smoked glass to gaze through. My parents were in the garden seated with their pieces of glass in their hands waiting for the eclipse when Howard looked down on them from a bedroom window and had the bright idea of dropping a wet towel on them, in hope to knock their glass out of their hands. The towel missed the target and, instead, broke the necks of two beautiful asters, a purple and a red. My father had been tremendously proud of his asters; for once they were better than gardener Martin's at the Hovel. 'If you must play such silly, childish tricks you'd better go back to Exeter and play them there,' said my father. Consternation. My father hardly ever lost his temper and we were completely out of countenance. But nobody could ever maintain any anger in our family. After a bit we heard my father humming a few notes. He called up, 'I'm going to the Barton, boy. Are you coming?' They made it up.

Holidays and work, mid-week at St. Austell and weekends at home, made a most agreeable mixture of hours for me. Then the Cambridge Senior Examination loomed. It was an examination which corresponded roughly to the present School Certificate; only names change in education. I cannot remember much of my preparation for it; I remember much more vividly Susan's examination pieces which she was practising at the time on the piano. She always practised a long time on Saturday nights when my father was often out, and when her lesson was fresh in her mind. She went for lessons to St. Austell to Mr. English the organist of the parish church. She rode to St. Austell on the bicycle; we had only one between us. In the afternoon I would ride Dart up to Fair Cross to meet her. My week's work was over and her ordeal with Mr. English was over and we would give ourselves up to glory, she skimming on ahead, I on Dart determined to keep up. When Susan got off to walk a hill Dart and I would flourish grandly by

for a few steps, then stop and walk with her, and talk of the mood Mr. English had been in, or of how Miss Gough had a new coat.

With the Cambridge Senior Examination my stay at St. Austell as a full-time pupil ended. Of the examination I remember my fearful flurry day after day; the little jump in my heart as I turned over the question papers; and the appalling minutes during which my mind jibbed and refused the start. What I needed, but had no power to command, was a warm feeling during which I poured out, hot, everything I knew; writing wildly until the very second when we were called upon to stop and give in our papers. I was never one to revise any effort of the little demon who was working for life within me once I had set him going. I gave him his fling and he saw me through.

It was early September when the result came; I was staying with my father's cousin Johnny Kemp, at Reskivers Farm near Tregoney. They had a wonderful stove in their long, low kitchen, a furnace which, blackleaded every Saturday, shone like a black boy. On the slab the pans of milk were scalded. There was always a pan with the yellow cream beginning to crinkle on the top. Lyly, Johnny's daughter, used to go out blackberrying with me, and Mrs. Kemp made a tremendous succession of blackberry tarts for the men when they came in from the fields. Blackberry tart and cream. I can almost taste the rich, red juice, still. I connect it with *Bibby's Annual*, a journal I never saw except at Reskivers.

One morning Lyly and I were going out on our usual round of the blackberry bushes when my brother Howard, who was at home for a holiday, came driving Dart along the road to Reskivers. He was waving the whip and shouting, 'Hey, ho! We Treneers are the Ones!'—my brothers had all been good at examinations. 'You've passed with a distinction in history. Examiner must have been drunk.' I did not stay to collect my nighty which reposed in its case on Lyly's bed, nor my brush and comb from her dressing-table. My toothbrush was forgotten. Into the trap I jumped in my old blackberrying rig and took the reins. Dart, who was always excited when I was excited, made for home like mad. The distinction in history nearly made me pop with pride. Even my father, so sparing in praise, said as he came humming 'Onward, Christian Soldiers' down the garden path, 'Good girl, Anne.' Miss Passmore sent me a postcard of congratulation and Mr. Raynor a telegram. I treasured both like love-letters.

[1] The Cornish word for playing truant.

CHAPTER IV

THE STUDENT TEACHER

Come, wind, and rustle my silk leaves,
A leafy pleasure is mine in June,
Wearing silk, a worm's cocoon.

Such joy of summer my heart receives
As ever lady under the moon;
Come, wind, and rustle my silk leaves,
A leafy pleasure is mine in June.

Of mulberry the worm weaves
My silken robe, an airy tune,
Melodious as a summer noon.
Come, wind, and rustle my silk leaves,
A leafy pleasure is mine in June,
Wearing silk, a worm's cocoon.

Wearing Silk

It is a genuine difficulty to know what preliminary training in the elementary school—the word ‘primary’ is happily ousting the word ‘elementary’—should be given to a young person before going to college. By the time I was eighteen the old pupil-teacher system was dead. Various other devices had been tried and discarded. In Cornwall the plan in vogue was that, after passing one of the qualifying examinations, the intending teacher should spend a year alternately teaching and being taught. One week he was teaching in an elementary school, and the next he was continuing his own studies in his secondary school. It was hoped that during this time he would discover whether he was fitted for teaching or not. That some such trial is desirable before a person is committed to an expensive and somewhat irrevocable training is, I am sure, a good thing; though the alternate-week system was found unsatisfactory and quickly abandoned. However, for a year that was the scheme under which I worked.

My first difficulty was the choice of my elementary school. Permission for me to teach in my father's school at Caerhays was refused. Although father and daughter would have suited one another admirably such family

conclaves were not encouraged. St. Austell Central School was suggested or Gorran, where my father had been head master before we moved to Caerhays. I chose my beloved Gorran, and to Gorran school I went alternately with St. Austell County School for a year. I knew immediately that I was one who would more gladly learn than teach; I doubt whether I have ever had a genuine impulse to teach anyone anything. However, my teaching difficulties at Gorran were few, so pleasantly were things arranged for me.

Mr. Britton was head master, and with him worked Miss Janey Pearce, Miss Alice Martin, and Miss Louie Lelean. My family had been friends with the Pearces of Tregerrick and the Martins of Highlanes from long before the time that I was born. I remembered Miss Pearce from the days when I was very small, from the days when Mr. Sim Stevens, who courted all and married none, would ride his fine horse past her classroom window, and Miss Pearce would look out and they would talk together while we played. Miss Pearce had a succession of beautiful bicycles which she kept clean and shining; every year or so she had a new one to replace the old. One Rudge-Whitworth, enamelled green, with neat gold lines traced against the green, was immensely admired by us all. Miss Pearce was both dashing and spruce. She wore a navy-blue bicycling skirt which she kept well over her knees by a patent device. A stretch of elastic clasped the inside of the skirt to an elastic band worn round the leg. When other people's skirts were ballooning and their owners were endeavouring, with one hand on the handlebars, to preserve their modesty with the other, Miss Pearce went bicycling decorously on. With the skirt went a smart, striped, shirt-blouse, a starched collar and tie, and a tricky sailor hat. I never saw Miss Pearce in a blouse that did not look freshly ironed. Over its sleeves, to keep them clean in school, she drew gay, cotton sleeves which were kept up with elastic just above the elbow and caught in at the wrist. Miss Pearce never looked chalky, and she was never late.

Miss Alice Martin, on the contrary, was endeared to me because she never left her delightful house at Highlanes until the last minute, when she took to the lanes like me, with a piece of bread and butter in one hand, and tucking in her refractory blouse with the other. She was roundabout where Miss Pearce was rectilinear, late where Miss Pearce was early, free-hearted, bountiful, and as richly nurturing to the young as good leaf-mould. I loved Miss Alice and admired Miss Pearce who had a sharp tongue. She could put a person down. Miss Alice was kind; children played her up, but they never played up Miss Pearce. Yet there was jubilation if Miss Pearce went out to play as she sometimes would; joining in the skipping, playing marbles to

beat the boys. Looking back I see that she had in a strong degree that mysterious thing known as personality. Her mood coloured other people's days for them; when she was gay others were gay; when she was gloomy or sarcastic she withered other people's leaves. With Miss Alice children displayed themselves as they chose in their ever varying dispositions, provoking or engaging. Nothing could ever be easily found in Miss Alice's room; reels of cotton, needles, chalk, thimbles, dusters, pencils, exercise books, pens—all the things that obeyed Miss Pearce, disobeyed Miss Alice. In Miss Pearce's room things stayed in their places until she said, 'Percy Mingo, you may give out the books,' or, 'Janey Teague, you are sitting up nicely, you may give out the pencils.' In Miss Alice's room things spread themselves on the floor, and on the window-sills, and on the stove. In this room Hans Andersen could have told endless stories of the conversations between dusters and scissors and tape in strange proximity. Whereas in Miss Pearce's room all things were silent, segregated, and subdued.

Miss Louie Lelean was quite different from either Miss Pearce or Miss Martin. She was not much older than I and could be called Louie. 'My senses!' Mr. Britton would say, finding us laughing together in the sunny end classroom, from the windows of which we could watch the distant ships go by. 'Don't you girls know it is time to ring the bell? Too long a play-time! These children do nothing but play unless I am about. My senses!' And he would try to look fierce under his drooping, mild moustache. 'My senses!' was his favourite expression. 'My senses! You children know nothing. What can you have been doing all your lives? Not know the capital of Australia? Do you really mean to tell me that no one in this class knows the capital of Australia? My senses! I'll have your heads off.' I soon got to know that Mr. Britton's fierceness was chiefly verbal, though when he said, 'My senses! I'll trim your sides,' some unlucky boy was likely to be beaten. His eyes were brown. I never knew him more angry than when a boy said that Shakespeare wrote the Acts of the Apostles. To me as a beginner he was kind, inspecting my notes of lessons, listening to my efforts in class with a fatalistic expression as who should say, 'Raw raw! My senses! How raw these students are!' As all the Gorran children knew me well by my Christian name it was of no earthly use for me to try to stand on my dignity. We joggled along together; sometimes they were good, and sometimes they were naughty; and if they were inclined to be naughty I told them a story. I invented all kinds of tiny rewards or distinctions to make them work. My idea of teaching was to have my class looking good. I did not have many lessons to teach. Often I watched other people and often my time was my own to do what I liked with. I kept a long novel always handy. *Westward*

Ho! I remember reading at that time. When Amyas Leigh climbed up and up a tree in Panama, and looked out on the Pacific, I was at his elbow; and I shrieked with the poor English sailor who was taking his ease with his dusky wife in lovely lotus land as the tiger sprang on him. An awful warning to all who neglected their duty, said Salvation Yeo. The first time I had a class hanging on my words—a gratifying experience to an ageing teacher let alone a young one—was when I told the story of the Armada, with details—facts and fictions were all one to me—taken from *Westward Ho!* An audience of children is a spur to the invention of the novice. History will always be pleasantly coloured and dramatic while there are young teachers.

Best of all while I was a student-teacher at Gorran I liked the dinner-hour. Nearly all the children went home to dinner so the break had to be long enough to allow them to walk the distance home and back. The gang spirit was cooled by the spell, and the children became themselves again, separate creatures with separate mothers. We were all renewed by being apart, and I never remember a stale, afternoonish feeling. Children from very long distances brought pasties or sandwiches and ate them out of doors if it was fine, or in a classroom if it was wet. Miss Pearce, Miss Alice, Louie and I used to meet in the end classroom in winter and display our dainties. A favourite luncheon with Miss Pearce was a cold wing of chicken and a slice off the breast, with jelly adhering. We brewed endless, companionable cups of tea; for all three of my colleagues were connoisseurs in tea. Miss Pearce, in a good mood, would entertain us all in dinner-hour. All the Pearces were good conversationalists and could tell a story well. On November days the rain would be washing down the window panes and we would be snug within, seated round the ugly stove. Sometimes one of us would go out to pay a visit to the children lively round their stove in another classroom. Miss Alice might prepare needlework if it were a sewing afternoon; Louie might mark her books. But always for the first part of the dinner-hour we talked and I, proud to be considered so grown-up, was included friendly-wise.

But fine dinner-hours in summer were the best of all. I remember fine, hot dinner-hours in July, just before Walter Ford trimmed the hedges. We used to call it cutting the trash. A poor, despised word like trash was ill-applied to the lovely flowers that fell beneath the hook. In July, before the cutting, when the hedges were royal with flowers, I used to persuade Louie to bicycle with me out to the Greeb to eat our dinner on Clickers Rock. We said ‘Clickers’ which was probably a corruption of ‘Glitters’. Glitters Field is mentioned in Gorran Parish Books which name the farm fields, and ‘Glitter’ is also a Dartmoor word for stones. I cannot think that there is a lovelier place for wild flowers than along the lanes from Gorran

schoolhouse to the Greeb by Boswinger. Purple and gold were July colours. The flowers grew in great patches; stiff betany; picris, orange-gold; mauve scabious; toadflax, orange and lemon; festoons of purple tufted-vetch; honeysuckle rioting skywards, and falling in flowery cascades, pink-folded buds and gleaming, satiny lips; blue devil's-bit scabious which we called devil's-buttons; cream bedstraw; rest-harrow; knap-weed, self-heal, and strong, coarse yarrow, with its pungent tang, and feathery leaves. Sometimes we left our bicycles by Treveson town-gate, and walked through the town-place to fields above Hemmick, to smell the camomile in the top field, and see the scarlet poppies and white feverfew about the rick. But for the most part, on sunny days, we sat in nooks of the grey rock piled up on the Green, breathing the sparkling air, and looking out over the shift and change of the sea; letting our eyes slide westward to the Gull Rock, to Nare Head, to the Manacles; or eastward to dark Dodman. It was on these summer days that I wore an old silk frock, and felt the wind fluttering my leaves. We could time ourselves by the birds. As soon as the children began to go into school the birds swooped down on the playground to eat up the pieces of pasty, or bread, or saffron cake left about. White wings over Mevagissey Harbour when the fishing-boats came in; and black wings over Gorran school playground after dinner.

I enjoyed, too, my bicycle ride to and fro to Gorran school from Caerhays, a distance of three miles each way. I could never make up my mind to start early except on some mornings, when I allowed time for a bathe on Portluney Beach on my way. Ordinarily I pedalled under the sycamores and up Barton Hill, eating my breakfast as I went, and with only time to wave my hand to Mrs. Kneebone at the Barton and Noah Loten in the Yard. Skimming down Pound Hill I would think to catch up with time; but Portluney Hill, cut through the rock, needed caution at the bends. On winter mornings, hoar frost sparkled in the field before the castle and along the level way to Penver Gate. In spring it was a ferny way; there is a deep nook to the right above Tregavarras filled to its cool depth with ferns. I never like to go to a place and come back the same way. So usually I went to Gorran by Tregavarras, skirting Boswinger and reaching the school by Four Turnings. Going home after school I went by Crooked Lane, past Old Vicarage Gate to the foot of Alms House Hill. I turned right and wriggled past Mount Pleasant Farm to Rescassa and so to Penver Gate. Thus going I subscribed a little arc with Penver Gate as the pivot. I chose to come home Rescassa way because the bend in that hill came near the top and after rounding it I could let myself go floating, flying down the hill. My father when he drove to Gorran from Caerhays chose Treveor way, but Treveor

Hill was too sudden to make a good bicycling track. Every inch of the way was familiar to me from early childhood, every stile and stretch of hedge had associations either with my family or the families of my friends. In the road by Mount Pleasant my brother Cap'n and I had upset in our pony-trap. In Old Vicarage Lane the Mingos had had a more spectacular adventure. William, John, Leonard and small Percy Mingo were driving their black pony when he ran away, galloping like a mad thing. Percy was singing out as they whirled down Old Vicarage Lane, 'This is the way to travel, me boys.' But his exultation turned to crying. At Treninnick Gate William tried to keep the pony straight ahead for Highlanes instead of attempting the bend sharp left by the familiar Mount Pleasant way to Rescassa. The pony, however, was not to be balked of the short cut, and, by Murder Ground, over they all went as the trap struck the hedge. Upsets were not infrequent in pony-traps. On Polmassick Hill old Mr. Lanyon was upset when he was over ninety. He was driving in a little four-wheel turnout when he met a motor car and his pony turned clean round and the whole thing upset. But Mr. Lanyon slipped out somehow between the shafts.

'Are 'ee hurt, Mr. Lanyon?' said the owner of the car, beside himself with anxiety. 'Are 'ee hurt?' 'No,' said Mr. Lanyon, 'but if I hadn't been a nimble sort of chap you would have killed me, killed me you would have.'

Sometimes for a longer ride home I went up past Highlanes and Oak Tree, turned left through St. Ewe, went through Polmassick and home by Treberrick. Polmassick is the most sheltered of hamlets, deep down in a valley where the little river Luney flows from its source in the china-clay country. Oak Tree is still a handsome tree. An old woman used to sit in it knitting at midnight people said, and some ponies would not pass without shying; the old woman knitting in Oak Tree was of one kind with the headless woman in Bodrugan Broad Lane. That lane has hedgerows so overgrown as to form green cloisters. One night John Grose was walking home from Portmellon when it came to a stinging hail shower. The white grains hissed and rebounded on the road as John took shelter in the dusk under the deep hedgerow. It grew darker and the white hailstones made everything look strange and fearsome. There was a whirling wild wind blowing. John began thinking about the headless woman when all at once he heard a voice and jumped nearly out of his skin.

'The shower is over now I think, my boy.'

John had taken shelter all unbeknownst close to a fellow-shelterer. People liked to try and frighten the timid. Mrs. Grose told me that when she was a girl the whole parish avoided Murder Ground at night. It was said to

be haunted. Once when she was walking with Miss Kitto in the lane by Murder Ground they saw in the moonlight something which seemed to be gliding along behind the top brushwood of the hedge.

‘Do you see anything funny, Mrs. Grose?’ said Miss Kitto beginning to tremble.

‘Don’t take any notice. Walk right on as if we hadn’t seen anything. Perhaps someone is trying to frighten us,’ quavered Mrs. Grose. And a well-known friend was trying to frighten them. He had heard their voices, had set his hat up on his walking-stick clothed in his lank overcoat, and so engineered a ghostly glide as he walked softly in the field on one side of the hedge and the girls walked in the lane on the other side of it.

I enjoyed my weeks at Gorran, and my journeys; but my thoughts were always preoccupied with St. Austell. For those who planned our work it must have seemed a hopeless scheme to have one set of sixth form students one week and a different set the next. But for myself I liked the week’s breathing space which gave me time to read whatever I chose. Had Mr. Britton worked me hard at Gorran it would have been a different story; but Mr. Britton neither worked his students hard nor made them over-anxious. The irregular St. Austell instruction suited me better than a scheme which implied too strict a supervision of my studies. We were not driven in blinkers. And then at St. Austell there was the pleasure of Vic’s company and sometimes Milly’s. My parents had changed my St. Austell lodgings to a house in Mount Charles, a house owned by a Mr. and Mrs. Bunt who had no children of their own, and who decided it would be pleasant to have two or three young people about. It was extremely pleasant for the young people. Vic and Milly were already there and I joined them. We shared a room at the top of the house as a study-bedroom and we had meals and were otherwise sociable with Mr. and Mrs. Bunt. My father was inclined to poke fun at Geo. P. Bunt who was the District Education Clerk. ‘Geo. P. Bunt!’ he would say with a snort. Truth to tell my father would never have been fair to any Education Officer to whom he was always forgetting to post his returns. ‘Utter nonsense!’ he would say; ‘utter nonsense all these forms! What child was ever the better for them?’ English education according to my father was being delivered over bound and gagged to a set of file-keepers who hardly knew a boy from a girl! Geo. P. Bunt was a nervous man. He had a habit of stretching his neck up out of his collar; he never crossed my father. He was a local preacher but he never tried to convert his three guests. To us, both he and Mrs. Bunt were kindness itself. The only gesture of authority Geo. P. ever tried was to make Vic sew a button on her coat. She would not. It

became a matter of principle that she should not sew on the button. No Hampden over his Ship Money was more obstinate. We dimly saw that the whole question of the Bunts being *in loco parentis* was involved; we were determined to be independent lodgers. Vic openly won her case and no attack was ever made again on any sin of omission or commission on her part. Feminine and gentle-looking, Vic has never in her life done anything against her will. Even tailors do her bidding. If she says she wants a heavy lining with a heavy tweed coat—she likes her coats built like houses—she has her way; and she always did have her way as a girl—with the Bunts and Mr. Raynor and Miss Passmore and whoever else attempted to guide her steps. She had three brothers—Jules, Ted and Byron—to contend with; they must have strengthened her will to withstand all aggression. She stood firm for her own course, whereas I got my way by seeming to yield. Mrs. Bunt thought I spent too much time alone at Porthpean, Trenarren and the Blackhead. I appeared to go less often but in truth I went oftener. It added to the fun to creep downstairs with my shoes in my hand of an early summer morning and, before the Bunts were waking, take my joy of one or other of my chosen spots and be back before breakfast time. Early study had made me hungry Mrs. Bunt would say as I demolished porridge, bacon and eggs and cast a hungry eye on little beef pasties which were always kept handy against the fiercest onslaughts of our appetites. Growing girls needed food, Mrs. Bunt said, equably. She liked us in a quiet, aloof way; and we liked her. My favourite time at Trenarren was by morning moonlight, with a clear sky and stars going out as morning dawned. I did not often go quite so early. Yet I think, on looking back, I would rather have missed everything else at St. Austell than those heaven-revealing mornings; the apartness in suffusion of fresh day.

CHAPTER V

TRYING TO GROW UP

How strange are trees that lift their leaves in air,
While their roots rout amidst the worms and dark;
How strange are wild flowers that with fragrance rare
Invite winged creatures, and with delicate mark
Direct. The sea is strange, filled with strange fish,
Coloured like sun-rise, or striped waves at dawn;
The sky is strange, with clouds now dragonish,
Now to the blue ethereal height up drawn.
Birds fly, grasshoppers hop, hares hunted run,
The thrushes sing, and housed snails silent creep.
Nothing remains at rest beneath the sun
Of things that dance and dive, or walk and weep.
 How strange is earth! And, ah! How strange am I,
 Appointed here to live and here to die.

Vic and I had made up our minds that if we were to teach, and if we must go to college, we would go to Truro. It was near home. We received a good deal of advice as to why we should go elsewhere. We might take the Cambridge Senior Examination again, obtain exemption from Matriculation, and go to a university. We were not inclined to any such mad risk. With luck, we thought, we had got through the examination once; but luck was tricky. A history examiner would never be drunk twice. What fools we should feel if we tried again and this time we not only failed to get Matriculation but failed altogether. To nothing that demanded a second trial of our mental strength in the slippery fields would we give any consideration at all. Then why not go to a London training college? Mr. Raynor said. London would broaden our minds. But in the secrecy of our attic we decided that we did not care for breadth. Truro or nowhere we said to all our advisers, and for Victoria this was a heroic decision. She had never learnt the catechism; I had.

Truro was a diocesan training college, and an old one as training colleges count age. The work of training had been carried on first in Fairmantle Street. There is a record of a grant of £200 made to the Truro Training School by the National Society in 1822; and there, for thirty years, pupil-teachers were trained for the Exeter Diocese, which then included

Cornwall with Devon. From 1857 to 1859 the school in Fairmantle Street was recognized as a temporary training college and ten Queen's scholars were admitted. These numbers, after a residential college and a practising school had been built on Mitchell Hill, were gradually increased to sixty. The college was still, wisely as I think, confined to sixty or so students when Vic and I were at Truro. Long before that, Cornwall had become again as in ancient days a separate diocese, and the Principal of the college was the Suffragan Bishop of St. Germans, with Miss Mary Gee as Vice-Principal.

Vic and I, having written to obtain particulars of admission, found that we must take the Archbishop's Examination in the Book of Common Prayer and in certain specified books of the Old and New Testaments. To me this prospect was not particularly alarming as I had been religiously brought up. But Vic had not, like me, been taken to church Sunday after Sunday until the Liturgy was as familiar in her ear as the sound of her own name. And she had no one to prepare her, whereas my father thoroughly enjoyed preparing me. Such teaching was his favourite work. I passed on to Vic as much as she would permit—very little of St. Paul who was not a sympathetic saint to either of us, and a good deal of King David whose prowess in the various walks of coloured life served instead of London to broaden our minds. Mr. Raynor and Miss Passmore took no note at all of our adventure in religious knowledge. We were a couple of privateers.

The day of the examination arrived and we went to Truro for it. My father drove me to Grampond Road Station in the pony-trap, and we joined Vic on the train. Probus Halt, and then the clustered grey Truro houses brimming the hollow; the towers of the cathedral rising in the midst; the head of the creek beyond and, on Mitchell Hill, a queer high and low building which was the college. I should remember nothing of the examination if it were not for a question on one of the papers which startled me into comprehension. The question was, 'Discuss David's foreign policy'. For the first time I stumbled on the realization that people were always the same; that time was one; that only the dresses and manners were different. David had had a foreign policy just as George III had had a foreign policy and just as His Majesty's Government were putting into operation a foreign policy at that instant. I don't suppose I saw the implications as clearly as this, but I know that my old childish notion of the Bible stories dropped off, and I saw David and the Queen of Sheba as an adult student would see them. David's foreign policy was the only examination question I have ever enjoyed answering, and it won me a prize which I did not know was offered. I remember the lunch that my father gave us after the examination. I can hear him humming as he looked through the papers, and his declaration that

they were well set questions. If we hadn't been able to do David's foreign policy we were very silly little girls. It was what he had been driving at all along but differently worded. Had we illustrated with a sketch-map to show the favourable position of Palestine in relation to . . .? Anne, he supposed, would have made a poor effort with a map; careless little girl! But he ordered me a second ice when he perceived that I was a little cast down at this aspersion. He had a rooted conviction of my invincible carelessness, but never liked to see me daunted.

Not so very long afterwards Vic and I paid a second visit to Truro—this time to be interviewed by the Vice-Principal, Miss Gee. Nobody remembered that I had nothing to wear for an interview until the day was upon us. Then it was seen that my school suit was short and shabby, my best one shabbier and shorter still, and that my hair was done in a manner ill-beseeming a prospective student. My mother and Susan went into consultation and Susan reluctantly and with many injunctions not to spoil it—did I remember that nice white blouse which Maurice had given her and which I had inked?—lent me a green skirt and a new blouse. I did my hair in a plait and tied it with one of Susan's wide black ribbons; I wore one of her hats and a coat of my own. Susan's skirt came well down towards my ankles and, masquerading thus as a budding young woman, I went off in Johnny Johns's wagonette to Truro. It was Truro market day.

Vic's interview was earlier in the day than mine as she was 'S' and I was 'T'. Her ordeals always ended just as mine were beginning. I walked up to the college feeling vain of Susan's skirt and my black bow. I swished a little from side to side to make the skirt swing. Johnny Johns put up somewhere at the back of Lemon Street, and I walked over the bridge and up Mitchell Hill. At the college door I adjusted my hat and, feeling that a suspender was working loose, was in the act of giving my stocking a tug when a maid opened the door. She showed me into a little room on the left, where I sat all alone; I was the last of the candidates to be interviewed that day. I wished with all my heart I was 'down Hemmick' instead of accompanying this would-be teacher who was sitting on the chair in my place, and with whom I have never been able to feel identical. Yet when Vic came in, her own interview over, and looked at my usurper and said, with a spontaneous burst of laughter, 'Oh, Anne, you do look a freak!' I was mortified. I said to Vic without conviction, 'Freak yourself,' and at that moment the maid came back and said, 'Miss Treneer,' and stood there holding the door. Vic, quick to divine, said, 'I was only teasing; you look grand really,' and in I went. Miss Gee was sitting at a desk, but everything about her was soft, billowy and feminine. She wore, perched on dark hair, a hat decorated with roses

under veiling. She had good grey eyes. My rawness met her civility and was quenched. Perhaps I divined that she enjoyed handling souls, for I immediately sheathed mine. Quite irrationally I disliked her then and always; it was not until long after I had left the college that I gained through other people's judgments a juster estimate of a remarkable Edwardian, whose mind wore the boned, lace neck-band of the period. As it was I felt myself beginning to glower in a little corner behind the young woman who was putting up my façade.

'You look very young, dear,' purred Miss Gee; 'too young, I am afraid, to come up to college in September.' I replied that I was of the common age and was, indeed, a day older than my friend Victoria Stauffer. I cannot remember anything else of the interview except that I feared Miss Gee might kiss me on parting, and whither should I plunge? The doubt as to whether or not I should be accepted for the coming September allayed with some cold drops my skipping spirits. Vic had been pretty well promised a place; if I could not go with her, I thought, I would not go at all. However, the door was opened to me; its hinges oiled by my prowess in the field of David's foreign policy. My prize was ten pounds to spend on books, and when I received it I thought the heavens had opened, and that I sat in a circular glory like a saint.

Vic and I left St. Austell County School that July with reluctance. We had been remarkably free there, chasing up the various paths of learning, nothing closed to us, nothing forced on us. We had been even with the boys; our attic had been a beloved refuge; going home for weekends a recurrent refreshment. Now we were to live in a community of women. At about this time three evils befell. My brother Howard caught pneumonia and nearly died in Exeter. Susan went up to help nurse him, but I stayed at home locked in with fear for the first time in my life. Up to then I had felt like Coleridge, that no one whom I entirely loved could die. Happily, my brother recovered and we laughed together again, but a certain fear of insubstantiation remained. The other evil was that one wet day my father slipped and broke his leg. When the leg was set and he was in bed, the rigidity of the plaster-of-paris case seemed terrible under the bed-clothes, and the knowledge that he could not curl his leg under him if he wished. Books which I read aloud to him come back to me intensely heightened by this demand on my sympathy for someone I loved. We had had little pain in our family. I have never re-read *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* since that time; but the horror of Hyde's trampling the child mingles with the colour of the down quilt as I sat by the bed and read aloud; and with the smell of antiseptics. I hate a hospital smell. The third evil and one which by no means I could get round was the

perception, which I could no longer blink, that Dart was growing very old. The fire had gone from him and he looked at me in a mournful, plodding way. I did not ride any more. We drove shorter and shorter distances; but even in the sunny quarry on the Barns Hill he seemed dejected. He was often still and no longer wanted to jump the hedges. Only in passing the tannery at the foot of Grampound Hill fear still made him shy.

Susan at this time was concerned about my clothes. I see my father beginning to get about on crutches and Susan groaning over my unhappy state in relation to the fashion of the times. I was born out of due season. The fashion of 1926 would have suited me in 1909; whereas the 1909 fashions, the long skirts, the waists, the frilly blouses, the hair puffed out over a frame, made me look, if ever I forlornly attempted them, confoundedly odd. Susan would poke and pull; she would try on the thing herself and look elegant; try it on to me, and lament aloud. What was the matter with me that I could not look like anybody else! Then I would turn on her in a fury and tell her I didn't care what I went to Truro in. I would walk up to Miss Gee with nothing on at all. That would shake her out of the morass of her softness.

My parents went off to Boscastle in order that my father might recuperate in the stronger air, and Susan and I were left alone. It was a wonderful mushroom season. We would go out to the Barns Hills, or to the fields between the Hovel and Trevennen, and pick basketfuls. They were a kind of solace; picking them we were children again. We forgot our impending separation, and our exasperation with each other. In the evenings I would watch Susan doing her utmost to send me to college with the things she thought I ought to have, embroidering my linen bag, making me pretty nightdresses, sewing name-tapes on towels and pillowcases; then I would burst out that I did not want any of my old things, that she needn't bother herself, that I wasn't going to any old college with any old Miss Gee. A less patient sister would have boxed my ears; instead we would make it up and go, wildly happy, on the beaches and on the cliffs, rejoicing in being alone, in skipping all the normal mealtimes, in turning the routine of the house upside down. When my new trunk came with my initials on I kicked it; when I opened parcels all containing new clothes I flung them about. Most of all I had a spite against a new suit and against a new frock for evenings. I became suddenly devoted to my old school sailor hat and packed it secretly in the bottom of the trunk, together with a faithful old green pleated skirt. I suppose I felt a need to cling to something.

I forget how I and my trunk reached Truro, I can only remember the hopeless despair when I said goodbye to Susan, and my grief that I had been behaving so intolerably. Then I remember the quadrangle at Truro and some young woman telling me that I was to be in dormitory 7, and another that we must unpack our possessions downstairs and carry them up on trays, and another that there would be high tea. My senior, Jessie Greenwood, introduced herself, small, dark, merry and so kind that I remember with thankfulness the beam in her eye after all these years. Vic was in dormitory 3, far removed, and we were not at the same table for meals. Over that high tea, which turned out to be a hard boiled egg, I mournfully beheld her from afar.

CHAPTER VI

TRURO TRAINING COLLEGE

I dreamt I skipt from skin and bones,
Into the starry mansions;

Yet knew I'd give my soul to be
Once more of the old earth earthy;

To hear a blackbird singing clear
With a gross unpurged ear;

And with an uncelestial nose
Savour the sweetness of a rose;

Run with the wind; my Holy Ghost
Has never known the Angelic Host;

My daily bread and rarer wine,
Small traffic have with the divine.

Oh, who would, for immortal ichor
Change his warm blood and earthly liquor?

And, dear my Lord, what I love is,
Not other but this worldës bliss.

This World's Bliss

I always associate Truro College with Tennyson. There was a deodar on the lawn and, although we were not sweet girl graduates, we were certainly in our golden hair; Dorothy Purchas quite literally, the rest of us in our various degrees of black, brown and mousy. No one wore her hair short or her skirt. Every night was heard the sound of rhythmic brushing in the dormitories.

With Tennyson went a pinch of the modern, a strong dash of the medieval and a tincture, very faintly perceptible, of Lowood Institution. The college had been built and was largely maintained by the subscriptions of

church people; but the subscriptions were supplemented by a government grant and by our own small fees. I did not realize then as I do now that Miss Gee was doing her utmost to modernize the college and had succeeded in a way that would have astonished the Founders. In the early days the students had been meek indeed. They had been made aware of benefaction. They had gone two and two to church and had worn bonnets when nobody else wore bonnets. Hardy gives a harsh picture of them—in a different church college—in *Jude the Obscure*. But Truro can never at any time of its history have been harsh or crude. It was, for one thing, blessedly small and had avoided that metallic quality which seems inseparable from large institutions. Its tradition was gentle. All its old students bore witness to it particularly, I think, its oldest students; those who, in 1909, women of fifty or sixty, with many years of teaching experience, came back to see us at Whitsuntide reunions. In the general ordering of our lives the medieval predominated. We might have been serving a novitiate, our very cubicles were austere, narrow and cell-like. In dormitory 7 we called ourselves the celestials and were nearest to the sky, being up six flights. There slept eight people, each in her curtained space, four juniors and four seniors. Each cubicle contained a bed, a chest of drawers, a bookcase and a chair. We might decorate our walls as we would. I did not decorate mine; all I put out on the chest of drawers was a picture of my brother Howard playing the organ. I used to imagine how he would laugh if he could see me at Truro. I would sit by my window looking out on to the garden, listening to the wind in the deodar and holding imaginary conversation with him. It was in Truro that I grew to find the night sky friendly. My cubicle was in a corner and I was profoundly glad of this, for it meant that I did not have students on both sides of me. I cherished the wall which made me feel a little private. Sometimes, I could hear Miss Cooper, lecturer in botany, poking her fire; but in general there was silence behind the wall. We were all under Miss Cooper's wing. Shelley was her nickname because she quoted the poet with such warmth in her lectures. We waited for 'as the poet Shelley says', and would smile at one another; but Miss Cooper was an enthusiast, and even while we smiled we respected. She was a little like a Cranford storybook lady, with delicate, pink cheeks and fluffy, greying hair, a faint opaqueness and drooping in one eye, and a gentle voice. She was very easily hurt, quick to take offence, and prone to emotional forgiveness. I never went through a forgiveness but I heard of them. It was Miss Cooper's duty to put out the dormitory gas-light at ten o'clock; then she would say, 'Good night, girls,' as though we were still at school, and we replied, 'Good night, Miss Cooper,' after which presumably we slept. Instead we often flitted about. I remember the comic shadow of my dangling feet as I sat on the curtain pole in dormitory 5 and listened unseen

to Miss Peat rebuking the dormitory for unseemly mirth. I might have been Donald Duck. We were often extremely childish, the result of being treated as children. A friend of mine once scrowled a pilchard over the fire in the part of the building we called the cottage, and the smell of pilchard permeated all things; Miss Peat arrived, lifted up a nostril, and was told it must be the jam boiling over in the jam factory down by the wharf. I hated the smell of strawberry jam for years. Truro reeked of jam in July.

In the morning at seven o'clock we were awakened by a dreadful bell. No time has ever seemed to me more precious than the warm minutes I spent in bed after this imperious summons to a life of duty. Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil! Our time was apportioned. When we had wrested ourselves from our drowsiness, we sped in various stages of undress, but always with the decent blouse and skirt covering all, to the classroom for early study. I believe if one got out early enough, one could get a cup of tea before study, but I never rose in time for this. It was a supervised study; we sat at our desks, the lecturer on duty sat at hers. Only Miss Gee, I suppose, was in bed. How cosy she must have felt! After early study came breakfast, and then various 'charges'. Our charges varied week by week. On dormitory charge, we swept out the room and cleaned the bath; on dining-room charge we helped lay the meals and to clear them. This charge was greatly liked as, after clearing, we usually managed to make ourselves toast over the dining-room fires at night, and sometimes a Welsh rabbit with cheese secreted during supper. Library charge was less popular; the librarian had too keen an eye for dust. My favourite charge was lab. charge. The lab. never seemed to look different whether we dusted it or not, so Jessie Greenwood and I volunteered for this charge whenever we could. It was while on lab. duty, while presumably we were dusting all the little bottles and replacing them clean, that she taught me the military two-step, and the valeta, and improved my waltzing. Singing the tunes and waving our dusters, we danced. 'Heel, toe! One, two, three! Heel, toe! One, two three!' we sang; or, whistling the tune of the Blue Danube, we waltzed about the benches.

Charges done, it was time for chapel. We went to St. Paul's Church at the foot of Mitchell Hill every morning. I constituted myself organ blower at as early a date as possible so that in my secure position behind the curtain, I could read in peace. I always chose a not too exciting book so that I should not go right off into the story and forget to come back to blow in time for the hymn; but once when I had chosen *Pendennis* and had read it safely for days and days on end, I did go right off at the death of Mrs. Penn. The organist waited for wind and no wind came; the students waited for the organ and no

organ played; Miss Gee and Canon Kerr waited for the students and no students sang. Then somebody came and shook me by the shoulder; I began to pump frantically, but the gaff was blown. I was deposed from my office. After chapel came lectures until one o'clock with a mid-morning break for physical training on the terrace. In the afternoons we might, in theory, play games or walk; but this precious time was frequently encroached upon. After tea, lectures and studies were renewed, until supper time. We then had chapel again, this time in the senior classroom where there was no organ to blow. Any little darling minutes that remained, were, I am half inclined to believe, our own; but I may err! It sounds extravagant. Trying to stuff too much into the hastening moments that poor mortals can command is a vice which has always dogged and still dogs training colleges.

The Victorianism of Truro was marked in our deportment, and in authority's attitude towards young men. These creatures were supposed not to exist. Very few students invited even a brother to college. I did not invite one of mine. I used to think sometimes that if even one, let alone all four of them, arrived and looked at our doings and began chaffing or teasing us, that the whole college would vanish like an illusion. I used to imagine Cap'n jesting with Miss Peat, or Howard telling Miss Cooper a funny story, or Maurice singing 'Mrs. Henry Hawkins' to his own accompaniment with variations on the common-room piano, or Stan just standing and looking at us quizzically without saying a word; but none of my brothers ever saw me at Truro. They would never have believed it was I drawing margins. As for my sister Susan, I cannot remember that she was ever induced to enter the college doors. If she had she would have transformed the life there within a month. She was once vaguely interested when I spoke of dances on Saturday nights; but when she asked who we danced with and I said that we danced with each other, Susan said, 'Oh!'

We began drawing margins in our first week and continued to the end. 'Back to your margins, girls,' Miss Bevan would say as she delivered excellent lectures on Method. We drew the margins and wrote our notes in beautiful notebooks, notebooks which were given out during the first few days of term and lasted us our Truro lives. They were sumptuous books; their like do not exist today. They were the very idea of notebooks. The paper in them was superfine, thick and glossy. The pen fairly slid over it. The covers were stiff-boarded, dark-green; inscribed on them in a flourish of gold was 'Truro Diocesan Training College. My deeds will speak'. Our deeds threatened to speak for us everywhere, hateful little things! The most handsome of all the notebooks was for nature study. Extra thick it was, with dark-red covers, and interleaved with drawing-paper. I beheld it with a

reverent eye, a savage might have worshipped it. In its pages Vic and I were to record in the process of time our observations on the behaviour of the elm over the space of a year. Shall I ever forget the elm, the wych and the common? Our blasted elm it became within a month. It refused to alter its appearance with sufficient speed for our weekly record. Were the winter buds any bigger? Indeed they were not. If ever I wish to smile at the past I can picture myself with Vic blinking at the elm or caudling away with water and paint and words at our records. From being stately creatures all the trees became jokes. I can hear Dorothy Purchas on the slow activities of the beech, or Hilda Pears in caustic comment on the lime. I envied her her coral buds and honey-coloured flowers. I think Maggie Kemp espoused the thorn. But our trees were a glorious excuse for extending the limits of our walks. ‘May we go as far as Tresillian Woods, Miss Cooper? Our wych-elm there . . .’ or, ‘There is a most interesting elm at Pencalenick, Miss Cooper; we thought, perhaps . . .’ If our trees failed us there were all Nature’s startling devices at our beck. I went far afield in search of dodder and sundew. In the holidays I reached Bodmin Moor in pursuit of cotton-grass. A murmured reference to enchanters’ nightshade was sufficient excuse when we were caught by the outgoing tide and stranded in the polished mud on a creek of the Fal.

Church, too, was an excuse for walks; for summer evening walks through the fields about Truro. Truro is a city in the fields; cows are almost numbered among the citizens. I remember the scented fields of June; the sheen of summer glancing from the waves of grasses as they bent to the breeze; or this same sheen catching the gloss of a horse’s flank, or of Dorrie Hicks’s splendid hair. In summer we chose to say our prayers at the most distant churches within range. St. Michael Penkivel was my furthest record. I had my bicycle at Truro by then, but even so St. Michael Penkivel, approached by intersecting lanes, green-banked and high-wooded, so that one seemed to be cycling towards the sleeping beauty, took me so long to reach that I was too late to go to church at all. I looked at the church, wished Lord Falmouth was a family friend, and pedalled back to college again, with the heavy dumble-dores blundering against me. Nearer churches were Kenwyn with its treelined church path and shadowy churchyard; Kea, and Sweet St. Clements. For walks in Truro itself—the city was out of bounds except on Saturday afternoons—I was mainly indebted to the fact that in my senior year it was my duty to buy and arrange flowers for the senior classroom; and in my junior year Jessie Greenwood bought and paid for the cream for table five. We contributed 1d. a week towards cream to eat with our apple pie on Sundays—‘Tell the juniors there’s plenty more.’ With

flowers to pay for and cream to order for Jessie, I rarely lacked an excuse if I wanted to wander where the little brown rivers flowed through Truro or by the old wharfs. I dearly liked the little bridges. I hardly noticed the light and gracious cathedral when I was at Truro, except when Canon Sampson preached. He always tried to convince us of sin, and I could imitate him in the holidays, waving my arms to amuse one or two of my brothers from the pulpit-like look-out on the Dodman when, as always in a summer holiday, we walked out to that purple-dark headland. Sometimes in Truro I whisked up to the cattle market to see if I could spot any of Mr. J. C. Williams's cattle, or a Barton wagon, or Noah Loten, or Jim Strout; but my deeds always threatened to speak for me in the cattle market, and to take off my hat would have been to make myself the more conspicuous. Even children wore hats in Truro, and on Sundays every hand was gloved. I never heard of anyone encountering Miss Gee without her gloves on.

My happiest memory of lectures at Truro is of the courses in English and history given by Miss Goode. Miss Goode was a remarkable tutor. Of average height, pale, with luminous eyes, and dark hair turning grey, she presented a subject and held together the people in her audience without confounding the individuals into a mass or allowing the subject to grow flaccid. She had a candid mind. Between the taught and the subject taught she held a delicate balance. Few achieve this. The authors read in English, though the plan was too circumscribed, were well chosen for our age. Tennyson to me is entwined with gardens; and Truro was the market town of a land of gardens, of cottage gardens and the stately gardens of great houses. It is on the borders of Roseland, amidst cultivated land in good heart, with woods through which the sea comes creeping up by way of the tidal Fal; bringing the smell of the sea; bringing the smell of mud drying on the lower branches of the trees; bringing the cry of curlews melancholy at night. *The Dying Swan* is a poem which fits the Fal by Tresillian; and 'Heavily hangs the broad sun flower' the Bishop's garden at Lis Escop. A child said to me once that she liked poetry because she liked the taste of the nice words in her mouth. Tennyson's poetry gave me that voluptuous pleasure. The voice lies sweetly along the words in Tennyson's poetry.

Browning flung me into the rapids of meaning. In the frail canoe of my mind, I went swirling past the rocks and into quiet pools, keeping my craft afloat as I could. I can remember one holiday at home, during which I was exploring Browning. My father and I had driven by Tubbs Mill and Trevennen to Rush Pool, and so to the top of Tregoney Hill above Dr. Grier's house in Mevagissey. Now that Dart was old we did not drive down the hill. We wished to spare him; so I waited in the trap at the top of the hill

while my father walked down to Mevagissey to get his hair cut. As I waited I read *Fra Lippo Lippi*. At first it was words, words, words, with snatches of tune; and then I discovered what it was all about. It exploded as Hopkins would say. I could see the old Monk and hear him talking, and looking; and seeing a face for Judas. I saw his life and his art in a flash, heard him lending his mind out, and knew that he knew as I knew and as the poet who evoked him knew:

The Beauty and the wonder and the power,
The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,
Changes, surprises. . . .

I relished the glow of existence in Browning, the earthly-based rapture to which he could attain in such things as:

Oh, good gigantic smile o' the brown old earth,
This autumn morning! How he sets his bones
To bask i' the sun, and thrusts out knees and feet
For the ripple to run over in its mirth; . . .

And as a poet he seemed and seems to me incomparably dramatic. What an influence he has had! Would Mr. Eliot ever have written that most dramatic of lyrics *The Game of Chess* if Browning had not written?

In Matthew Arnold we tasted the rhythm of our own melancholy and the melancholy of the moon-blanchèd beaches, a melancholy which, as a child, I did not know, but which seized on me all the more strongly at Truro. In a part of the garden we called the wilderness, fearful lest anyone should hear me, I would say aloud, *Thyrsis* and *The Scholar Gipsy*. They provided an objective outlet for that passion of regret that invades the soul as it feels itself becoming entangled. This melancholy in its profound and tragic import is experienced in *Hamlet*, the play selected for our detailed study:

There's something in his soul,
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood. . . .

The poets Tennyson, Browning and Arnold, and I think the tragedy of *Hamlet* too, are for the young; not for children, but for young people growing towards the world. That is why they fare ill at the hands of mature critics who have a sort of spite against them, punishing in them their own inability to respond to them in all their recesses any longer.

Truro College was earnest. In prose, George Eliot reinforced Robert Browning in trying to persuade us that life's business was to make a terrible choice. But I used to let my mind flit away from the serious import of the

fables themselves to the bar of the Rainbow or to Mrs. Poyser's kitchen. I read many Victorian novels at Truro; but I read none of them with that profound and trembling interest with which I had read Scott at home as a child. I suppose I shall never in this world of fiction journey again with anyone as I journeyed in those early days with Jeanie Deans. Scott was not Victorian; but at Truro we were Victorian in essence, even in the authors we chiefly studied. In one respect, though, we were modern. Maggie Tulliver never did physical training, whereas in our skippings, and jumpings, and games we were looking well forward. Truro was in that respect more modern than many a college today. Miss Fountain in my first year, and Miss McDowell in my second, were recognizably experts in their profession. We liked to look at Miss Fountain and to watch her move. She wore a short, dark-green tunic in the morning, and a long grey-green dress at night over a cream blouse with bishop sleeves. We wore short black tunics over white blouses. It was a wonderful relief to slip out of our lady-likeness into this practical habit and prance about the terrace. 'Deeply breathe in!' We breathed in and stretched ourselves within our cage of bones. 'Deeply breathe out! control it!' and out our breaths fluttered. Even in my first year I was as earnest as a savage about my physical training; in my second year, under Miss McDowell, I was fanatical. I fitted up some apparatus in the wash-house at home so as to keep up the business in the holidays. I hung from curtain poles, I vaulted over the mangle. I remember when Franklyn Davis and his men came to paint our house at Caerhays and white-wash the wash-house how they teased me about what they called my Jimmy Aisem. Both Miss Fountain and Miss McDowell knew what they wanted and how to teach. Gone was the tentativeness of education; here was something positive and graduated. With a physical training 'table' I knew what I was at. Miss McDowell's lectures on anatomy and hygiene were as clear as daylight. I see her standing by our skeleton—the Lady Bones of many a practical joke—recapitulating with precision. I left Truro with the feeling that I could at least help children to have nice, straight, lithe bodies. My own scholarly stoop had received swift attention. The back of my neck now sought my coat collar; heads up and chins in was the watchword. I laugh still as I think of myself trying to draw in my chin. How could one draw in a chin? And there was Susan as straight as a lath with a chin neither in nor out; yet Susan had thought of none of these things. She had neither cultivated a stoop with Mr. Raynor nor uprightness with Miss McDowell.

I enjoyed games at Truro. Badminton on a sheltered terrace out of doors was the best of all, partly because the game was new to me, partly because the courts were in the garden and we could play in odd half-hours, partly

because it is a light and leaping game. The rackets are half the weight of tennis rackets and the shuttle-cocks are feathered. Any wind spoils out-door badminton; that was why I was bathed in anger when the court on the lower terrace, which we called the wilderness, was taken as the site of the proposed new college chapel. I grudged this site to God. Although I liked the idea of a college chapel, a windy site I felt would meet the need, whereas the shuttle-cocks needed a dead calm. Once when two of us were running down to the wilderness, waving our rackets for a game between lectures, we nearly knocked down the Bishop as he entered by a side door. A set of steps which I was jumping brought me up against him with some abruptness. He showed Episcopal equanimity. We liked the Bishop; but our favourite cathedral dignitary was the Precentor, who was also the college chaplain. Canon Corfe was not a good lecturer, I imagine, for we used his divinity hour to read or paint or write at leisure. No one can ever have lectured to a more abstracted audience. Near the end of the time, taking off and readjusting his pince-nez, he would say, 'Is your clock right by any chance?' 'A little slow, Precentor,' we would reply, and he would thankfully escape from us. When he took the whole college for choral singing on Saturday evenings, it was quite a different matter. This was my favourite hour at Truro. We learnt an infinite variety of songs and sang them with all our hearts. We sang them with all our hearts until Miss Cooper, who took choral practice when the Precentor was absent, entered us for one of the Cornish Musical Festivals. I have a notion the festival was at Chacewater but this is impossible. There was no hall at Chacewater and we did not sing to the sky. I suppose it was at Redruth. I remember we filed on to the platform in such numbers in our sailor hats with the black and white hat bands and 'My deeds will speak' emblazoned on our fronts that Sir Hugh Allen was transfixed. But our deeds spake not; we were cold. There came from us a thin trickle of polite sound, very different from the warm music in the senior classroom. Words failed Sir Hugh to describe his disappointment in us. So many, and so lamentably incapable of any attack! The absence of colour in our voices! The! . . . He wore himself out in denouncing us, and then he worked himself in again conducting the combined men's choirs. He took off his coat to it, 'Sing like the devil, men, sing like the devil!' he was yelling at them before the performance ended. The men went ramping off, but we dwindled away. There was no spirit left in us.

For some students art and handiwork were more favourite recreations than music and games. But not for me. How I hated making baskets of wet canes! How I loathed the very sight of raffia work! How Vic and I giggled over two little pairs of knickers on which we had sewn throughout our days

at St. Austell County School, and on which we continued to draw thread throughout a series of Lenten missionary meetings at Truro! These modest but ill-made little garments went at last in a parcel to those whom Vic and I blithely called the Heathen Chinees. They would have amused a set of Dervishes. I should have adored to see a little Chinese arrayed in those knickers. Miss Gee, I remember, read to us while we stitched. A history of the place of the philanthropic parcel in the comity of nations during the first half of the nineteenth century could make a pretty thesis. Vic and I never thought in those days that we should ever be the recipients of parcels ourselves. We did not know with what joy we should open them. I have eaten royal cake out of a parcel sent by her American brother Byron, and have gone clad in fine raiment sent by my American brother Maurice. But blessings on both our American brothers. Their parcels were better than fine gold; they were fun.

Miss Peat taught handicrafts and art at Truro. ‘Don’t be afraid of a little colour, girls; don’t be afraid of a little colour,’ she would say. I certainly got a notion of thick paint. Good teachers lend themselves to caricature. Miss Peat was our constant joy. She was a majestic figure with decided, handsome features, and she was unassailed by any doubts, except as to the physical strength of young women. It was very dangerous to our delicate systems for us to carry anything heavy. I would place myself in position to shoulder something, a little stand or chair or platform, just to hear her say, ‘Don’t move that alone, dear; don’t move that alone. Get six strong girls to help you, dear.’ She hated noise; she did not like young women to be robustious. She shushed us in the corridors. At certain periods of the day there was a recurrent murmur of Sh! sh! sh! about the halls of Truro. I can hear it with the wind in the trees, and the pigeons cooing, and the sound of Penhaligan’s mower on the sunny lawn. Once when the Bishop was lecturing in the junior classroom Penhaligan mowed too near. The Bishop moved towards the window and shouted in a voice that had roused congregations to righteousness, ‘Penhaligan!’ Penhaligan went on mowing. The Bishop turned to us with, ‘The man doesn’t hear me.’ I, perceiving the pleasant sunshine outside, suggested that I should go out and tell Penhaligan to withdraw a little. I had a delicious slow saunter, and I did not repeat to the Bishop what Penhaligan said when I invited him, with the Bishop’s compliments, to move a little further off. Penhaligan was exactly like Jerry Cruncher in *A Tale of Two Cities*. His face was red, his hair bristled, his fingers stuck out. ‘If the students wean’t put their hockey butts in the basket, I cean’t clean ’em, Miss Treneer; tha’s all ’tis; I cean’t clean ’em.’ Or, ‘Miss Treneer, it tidn’ no good telling me the hockey butts is still wet. Tidn’ my

fault; 'tis that dratted apparatus. 'Tis things tha's wrong with this college; things! That there apparatus and me lawn mower, miss; bought in the year one.' I once was late for a hockey match through listening to Penhaligan on 'things' and when I got to the field Miss McDowell told me I didn't take things seriously.

Miss Holloway was the only person who could manage Penhaligan. Miss Holloway managed us all. 'A nice warm vest, dear! That's the cure for chilblains; a nice, long, warm, woollen vest. Nice combinations would be even better than a nice vest; but you girls won't wear them, I know, dear, any more than you'll eat your nice suet pud . . .'

In my junior year Ethel Morrison, one of the seniors, used to make us laugh over all the little day-to-day happenings at Truro. She fitted her commentaries into the framework of the Baconian essay. After supper, standing on a chair, she would deliver the compositions to an accompaniment of laughter and the beating of spoons upon the board. They perished like all the best things with the moment; but if they were as funny as I seem to remember they were, they were very funny indeed. They struck straight home at any grievance, foolishness, or inflationary sentiment. If relations were never strained between seniors and juniors when I was a junior I think it was largely due to Ethel Morrison. We had no Ethel Morrison in our year and we missed her when, in our turn, we became seniors. We said our juniors were uppish and sent them to Coventry. This was extremely awkward for me as my junior was Dorrie Hicks. She came from Pengruglar, not far from my home. She had been to St. Austell County School, and her aunts knew my parents. She was not a junior but a friend. She had glorious red hair and was half as tall again as I, and twice as sensible. I forget how the fire and smoke affected us at the time; we grinned at one another from the opposed ranks, I think. The whole affair was typical of what happens when too much segregation is attempted; it was not much more foolish than the class war.

The best day of the year at Truro was Ascension Day. It was a holiday with no organized festivity. We went to the early Eucharist and after that we were given a pasty, a banana, a bar of chocolate, and freedom. In our junior year Vic and I walked to Perranporth and then to St. Agnes on the cliffs. By nine o'clock in the morning, on top of Truro brim, we had freed ourselves from the burden of our paper bags by eating the whole day's provisions. After that we travelled light as air. Perhaps it was partly emptiness that uplifted us; certainly I nearly floated off on the gusts of furzy scent that ravished us on the cliffs between Perranporth and St. Agnes. When we got

back at night and sang, 'Hail the day that sees him rise', I knew exactly what levitation was like.

Another wonderful day was entirely unexpected. It had never occurred to me not to honour the King, and I had a pang of regret when King Edward VII died; but my spirits rose with a bound when I found that his death cancelled all arrangements at Truro for an Old Students' weekend, at which the juniors would have made themselves useful. The juniors, it seemed, were free. I coaxed my senior, Jessie Greenwood, to catch Miss Gee in the throes of indecision. Could the juniors who lived near at hand go home for the weekend? I stood at the college gate waiting; Jessie came spinning towards me and I was off within a second of the permission. I was afraid Miss Gee might change her mind. I walked home from Grampound Road Station in a state of hilarity, ill-suited to the preparation of black gloves, black hats, and black shoes incipient at college as I left it. The last mile's walking of an unexpected visit home is royal; and then the opening of the garden gate and the door; the cry of, 'It's Anne'; the warmth and the blessing. I knew by my mother's face that she thought for a moment that I'd carried out a threat that I had often laughingly made, and walked out of Truro for good. I was glad I hadn't, she would have thought it wrong. 'With Mary's permission,' I sang as, with my arm round my mother's waist, I waltzed her round the kitchen.

The worst times at Truro were the weeks of school practice, and the occasional giving of criticism lessons. If in hell I lift up my eyes being in torment I shall know I have lost my Illustrations, and that Miss Bevan is making a note of my blank face. I once gave a lesson to little children on the Epiphany in which I never even reached my Illustration. Miss Gee was listening to me and I talked so much about the Kings and their possible doings in the East that I had only dimly approached the point of my lesson when the bell rang. Miss Gee, going over the lesson with me in her room, gently remarked on this failure. 'And where, dear, were your illustrations?' said she. 'Had you no illustrations?' 'Yes, Miss Gee; I had a star,' I said; and I had made a star, a lovely gilded star, and this I had meant to draw forth like a conjurer at the dramatic moment; but the star never rose in my lesson, the Kings were still in their possible pasts. Another criticism lesson I gave was to older children on my dearly beloved Henry Trengrouse of Helston. For this I made a handsome little model of the breeches-buoy. I had a little china doll and pulled her from the wreck to the shore. The children and I were alike enthralled. Again and again I saved our doll from a watery grave, and my supervisor never came in to see that illustration. School practice—I think we did a fortnight or three weeks at a stretch, three times during the two years—kept me awake at nights. I taught at Bosvigo School, Truro, under

Mr. Shakespeare; and Trewirgie School, Redruth, under Miss Harris. I liked Trewirgie. We went up Carn Brea on the last Friday afternoon by permission of Miss Harris the head mistress who was a darling, and who gave her novices comfort. She said you could never tell whether or not you liked teaching from school practice. It was all quite different when you knew the children and had a class of your own. I have found this to be true. And the set lesson except as an occasional stimulus is over-valued. Plan the work and let the children get on with it. Sufficient space, the right books in plenty, music and pictures, enough material to stimulate ingenuity, no illustrations, and friendliness—it is almost as simple as that, but not quite. I have heard many head mistresses say that they prefer to have young teachers untrained; and certainly I have met many good teachers who have never been through any set course in education. But one would not venture to doctor the body without a strenuous course of training, and minds and souls are not less delicate. The trouble is that a broken spirit does not show so easily as a broken arm. And the relief is, as Sara Coleridge's old nurse said, 'Bless you, ma'am, it is very hard to *kill* a baby.' Children are blessedly resilient. If they were not they would all have died under our tender dread of complexes in the last twenty years. But they are still all alive and shouting, and ready to try out the powers of the new students as they tried out mine. Looking back now at much over which I was impatient when I was young, I see that Truro College had one tremendous asset. It put first things first. At Truro the purpose of education was seen to be—for all the fun I have made of gilded stars—to guide children towards a way of living. Our tutors themselves were un-self-seeking and disinterested. They were, in short, good women. There are still saints among teachers, of whom, alas, I am not one; but I have met them. Their devotion keeps the spirit alive. Colleges like Truro helped to produce them. If the supply should run short the teaching profession will grow dingy.

CHAPTER VII

TREVERBYN

Let's michie, boys, make mocks and play;
She's new! Hey nonny, nonny, nonny ney!

When first I went to live in a community at Truro, I found the confinement intolerably irksome; but at the end of two years I was half loath to leave. The narrowness of physical being made the mind turn inwards. In the garden that summer I used to think I should like to stay for ever and not go into the world, or build any scaffolding for myself. Instead of seeking far and wide I would contract and contract to a pin's point, and yet all the world would be mine, because all the world was in me.

From this contemplation I was roused by the business of finding a school and earning my living. The more the mind tries to pitch and settle on a head of clover or spray of meadow vetchling the more some vexatious duty intervenes and bids it fly off. There is always something to be done which one does not want to do. I have never been able to be entirely abandoned. I can be neglectful but not utterly neglectful; I can take little thought but not no thought. 'Take no thought for the morrow.' At Truro they used to say it meant, 'Be not over anxious'. I hate these hedgings. 'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.' I was ever ready to consider the lilies—only I preferred roses—how they grew and toiled not. But, alas! I was not a rose or a lily. I had not their useful roots, but only feet and hands and a restless head. A root and leaves must be an exquisite form of economy. However, as roots and leaves were not mine, I decided to earn some money. I wanted to earn money to give it to my mother whose naturally serene mind had sometimes been fretted by the lack of means in bringing up a family. I thought what fun it would be to change my first cheque. I could teach during the week and have weekends to myself, weekends at home. For I was determined on one thing, I would find a school near enough to Caerhays for me to go home every weekend.

The school I found was Treverbyn Council Mixed. Council Mixed was one of the most comic of all our comic attempts at naming schools. The historic names, British, National, Voluntary, Board, Council, were all bound up in some way with financial administration or with warring religious sects and secular bodies. We sought compromise and often named to hide; whereas Miss Pinkerton's academy was at least Miss Pinkerton's. Of the old

names 'board' persisted longest; it persists still as an opprobrious term, though it ceased to be official forty years ago. Our bitterly ugly names have corresponded to something ugly in the essence. There is, to my mind, much in a name. A rose would not smell quite so sweet to me if it were called tab. However, I did not give much thought to Council Mixed when I was twenty. I was more concerned with the name Treverbyn, beautiful in my ears. In the pleasant Cornish manner of those days, even the word Council was entirely relegated to official correspondence. In the parish the school was plain Treverbyn school and, since there was no other, all the girls and boys in the neighbourhood went to it, at least until they were eleven, and the majority until they were fourteen. A few girls chose to stay an extra year; and these big girls were both helpful to the school and helped by it.

I first set foot in Treverbyn on a scorching hot July day. At Truro all through the final certificate examination heat had melted the marrow in our bones and made us sweat our thoughts on to the paper. The blinds, pulled down to keep out the sun from the senior classroom windows, never flapped. Air was still and dead and so, by the end of June, were the examination candidates. In July the sun was flamy. I had decided to work for the month of July as an uncertified teacher at Treverbyn, so as to read myself in. On the first Saturday I went up to reconnoitre, bicycling the distance from home. Treverbyn, up among the clay dumps, is not very far from Bugle. The landscape is not quite earthly, more like a scene from the mountains in the moon. Here are glistening sky-pointed pyramids, deep pools like cloudy turquoises, and white streams. I was half surprised that the cows in the small, bare-hedged fields gave ordinary milk. Yet this district had been familiar to my eye in a distant view from childhood. We used to look at it from the Dodman and tell the weather from the clarity which outlined or the haze which veiled it. I remembered going over a clay pit once with my cousins from Bosinver. I remembered the sky-tips aloft; the concentric level ledges of the great pits on which we walked; and the opaque, strange water below us. The colour, the unclottedness, and the violent shadows might please the eye of a modern artist. Anything more unlike the leafy Polgrain valley which I loved can hardly be conceived. Polgrain is at sea level. Treverbyn is high up towards Hensbarrow. To a cyclist the way from St. Austell up to Treverbyn provides collar work. I was hot. I thought of the local preacher who arrived late in the pulpit one Sunday, his bald head steaming like a crock on the fire. He said, 'I'm sorry I'm late, brothers, but I came up that hill some coose.' I went up the hills between St. Austell and Treverbyn going some coose, heat or no heat. I was to meet the head master in the school at 3 o'clock, and I was never one to leave home for an

appointment with an amplitude of time. With little trickles of sweat on my forehead, and my black shoes dusty, I opened the door of the main room of the school at half-past three. I found the head master inside practising strange contortions. He swung towards me with a mighty, imaginary stroke as I stood in the doorway. If I had been a ball I should have gone whizzing through the walls to Newquay. As I was merely the new assistant mistress, I stood and looked, and the head master went adroitly on. I could only think he was practising shooting goals with an airy hockey stick. ‘Practising hockey?’ I ventured at last. ‘Golf,’ he said; and went on lunging. I have never watched a more heating performance on a summer’s day; in addition I was piqued at not being taken more notice of. So with a Gorran flink I said, ‘Well! as I have seen you, I’ll go now,’ and prepared to slope. That made him rest his arms at his sides at last. I was quite relieved to see him quiet. It was strange that I should first have come upon him practising a game, if golf can be called a game, for he was far from being a gamesome man. He was one of those people who seem born grown up, born old indeed. I could never fancy Mr. Boxhall as other than he was at that time, not much more than fifty I suppose, but to my twenty years that seemed very old. He was good-looking, with a sombre and dominating personality, and a face like an etching. He was used to having his own way; other people looked to him, he did not look to other people. As we talked of the school, of the class I should teach and of the lodgings suggested for me at Penwithick, I had a sinking of heart. Perhaps all young teachers’ hearts sink; but few can have sunk deeper than mine. I had a feeling that I should never be able to do the work. ‘Needlework,’ said Mr. Boxhall. ‘Of course, you will be responsible for the girls’ needlework. It has always been considered very good here. In my wife’s time . . .’ He was a widower; his wife had taught in the school. Well! I wasn’t his wife, I assured myself. I could leave, I could even leave before I began if I wanted to. I did want to. Needlework would not remain very good under my dispensation I was sure.

I dreaded Monday morning; but the reality was worse than I could ever have imagined. A class of forty or so—they seemed to be all the children in the world—forty or so nicely behaved little girls and boys fastened their bright eyes on me as Mr. Boxhall introduced me to my classroom. With the uncanny instinct of ten-year-olds they realized that I was delivered into their hands; that I was not a disciplinarian; that I was as uncertain of myself and my surroundings as a Jenny Wren. In calling the register, I mispronounced a name. All the children shouted with laughter. After the register came scripture. Two little boys, a cheeky red-haired one with a pale face in which millions of freckles had almost joined into one, and a dark little boy,

innocent-looking and rotund as the infant St. John the Baptist, fought to give out Bibles; another boy joined in the scuffle; then another. The little girls looked on with expectant, self-righteous enjoyment as the disturbance spread. Mr. Coad, an assistant master from the next classroom, appeared at the door, smiled at me and glared at them. They resumed the mien of willing cherubs. All through the morning, through arithmetic and reading and geography, this little comedy repeated itself; eager co-operation, pushes and shoves, disorder spreading, pandemonium, Mr. Coad; eager co-operation, a pinch and a fight, disorder spreading, pandemonium, Mr. Coad. In geography lesson Mr. Boxhall arrived and beat Freckles and St. John the Baptist. In the last lesson, history, I told the story of Drake's voyage in the *Golden Hind* and my end was peace. All the little boys and girls looking as though they could never do a naughty deed or say a naughty word, went sailing westwards with me. I had my illustrations. In the best Truro tradition I scored a success. Most interested and most intelligent with questions were Freckles and St. John the Baptist, who appeared to bear no scrap of malice for their beating.

For four July weeks I struggled. My first cheque was hardly earned, and I sped to the bank with it. I forget the exact amount. It was something like four pounds, nineteen shillings and elevenpence. I remember the golden sovereigns sliding towards me on the little shovel. I immediately laid out my All. I bought Three Nuns tobacco for my father, a white blouse for my mother, a pair of suede gloves for Susan, a handsome Byron for myself, a pipe for Howard. It never occurred to me that the money should be used to live on, so accustomed was I, during my twenty years of life, to being provided for. It was old Mrs. Sargent, when I skipped down through the Rectory fields to the Hovel with my tale of gold y-spent, and a packet of her favourite peppermints, extra strongs, who put me in mind of this prosaic usage. She said, 'Anne, my handsome, what have 'ee got left to live on until next pay day?' and her whole person quaked with laughter under the folded hands. She would sit by the window in a low chair, her hands folded on her stomach, except when she used them to push her spectacles up to her forehead, so as to bring the naked eye to bear on her guest before delivering a potent word. No head mistress has been able to dislodge me from an airy perch with such a bump as old Mrs. Sargent; but this time nothing mattered. The blessed blessed holidays had come. The month of August. I have always enjoyed the harvest holiday but this one was celestial. I told my troubles to my brother Howard and the sea, and then I forgot all about standards three and four, and Mr. Boxhall, and the needlework cupboard into which I had

shoved everything and locked the door before a tangle of knitting and sewing could fall out.

But in September I had to return to the charge and I found myself no more effective for having, in the meantime, received news that I had passed the Teachers' Certificate Examination, and was, in the eyes of the Board of Education and the Cornwall Education Committee a fully qualified teacher. In fact I was about as fully qualified as a blackbird. Perhaps I was exceptionally unable; perhaps I had not a glittering eye. I know that many of my friends in my year at college did not have my troubles; but I know, too, that many had; and I know that it was purely a matter of large numbers in a class. If I were any god of power in English education I would not care what other reforms waited, I would not rest until I had reduced the number of children in charge of any one teacher in any one class. Adults can look after their own education. It is a matter of religion and music; of making and showing excellent films and plays; of beautiful pictures; of noble and comic literature; of building houses and cities satisfying to the imagination as well as to the body; of travel and freedom of intercourse. But in schools large numbers involve all the wrong methods from the start. Since the number was large the only means I had at my command was to interest the whole group by giving set lessons; whereas what the children needed was to be working for themselves. The wicked ones were good as long as they had enough to do, but how fast they worked and how fast they read! I was always wondering what the adventurous could do next. I almost wished the children were slower. Somebody once remarked that very few people can teach, but any firm female can make children learn. It seemed to me that I did not even have to be firm to make children learn; they would learn of themselves if they had opportunity. But there was so little room to move; there were too few books of insufficient variety. Materials were scanty. That children should sit in desks for most of the morning was still the rule. I have never taught children more full of energy or more intelligent. The naughty ones seemed to be bursting out of their suits with ingenuity and invention, their pockets bulged with marvels. But we always seemed to be veering towards the noisy instead of towards the quiet, which I, at that time, thought fitting.

My friend Vic working at Mount Charles found life easier but not too easy. We used to meet after school and consider each other's woes. I did not envy her for having girls only; to me the big girls at Treverbyn were the most terrifying of all my pupils. They sewed; and to my poor ignorance their sewing was entrusted. How we got along at all I do not know. The worst thing I did was when a charming, dark-haired, polite girl said she wanted a

front opening cut in the nightdress she was making. ‘Has anyone else reached the same stage?’ said I. Three others had. ‘Bring the nightdresses,’ I said. Thinking to save time by cutting four front openings at once, I laid the garments on the table flat on one another, seized the scissors to wield which, in the Treverbyn tradition, was the mistress’s prerogative, and cut. ‘There you are, Milly!’ I said, presenting the pretty girl with the top garment. And even as I said the words I knew what I had done. I had sawn through eight thicknesses. All four nightdresses now had back openings as well as front. They looked very funny as the girls held them up. ‘We shall have to run and fell up the back openings,’ said Milly. ‘Yes, run and fell them up for your lives,’ I said. We were like conspirators until those four nightdresses were finished and hustled out of school. I never heard what the parents said about them. Milly’s sense of artistry had been dared by the disaster. She had prevailed on me to cut two other slits in the back and had embroidered little patterns on the three joins. The other three girls had been content to ‘run and fell’.

When I first began teaching I was much troubled by what people would think and what they would say. How would my class be looking and behaving if anyone should come in? This weakness was partly the result of our system of training. During periods of school practice one never felt safe; the classroom door was always being opened by head mistress, class mistress or supervisor. Criticism—we even gave ‘criticism lessons’—was the essence of the system of training. I doubt whether the plan was good. It made us think outwardly of the class as a whole rather than inwardly of the separate children. I knew my class was often doing its best work when all the children were buzzing like bees and not being to a stranger’s eye ‘good’; but how I liked to see them being good, how I liked them all to be sitting up listening to me, intolerable creature that I was! Once when I was giving a scripture lesson on the Lord’s Prayer Mr. Boxhall walked in and found Freckles, St. John the Baptist and a few others playing instead of listening. He said the whole class must stay and have the lesson after school. I have never felt more furiously unforgiving than as I stood at four o’clock talking about, ‘And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us’. I nearly told my head master that he was my ghostly enemy. He was certainly the enemy of my peace of mind though he supported me strenuously. Singing lessons were a fearful ordeal for me because during that lesson, which I took with the whole upper school, Mr. Boxhall stood grimly by. I could not go a-maying with any zest while he was there, and most of our songs were about Going A-maying. Once we had a ‘Round’ which Mr. Boxhall chose. It was about poor Thomas Day:

Here lies poor Thom-as-Day
Dead; and turned to clay.

I used to give a rendering of this ditty to amuse my brother in the holidays. The sound of Thomas Day still brings back to my mind's eye Treverbyn school, even to the beans I set to germinate between damp blotting-paper and the sides of a glass jar. Poor beans! Di-cotyledons! Did I use the word di-cotyledons to the children I wonder? I expect I did, being foolish enough for anything. I was foolish enough and also eager enough. 'Anne tries' could have been written of me in a terminal report. But if I had not been able to go home for weekends I think I should have fallen beside my five wits. It was very lonely. As the autumn passed over to the winter the evenings were long in my little sitting-room at Penwithick. Mrs. Benjie Bassett, my landlady, was kindness itself; but I felt I was attempting work for which I was not man enough, or rather woman enough, to do well. In the old Gorran phrase I was like a flannel patch on a calico shimmy. Miss Hilda McDowell was the only person who put any heart into me. She had been tutor in physical training during my second year at Truro; for her occasional encouraging word and for her faith in education, I shall always be grateful. Myself, I was always losing faith. It seemed to me that almost anything would be better for children than the class-system I was struggling to maintain.

It must be remembered that many young teachers are still wrestling with large numbers in classes, although we have had thirty years—years interrupted by two wars, I admit—in which to carry out reform. To my father I did not talk much of school, for the simple reason that, during weekends, I wanted to forget it. Besides, my father hated large numbers himself, and had quietly taken a school in which there was no problem of the kind. But, rain or shine, while I worked at Treverbyn I never missed a weekend at home, although it was a wild enough bicycle journey some nights. Much of the way between Treverbyn and St. Austell lay in the very fang of the wind. As, on dark winter evenings, I cycled home, a smelly acetylene lamp lit my bicycle, making a glow-worm glimmer of light. But the dimness of illumination was not dangerous; after Hewas Water I rarely met other travellers. Near Treberrick I began to look out for my father and Susan who always walked a mile or so to meet me. The pleasure of hearing their voices, the glow of their companionship as we walked home together will always be with me, and my mother's welcome at the door when she heard our footsteps. She would come out wearing something pretty, seeming so unlike Treverbyn. Everything at Caerhays was unlike Treverbyn, although the places were only fifteen miles apart. Treverbyn was an unsheltered district; when it was raining the rain possessed earth and air.

Some Monday mornings I was so soaked with rain that I slipped out of my wet things in Mrs. Benjie's passage, and ran upstairs with nothing on, a proceeding which Mrs. B. considered not quite nice, but which was appreciated because it saved the stair-carpet. Treverbyn hedges did not give the shelter of Caerhays hedges. Caerhays hedges were full of comfort. Long may the hedges last! Stretches of hedge along the alternative route from St. Austell to Caerhays—the way by Pentewan, Pengruglar and Highlanes—have been replaced by ugly, barren, cement walls. When I see them I think of what Charlie Nicholls said to May Grose when he was building her house at Milford by Treveson Gate in Gorran parish. She thought she would like a wall round her garden. 'A wall's cold, my handsome,' said Charlie. 'Have a hedge! The wind do blow against a wall, and rebound, and shoot up over un like a kite. But a hedge do soak the wind in.'

Christmas came and went. In January, on my twenty-first birthday, my brother Howard sent me a complete Shakespeare, and in his letter he said he had heard there was to be a new assistant mistress in a school at Exmouth, only ten miles away from Exeter where he was teaching. I began to sing. Then I stopped. It would mean farewell to my weekends at Caerhays, farewell to Susan, and farewell to Cornwall except in the holidays. However, I said I would apply and told Mr. Boxhall I might leave Treverbyn at Easter. He was kind; he even praised me, and I have a weakness for praise. I can drink it in foaming glasses. From then onwards Treverbyn began to improve; garments were made, children grew accustomed to me. February skies are lovely over Treverbyn, clear-washed, delicate, shimmering. The larks began to sing and of all the places in which I have lived larks are most jubilant over Treverbyn, Stenalees, Bugle and Roche. They toss themselves up in an ecstasy of aspiration, higher, higher, singing with all their might between the bare uplands and the sky. I began to feel that wooded country would stifle me after this free, scented air. The furze flowered in March, spicy, nutty, with a firm texture in the clear wing-petals. Hooded, the furze flowers laughed at the rain. I liked to walk out at sunset, and see the sky-green colour lying in lakes between the streaked clouds, purple or fiery on the horizon. From the top of Hensbarrow or of Roche Rock I could survey my domain, looking far out over different levels and plains of dissolving beauty to the coast north and the coast south. Near at hand the fields and hedges with their duns and browns and greys were a foil to the glory of the sky. Then all the small delicate flowers began to come out. I suppose the hermit of Roche Rock, whose chapel is there to remind us of him, watched the flowers in his day. I left Treverbyn at Easter just as the celandines, the sorrel and the strawberry flowers below the rock were giving place to primroses,

wood anemones and bluebells. I did not spend a summer at Roche, or taste the great juicy blackberries that grow on the moors until years later when Harold Harvey, who married my friend Marjorie Pascoe, became head master of Roche school, and I went to stay with them in the new white schoolhouse which was built for them near the hermitage on the rock.

CHAPTER VIII

DEVONSHIRE INTERLUDE: EXMOUTH

Red you are, and rich you are,
And wild you are, and broad you are,
And loved you be; but ah! to me
Cornwall is lovelier far, said she.

To Devon

Although I was twenty-one, I had only once been out of Cornwall and that for the space of three weeks only. Now I was to be interviewed for a job in what to me was one of the foreign parts—Exmouth, in Devonshire; and I was to spend the weekend with the family of my brother's beloved Mary. Her father was an inspector of schools, and I feared he might be disposed to look upon me with a gimlet eye. He would know the points of a likely candidate for the post of assistant mistress in a girls' school as well as my friend John Grose knew the points of a sheep.

But Mr. Bicknell not only had a reassuring manner, he had a reassuring person. He was a man with the most purely jocund appearance I have ever seen, and he had a soul to match. No one could have been a greater contrast to Mr. Boxhall! Whereas Mr. Boxhall was spare and saturnine, Mr. Bicknell was sanguine and round. His name was Samuel. Mr. Boxhall's Christian name I never knew; in all probability he never had one unless, perhaps, he was named William. Mr. Bicknell seemed all Christian name. I was to discover later that he was learned as well as wise; that he had faith in children; that he loved the world and was religious in it. On this first meeting I could only be thankful for him; he looked his best carving a leg of lamb for his large family, and twinkling at me over his napkin which he tucked in somewhere between his chin and his Falstaffian waist.

Unwittingly he put me on my mettle for the interview. I heard him tell Howard he was afraid the Managers would think I looked too young. Would they indeed? thought I. I placed my new hat firmly on my head and made up my mind I would look older than a retired schoolmistress I knew. I remembered the look of her, and how she never laughed, how to indicate amusement she gave a little breathe out, and said, 'ha, ha, ha', and took a little breathe in and said, 'he!' Howard and I practised this dainty mirth

going down in the train to Exmouth until the entire coach must have heard our laughter.

Of the interview I remember little except that the Rev. Thomas McClelland, a parson exactly like his name, who was in the chair, asked me if I was the candidate engaged to a Mr. Pye; and that I had an almost irresistible impulse to say, 'Do you mean Mr. Pigeon, or Mr. Lick-and-Taty?' I refrained and concentrated on trying to decide whether the Rev. Thomas wanted his candidate to be engaged to Mr. Pye or not. I decided that he did and responded with a modest blush that I was. Soon after this they told me I was appointed, and I said goodbye and tried to go out through a cupboard door. I have never been good at distinguishing the right door in moments of elation. I need no rum to make me drunk. Howard was delighted at my news as we wanted to be near each other; but he was concerned about my engagement to Mr. Pye. He asked me whatever made me say yes when I could so easily and truthfully have said no. I told him I had no idea, and we went down on the Maer—the sandhills beyond the coastguard station, where, in those days, there was no sea-wall and no promenade. There grew by the shore, blue-green sea holly and sparse bents; and yellow-horned poppies on the cliff. We made up all sorts of stories about Mr. Pye and me, and of how his heart would fail him when he learnt that our engagement was broken off. I never heard anything more of this fabulous man; nor did I ever find out to which candidate he was really engaged.

My brother and I went to tea with Miss Harborough, gentlest of women, who was to be my new head mistress. While dispensing deliciously thin bread-and-butter and fairy-cakes she broke the thread of a sentence to say, 'Mr. Treneer, would you like an egg?' I told Howard it was because of his lean and hungry look and the glitter in his blue eyes. 'Mr. Treneer, would you like an egg?' became, for some unfathomable reason that no family can ever explain, a joke.

I went back to Treverbyn till the end of the spring term. Then I exchanged the quick, bright air of the Cornish uplands for the softness of South Devon. I felt at first like an old lady I knew who came back to Cornwall from an up-the-country visit. She said, 'Iss, 'twas all right up there, my handsome; but I couldn' breathey.' I felt the same in Exmouth. Often I couldn't breathey. But it was late spring when I arrived, breaking quickly that year into summer. As I walked and bicycled about the countryside I felt in some way luxurious in my new blue, terra-cotta, green and blossomy land. The first time I walked up the Otter Valley from Budleigh Salterton to Otterton, and saw the cows knee deep in the river

under the trees I thought that summer had come to stay for good, so settled and content it seemed with the mingled coolth and sunny heat. I loved the Otter for itself, but also because Coleridge had been a child at Ottery.

The estuary of the Exe had for me no adventitious glory of association. I loved it purely for itself. It was as changeable as I. Sky and tide; wind, rain and sun; the season and the time of day or night transfigured it. I would walk to Lypstone by the railway path when the water was still as satin with a grey shot light beneath the blue; the wind might freshen, and fleets of tiny wavelets charm my ear; great clouds might come up, their dark masses casting indigo shadows on the estuary and the long rhythmic lines of the hills behind Starcross. When the tide was out I walked by the mud; but even the wet mud-banks reflected splendours. The splendour was most dramatic nearer the sea at sunset in October and November. But at all months of the year it is grand to walk from Budleigh Salterton along the cliffs westward to Exmouth and see the estuary spread out to take the eye. For this view one should keep up on the high cliffs and descend to the level only when forced at the end. But for walking close to the sea one can go down at low tide to Littleham Cove and walk bare foot on sand right down to Exmouth Pier. I used to like to walk west along the sands with a distorted sun reflected in the wet sand, keeping always in advance of me so that I should never be so impious as to walk on his face.

Another favourite walk was by the narrow uphill lanes—there was hardly a house beyond Hulham Road in those days—to Black Hill and Woodbury Common, from which there was a view of the coast so wide that red sandstone gave way to the glittering cliffs about Lyme Regis. Some of my walks with friends were far afield. I remember in particular a walk to Branscombe and back by the cliffs; and often we went to Sir Walter Raleigh's birthplace at Hayes Barton. Sometimes we went by boat to the Warren to be saturated with air and sun all day; or we took Susan's favourite walk along the sea-wall to Dawlish, turned inland for a mile or two and then down Smugglers Lane to the second sea-wall which led to Teignmouth. We liked to take a boat to Shaldon and walk up Fuzzy Dee. In another direction, after taking the launch to Starcross all sorts of pleasures were open to us. A favourite excursion was to take our bicycles to Starcross and go by devious ways and villages to the top of Haldon to see the world, and spy out the distant cathedral riding Exeter.

In Exeter were Howard and Mary, married now, and set up in a little house of their own. I envied them their little house and the fun they had together; but I was no longer very jealous. Mary was a sister-in-law one

could not help loving, and when Friday night came I often went dashing up to Exeter to spend the weekend with them. And I, in my turn, could have visitors in my lodgings at Rill Terrace where I lived with Miss Emily Salter. She was the eldest daughter of a famous Exmouth schoolmaster, Mr. Charles Salter, an old man over seventy-five, but still teaching, still wearing knickerbockers and bicycling stockings, mascot of the Exmouth football team whose play he watched every Saturday, a splendid shrimper, and one who used to boast, as he waggled his beard at me, and gave me advice about teaching, that he had caned all the substantial tradesmen in Exmouth. Only the tradesmen in the poorer little shops had not been caned by him. That was why they were poor. He used to call in and see us every morning and share our bacon and eggs. As he opened the door Em would say, 'Fath-er' on a downward note, and in he would come. I had a little bed-sitting-room with the only really nice bureau I have ever written at; but I had all meals with Em and breakfast with Em and 'father'. Em had the clearest brown eyes. If you can imagine a chapel-going sparrow Em would be that sparrow. She was a Plymouth Brother; but she did not try to convert me. I thought it strange when I had been there some little time and she had really grown quite fond of me that she should not bat an eyelid at the idea that since I was not one of the Elect I should go to hell. Quite cheerfully she would see me going off to a dance believing that I should howl for it some day.

Susan came to stay, and my father arranged his summer holiday so that he could spend a week with me. After school we used to go for evening trips on the *Duke* or *Duchess*. My father loved trips. On Saturday we went by train to Camelford, and by a brake with four horses to Tintagel. On a dizzy crag high above the sea I knew that I was Cornish, not a Devonian. Miss Salter admired my father; he had such charming manners she said. I always thought that this compliment was a little hit at my two abominable brothers, Mr. Howard and Mr. Stanley as she called them; for I am sure she never knew what they would do or say next; nor, alas! did I. They found Miss Salter irresistibly guileless. They would tell frightful stories, taller and taller lies every minute, while she, gazing at them with bright brown eyes, had a naughty feeling that she was hearing more about life than a nice Plymouth Brother should. She never asked Stan to say Grace, but she used to ask Howard. 'Mr. Howard, would you ask the blessing?' Em had texts even in the lavatory.

At school I was still as uncertain as the weather, yet as fanatical as a dervish. I taught the girls in the top group, girls of about twelve to fourteen years of age. I liked them; but I liked the idea of physical training even more. I suppose I had the instincts of a dictator, for I loved to see them all in

the playground moving rhythmically at my command. This was the 'hips-firm' period of physical training. Rain or shine we danced and skipped, and marched, and deeply-breathed-in. Other mistresses might think the weather inclement; but not me. Out we must go. Some children must have loathed it, but they put on a cheerful countenance. In other lessons though less fanatical I was no less dogmatic. Only in painting would I let them work their own will, not knowing how to induce them to work mine. I may have half-killed them with physical training, but I spared them the worst horrors of Art. Much of the art lesson having been taken up with the operation of giving out paint-boxes, drawing-books, water and paint-rags, I used to say, giggling to myself at the memory of Truro and Miss Peat, 'Don't be afraid of a little colour girls,' and they would go splashing to it. Some of the children merely made a mess and I sympathized with them; but some occasionally produced what seemed to me startling revelations. I had a passing insight into what education could really mean. Some little Tooze or some little Smerdon or some little Pigeon would show me that she had something within her to unfold at which I had not remotely guessed. But the bell would ring; we collected the paint-boxes, the drawing-books, the paint-rags and such water as had not been spilt and I would wrap myself round again with the false ideas I had of my function. I must make my pupils learn. Even in poetry I would not let direct and lovely things have their own way with the children. I had to be pointing out beauty. How I taught in those years! With what idiot assumption that I was doing right! If a child would not work I kept her in. Once when I had kept a child in, her mother bounced into my room. She could not fix me with her eye because she had a squint which glanced off the blackboard to the right of me. She shouted: 'Who dew 'ee think you be, keeping the children in? You baint nort but a gert girl yourself.'

When it came to needlework it was too true that I was nort but a gert girl. Here, as at Treverbyn, all my confidence forsook me. Sewing and knitting prevented my happiness and changed the whole course of my life. At Exmouth, not only had we to make things, but we had to order the materials—the blue, and green, and yellow zephyr for blouses and dresses; the nainsook for nightdresses; the calico for knickers. Bales of stuff came. We had to make it into clothes and sell the finished garments for the price we had paid for the material. No scheme could have been devised more likely to plunge me into despair. Ranks of figures have always made me shudder; yards of green zephyr have never made me say to myself, 'That would make a pretty dress.' Now I had to face both figures and stuff.

If I could have done as I did in painting, if I could have allowed the girls cheerfully to experiment, I might have survived. Yet I think not. A technical

business like dressmaking needs first-class technical teaching. This is realized in schools now where the unskilled no longer wield the scissors. As it was I relied, in cutting out, on Miss Peat's diagrams; it was not for a couple of years that I bethought me of buying some paper patterns. I managed better with the patterns. But I loathed the cheap cotton stuff we used. When I tore it into lengths it made a hideous rending noise, and it smoked. I have the smell of that smoke in my nostrils yet and if, as I have been told, it is a china-clay product which stiffens cheap cottons, so much the worse for china-clay. I see myself standing by a yellow varnished table, surrounded by girls anxious to help. But they all wanted to go too quick for me. Cut out and laid flat knickers look like a map. I could never see which edge should join which so as to make anything so recognizable as legs. Clever girls would seize the maps and make the whole thing come right in the twinkling of an eye. Slow girls would get the different joins inside out. I have never seen anything to equal the confusion and griminess of some of the knickers. Yet even under my poor direction some girls, naturally dainty-fingered and constructive, made for themselves clothes—blouses and nightdresses. We even made a frock or two.

I can never look back to these days without remembering a shy, dark-haired girl called Ruth Gibbs—one of the most able, yet modest, unassuming children it has ever been my lot to teach. She was earnest in everything, not playful. Some souls seem to be born older than others. Ruth did things quietly, deftly; she had a mind which instantly perceived. She would show me how things went in a way that might not wound my vanity. At thirteen she was more mature than her mistress at twenty-one. I longed for her to take a scholarship which she could have done with ease; but for some reason she would not enter. She worked as a clerk later, and did not live to marry or grow old. She liked to sit in a certain corner of the classroom, a little remote except from a fair-haired friend named Florence.

It was Ruth who taught the whole class to make gloves. I had embarked on gloves thinking that thumbs and fingers would be less difficult to do than heels and toes. We had a peaceful lesson during which the girls knitted their cuffs and I read a story aloud. Then Ruth reached the point at which a thumb must sprout. We pored over the directions in the book, I quite bemused, Ruth clear as daylight. 'Shall I take the book and try, and you go on reading?' she asked. She retired to her place under the window and knitted a thumb, then she knitted four fingers. As all the other girls reached the danger points they went to Ruth. Pretty nearly everybody in the class completed a nice pair of gloves and someone made a pair for me, though I have no idea to this day how a thumb becomes a thumb.

Just as the gloves were nearing completion we had a visit from a woman inspector, a Miss Castelle. Miss Castelle used to arrive enveloped in a golf cape which seemed to give an air of immense authority. She was a large woman, dark and ruddy. I always quite undeservedly won her praise. For though I never kept my record book up to date, and Miss Castelle was scrupulous about record books, the school was so built that she could never reach my classroom without warning. My colleagues teaching nearer the front door always bore the first brunt and sportingly sent me news of the Approach. Then, under cover of the lid of my desk, and aided by my ready fancy, I would hastily fill in the little daily spaces in the book. By the time Miss Castelle appeared I would be busily teaching.

‘May I see your record book?’ she said on one occasion.

‘Yes, Miss Castelle,’ I replied, and produced the tome.

‘Ah! you keep it up to date, I see.’

Without a blush of shame I took this tribute to my faculty of speed under pressure, and she turned to the class with whom I felt firmly in league.

‘Gloves. Oh, yes! I see they are knitting gloves. What method have you used?’

Speed under pressure will enable me to bring a record book up to date, but will not bring a ready or convincing lie to my lips. Verbally I am very truthful. ‘Father, I cannot tell a lie’, has often made me laugh as I have made desperate and damaging admissions. I told Miss Castelle exactly how the gloves had grown into existence.

‘Excellent,’ she said to my extreme surprise. ‘Excellent! The girls should work out things for themselves. Most teachers teach too much.’

I made great game with the other mistresses on the staff over this story. Even gentle Miss Harborough, the head mistress, who was delicately fastidious as to personal honour—she did not like the tale of my doings with the record book—was amused by the story of the gloves.

But although I had come off successfully with this piece of bluff, needlework continued to worry me. I could not be happy over it nor over the sums in the arithmetic book about how to read a gas meter and an electric meter. I suppose if one had to read a gas meter or die one would do it; but in normal living why not rely on the gas-man who calls obligingly for the purpose? I hated that arithmetic book. It filled the mind with dark suspicions that a person would always be cheated unless she worked out everything to

the nearest penny. I determined to free myself of both needlework and arithmetic for life.

Miss Passmore, when I, in consternation at Treverbyn, had consulted her about giving up teaching, had advised me to change from elementary to secondary school work. I could then, she said, choose to teach the subjects I liked best. She did not remind me that this advice was the same she had given two years before when I had obstinately, in choosing Truro, made the course impracticable. She now patiently tried to show how I could yet free myself of needlework. I had wanted to teach in a village school if I taught at all; but I could see now that for this work I was not gifted in the right directions. I have never felt much urge to do my neighbours good, and a village schoolmistress should be sociably-minded. It is not enough for her to run with the wind shouting poems. Miss Passmore, who knew I liked learning, advised me to be systematic and read for a London external degree. When I went to live at Exmouth she said I had better attend classes at Exeter University College. For months I did not trouble; I have never liked having my reading directed. Besides, although school was hard, games were good. And there was every kind of game to be played at Exmouth. But in September 1913, after one particularly unlikeable day at school, I went up to Exeter, found the ugly building of the University College tucked into Gandy Street and, in a great flutter, approached the office of the Registrar. Mr. Woodbridge smiled at me. He made it seem a perfectly natural thing to do—to come to inquire about classes and read for a degree. In his friendly absence of officialdom, in his easy way of removing real and imaginary difficulties, he typified something in the young and struggling University College which fostered it, so that it grew well. There were comparatively few students doing university work in 1913. Today, 1947, with Principal Murray at its head, the college has become the University College of the South-West, with immediate hope of a charter and independence, with a splendid estate, halls of residence, the nucleus of worthy buildings, and such a staff that university studies are available in every branch of learning. Exeter has peculiar claim to become a university city. Within the crumbled outline of its walls, not far from the ghost of the ruined castle on the Red Mound, stands the living Cathedral Church of St. Peter, its massive, almost squat outward strength enclosing the rhythm of its pointed arches. Exeter soars within proportions of enduring symmetry; and with this symmetrical endurance goes an evanescent music of floating bells, and flowers and trees. Exeter is dappled in June. In moonlight it is serene. I remember hearing Bach's St. Matthew Passion in Holy Week in the cathedral and, after the Bishop's blessing—'the Lord lift up the light of His countenance and shine

upon you and give you peace’—I bicycled to Exmouth, and saw the moonlight lying on the estuary as I looked down on it from the top of Exton Hill. The situation of Exeter is gracious for students. Its river, which rises in Exmoor, broadens into a distant pattern of water visible from the top of the Norman towers of the cathedral. Up the river the Danes swept. King Alfred still seems royally steadfast in Exeter. To learn Old English there, to read the Anglo-Saxon *Chronicle*, is to read and learn in a city where the Danes are present in place-names as well as in the laconic prose of the *Chronicle*. Among the cathedral treasures is the Exeter Book, a collection of Old English poems. The spirit of poetry is preserved in the enduring vellum and handsome script of a thousand years ago. Historic buildings of all periods, but particularly of that period when the wool trade most flourished, composed the city when I was a student. And even today, in spite of the depredations of the German terror, and of our own more persistent and insidious vandalism, much remains. What is lost is the old cohesion of glory and squalor in the labyrinth of twisted alley, and mounting step, and inserted church; of Georgian curving spaciousness and squeezed Elizabethan daring. A wall would take a leap. We lack all daring now. Council houses are anything but daring. We never take a tiny allowed space and see how cleverly we can build a good little suitable house in it. No; we encroach and sprawl on the fields. Nothing girds us in, no little sonnet-plot.

I was glad to go to Exeter. For me, freely to learn at night, became a wonderful mitigation of having to teach by day. I invested Mr. Fletcher, Mr. Schopp, Mr. Harte and Mr. Sager with haloes of glory, and arrived at Mr. Sager’s first botany class armed with a rusty razor which Miss Salter had lent me. She kept it to cut her corns with. Mr. Sager shouted with laughter at the sight of it. He made the laboratory resound, while my confusion urged him on to fresh excesses. He pretended that I had come to cut his head off; he cowered. I began to wish I could cut off his head before he had finished. He was a facetious man; but most lucid in instruction. Under him even I—once provided with a bright razor—became neat-fingered in cutting and staining sections, and quick-eyed in perceiving what was revealed by the microscope. I even drew; I became patient of classification; I paid attention not only to the sound but to the sense of the words as Mr. Sager talked of the ‘reducing division of the chromosomes’ or discoursed on ‘the mutating evening primrose discovered by Hugo De Fries in a de-serted po-ta-to field near Amsterdam’.

Latin and French I enjoyed more, and Mr. Schopp and Mr. Fletcher gave me hours of extra time. I have never been generous with time myself and I am still amazed in looking back at the allowance made me. In Latin I

outlived a succession of evening students who would begin and then drop off. Yet Mr. Fletcher not only continued the class for my sole benefit, but doubled the length of it. My pleasure in Latin was intense. To pass from desperate dealings with my stock book—I had a stock book for needlework—in which nothing would come right, to the study of a language in which, with attention, everything would come not only right, but often exquisitely right, was as good as a plunge in a limpid stream when one was hot. My work in Exeter made me see my school duties in better proportion; I withdrew a little, to my own advantage and, I am sure, to the benefit of the children. No notion has been more pernicious in the schools than that which supposes that teachers merely teach. The apprenticing of youth to a master of an art, trade or profession was far sounder; it discouraged dabbling on the part of pupils and preserved the master alive.

I began to find school more tolerable; but not so tolerable but that I was always glad to leave it to catch the Exeter train at 4.30. Miss Milford and I used to put the clock on a little so as to make sure of catching our train. Collins, the caretaker, would say, ‘That dratted clock, that dratted clock! Fast again! Yew dew never know where yewm tew with that clock.’ But soon he began to guess where he was tew. He began to mutter, ‘That clock dew go under more than his own steam that clock dew.’ And then, one term, we came back to find that Collins had defeated us. He had skied the clock. So high up on the wall had he placed it that none of us could reach up to add steam to time. ‘Show his feace up there that clock dew,’ said Collins to me. Miss Milford was furious. She was tall, with an elegant figure, a clear colour, dark hair and grey eyes which could be very scornful. ‘That man Collins,’ she said, ‘runs this school.’ She had a way of saying, ‘that man Collins’; or ‘that child Endicott’ in a tone which annihilated the very idea of Man or Child. She dressed well. Her beautiful colouring in winter against a fox fur is one of my pleasantest memories of Exmouth Church Girls’ School.

Not quite. My pleasantest memories of all the schools in which I have taught are memories of breaking up. It is almost worth while being a teacher to share with children the joyous sense of end of term. Old scores are cancelled. There is a giving of gifts, a shaking of hands, a relaxation of rule, a bustle and a chatter, and a benevolent glow of goodwill between teachers and taught which will drive away care. There were forms to be filled in though. Miss Leyman, Miss Milford, Miss Carter and I would sit round Miss Harborough and perform the frightful feat known as ‘doing up the registers and filling in Form 9’. How I ground my teeth over forms; it is a wonder I have a tooth left. By the time we had concluded our operation with the

registers and the forms it was always too late to catch a Cornish train. I used to go up to Exeter, spend a convivial evening with Howard and Mary and catch the mail train two or three hours after midnight. Bicycling through the Exeter streets in the quiet of the night was an experience I always enjoyed, together with the grand sense of triumph and freedom when I and my bicycle were safely aboard and the train went gliding out. Beautiful journeys I have had. One in particular I remember at a Whitsuntide, with all the country from Plymouth to St. Austell bathed in an early summer radiance. Light shone translucent through the early leaves of beech and oak as we looked down on the woods from the train; shadows of trees lay cool on the fields; deep-rooted bluebells and cock-robins were dewy in the ferns. At St. Austell Station Susan was waiting and came dancing along the platform in a pink frock. She had bicycled up from Caerhays to meet me and we rode home together down the Pentewan valley with all the birds singing to us as if we were queens; up Pentewan Hill, out to Highlanes, down Rescassa Hill, a few minutes to wonder afresh at the magic of Portluney; then up Portluney Hill, past Pound and Barton to see my father coming along under the sycamores by the lodge to meet us; and so home to my mother and breakfast in the kitchen. My father was always a little remote when subjected to demonstrativeness; but my mother warmly returned kiss for kiss. She would laugh for joy to have us home.

CHAPTER IX

EXETER INTERLUDE: WAR-TIME

Long quest to kill the delicate body;
Shot with cannon or culverin,
Stabbed with bayonet, pierced with pike,
Pounded with iron and hoof: yet thin,
So thin, so thin the delicate tissue,
Delicate tissue guarded with skin,
Touched to the quick with a prickle or pin.

*History: On Viewing A Collection of
Historical Weapons: Edinburgh*

It was when I was going home for a summer holiday that the fear of war first struck at me. I had always heard of war. My father, keenly interested in European affairs, had dreaded it, and had talked to idle minds of how to avoid it. He, who was religious, knew too well that, although many desired peace, so few cared for the things that made for true peace, that strong defence was essential. I had lightly dismissed my father's concern as one of his little oddnesses; he was in many ways unlike other people I knew. But when Mr. Kneebone, with whom I was driving home one day from St. Austell in July 1914, said as we passed St. Mewan, 'What about the murder of this Arch-Duke, Anne? Do 'ee think it will lead to war?' I suddenly knew with an awful pang that this war would come. I said, 'Don't 'ee be so silly, Mr. Kneebone. All you men d' think about is war. I believe you d' want war.' But I was talking to hearten myself. I have talked much nonsense to hearten myself in war-time since then.

Caerhays was looking lovelier than ever; Susan and I had never been more up in the air. We were expecting Howard and Mary; we were expecting Cap'n and Edith; there was a rumour that Stan and Kate might come. But it was the war that came. I was standing by the kitchen table one morning in August when my mother opened a letter from Cap'n; she began reading it aloud, stopped suddenly, and finished reading it to herself. She said, 'He has volunteered,' and went into the garden. Then Stan volunteered and was gone; Howard was rejected on medical grounds; Maurice manufactured chemicals in America. Boys we knew in the village and round the farms volunteered and were gone; the four Castle boys were gone;

Charley Rosling was gone from the rectory. All went away and were gone, all the young men we had grown up with.

Then rumours came and grew. There was no wireless in that war. Jabez brought rumours; the papers printed rumours. For Susan it was worse than for me; I have never been so tender-hearted as Susan, nor was my heart so much engaged. I was ashamed of my hard heart for I threw myself into study with a frenzied desire to forget. I deliberately and selfishly tried to shut my imagination up; to build up walls of history and English, botany, Latin and French round the sensitive centre of my mind so as to keep misery out. News of the death of my friends; unavoidable knowledge of what was happening in Flanders—‘With man’s blood paint the ground, gules, gules’:—I read the line in *Timon of Athens* and cried for a day not for the actuality, but for the piercing bitterness of recognition the words forced on me. I never talked of the war; I never helped; I never nursed. When I reproached myself I also told myself passionately that if everyone were as selfish as I there could never be a war. Each living soul would love life too well to dare to try to kill another, I did not then know Coleridge’s *Fears in Solitude*:

Therefore evil days
Are coming to us, O my countrymen!
And what if all-avenging Providence,
Strong and retributive, should make us know
The meaning of our words, force us to feel
The desolation and the agony
Of our fierce doings?

I did not then know this poet’s prophetic warning. But I was beginning to have an inkling; I was slowly learning to distinguish poetry from rhetoric; I was beginning to see how poetry could bring home to the soul the horror of certain deeds, but how rhetoric might spawn them. What did those who mouthed speeches care that a man might die for it? One man? Millions of men! But death is obscured by numbers. Our hearts are so small they can only mourn for one.

The only practical bit of work I did was on the land. In the holidays I became a workman at Caerhays Barton and, in August 1915, Mr. Kneebone set me to cut ‘dishels’—‘milky dishels’—as we called the mauve-coloured thistles with silky, downy fruits which infested the fields. I had a hook and I first attacked the dishels in the field by the church. I cut with such furious, freshman’s energy that Willie Rundle, a boy I had been at school with at Caerhays, and who was cutting dishels in another field, was moved with compassion. He waved to me to come his way, and he came towards me. We

met in the churchyard, and sat down on the granite kerb of Mr. Bellamy's grave. Willie said:

'You mustn't work like that, Anne. You'm working too hard. You must stop a bit every now and then and take a titch-pipe, and whet yer hook.' He took out his whetstone and whetted my hook, and we lingered in the sun. My father considered Willie Rundle a naturally intellectual boy, and had hoped he might have opportunity of learning. But further schooling was not possible for him. He worked at the Barton; but he had not the right kind of intelligence for farming, and was too delicate for war. He died quite young and people used to say his ghost haunted Caerhays churchyard.

Like me, Howard worked at the Barton during his war-time holidays—he was refused for the Army until the last war year. At the farm he did more varied work than I. Old Jim Strout, who did not speak very plain, used to call him 'Howlard', or 'Howlard, Sir', when he remembered to pay tribute to what he considered Howlard's superior erudition. One day Jim and Howlard were driving bullocks when one bullock put down his head and threatened Jim in a surly fashion. Jim, who had his stick in his hand, turned on the bullock and said, 'Horn me, would 'ee? Horn me, would 'ee?' and added a few expletives.

Howard, who saw Mr. Kneebone coming, said, 'Steady on, Jim, here's the Boss coming.'

Jim said, 'I don't care bloody hell for the Boss. Horn me, would 'ee?'

By this time Mr. Kneebone was within hearing. He said, 'Now then, Jim; now then!'

Jim said, 'Oh, Boss, I didn't know you was so near. Run along in front Howlard, Sir, will 'ee? Run along and head 'em off.'

But one of Howard's best times was when he went to Truro market with Mr. Kneebone to buy some pigs for the Squire. Mr. Kneebone bid for the pigs; they were knocked down to him, and he and Howard went down to Tregonning's for some lunch, and to do some other business. When they came to take the pigs home they weren't there.

'Where be my pigs?' said Mr. Kneebone.

'Your pigs?' said an attendant. 'Your pigs? I didn't know they was your pigs. Chap with one leg just been and took 'em off in his cart.'

'After un, Howard; after un, my son!' said Mr. Kneebone, who had a game leg. 'We shall lose they pigs.'

Howard hopped on to somebody's bicycle, received directions, and was off on the chase. Pretty soon he came up with the man who had the pigs netted in his cart.

'Hi,' he said, 'stop. They'm Mr. Kneebone's pigs. He bought 'em for Squire Williams, C'raze Castle.'

'Squire Williams and C'raze Castle be damned!' said the man. 'These pigs was knocked down to me.'

'Come on back to the auctioneer and prove it then,' said my brother. 'Mr. Kneebone d' think he bought the pigs.'

Back they went, and the auctioneer was found. He consulted his book.

'Iss,' he said, 'they'm Mr. Kneebone's pigs. Bought for Mr. Williams, Caerhays Castle.'

The pigs were transferred to the Barton wagon, and Howard and Mr. Kneebone began the fifteen miles drive home. Both smoked peaceably, with Mr. Kneebone saying at intervals:

'He meant to have they pigs you know, Howard. Another hour and he'd have got clean off with they pigs.'

'If you hadn' been pretty spry you know, Howard, he'd have had they pigs. He meant to get clean off with they pigs you know, Howard.'

Mr. Kneebone had no opinion of women doing farmwork. It was clean outside the tradition in which he had been brought up. He kept me on outlying light work, not mingling much with the men. Once, though, I was employed helping Howard and Nicky Hennah to put a wooden paling round a rick which the cattle were getting at. I can see Nicky now and hear him saying as he screwed up one eye and squinted along a shaft of wood, 'A little bit more this way, Howard, will ee? Aw! Just a little bit more t'other way, Anne. Tha's av ut. No need to be too particular. 'Tis only a temporary job.' After that everything in the family was a temporary job.

It was during one of these summer holidays that I had news that I had passed the London Intermediate Examination. My father was pleased. He liked any academic success that came to any of his children. We used to say we had to pass examinations in order to get a letter from him. He wrote in formal, compact and precise English, and once sent back a careless letter of mine corrected. I had now to consider which studies I should drop and which continue. I found I wanted to continue all five; all had their allurements. Had I any Greek I should have chosen classics. History I had

always enjoyed. In the end I chose French and English—these two languages could then be taken in combination for the London Honours Degree. I chose them partly because Mr. Schopp wrote and suggested them, but more because of Chenier's poem, *La Jeune Captive* and Molière's *L'Avare*.

I had read *La Jeune Captive* at school and had not been particularly moved by it. But that first year of the war I learnt it by heart while cutting dishels. I used to say it aloud, putting into the saying of it all the pity for people in the world of which I could never speak to anyone; pouring into it the energy of spirit which should have gone into the practical work of alleviating distress; of being, like my mother, a consolation. But I could not be like my mother. Instead I would be out in Church-close in the sun, now swinging my hook, now pausing to say:

Je ne suis qu'au printemps, je veux voir la moisson
Et comme le soleil, du saison en saison
Je veux achever mon année.
Brillante sur ma tige, et l'honneur du jardin,
Je n'ai vu luire encore que les feux du matin,
Je veux achever ma journée.

O Mort! Tu peux attendre; éloigne, éloigne-toi. . . .

Contrasting with this poetry was Molière. I cannot help loving comedy, all kinds of comedy. I have not fine eyes like Elizabeth Bennet but, like her, I dearly love a laugh. I had not read Ben Jonson then, so Molière was to me something entirely new. Out in the fields with no other person near, I would be chanting *La Jeune Captive* at one moment, and at the next I would enact Harpagon. Outside Shakespeare I had never come across any speech so truly dramatic, so comprehensive of poor, pitiful, human passion, and of corrosive evil, as Harpagon's when he is literally beside himself because he has lost his darling money. Most drama is so thin. But Harpagon! How ridiculous, how pitiful, how tremendous he is, snatching a whole audience into his life:

De grâce si l'on sait des nouvelles de mon voleur, je supplie qu'on m'en dise. N'est-il point caché là parmé vous?

I would put down my hook, catch myself by the arm, shake myself and say:

Qui est-ce? Arrête. Rends-moi mon argent, coquin . . . Ah! c'est moi. Mon esprit est troublé, et j'ignore où je suis, qui je suis, et ce que je fais.

With what tenderness I would murmur to myself, with a pleasure I still cannot begin to explain, ‘Mon pauvre argent; mon cher ami!’ Perhaps it is that Molière is nearest Shakespeare in his ability to catch in his net of words the up-rising suggestions which spring from the quick of the mind when some passion makes it go faster and faster until, like a child being run off his feet, he leaves the earth. Molière keeps his feet; he is not a poet exactly. Or is he? What speed he has, not through two, three or four layers of fleeting and pictorial suggestion like Shakespeare, but in sequence. ‘Je me meurs, je suis mort, je suis enterré.’ The lean, spare words shoot the mind forwards.

I never regretted choosing French. French literature clears up the fuzziness of young minds. Claritas! I love a sparkling wine. At first, apart from attendance at Miss Major’s lectures in Old English, I gave nearly all my time to French literature. Mr. Schopp invited me to his house, and he and his wife and little daughter, Bérénice, became my friends. The work we did had little relation to the college courses. It became private and, alas for Mr. Schopp, unpaid tuition. We read in the garden, in the study, and on the beach at Exmouth by Orcombe Point, where the Schopps had a beach hut. When I felt guilty at taking so much of another person’s free time Mr. Schopp would smile under his drooping moustache and say, in the slightly guttural tones which he had never lost—he was a German by birth though he had lived in England since the age of eighteen or so, and had married a Yorkshire wife—that he prepared his lectures with me. He would arrive on the Maer of a summer evening burdened with tomes and dictionaries. I never caught his enthusiasm for philology; but the poetry to which our studies in words gave me the key was the purest pleasure. Not to have read the *Song of Roland*, and the *Poems* of Villon; not to have lingered over Du Bellay and Ronsard would have been to have missed some of the choicest old excellent vintages. Much has faded from my memory but much remains. When I say to myself the sonnet beginning: ‘Heureux qui, comme Ulysse, a fait un beau voyage’, the poetry is mingled with the sound of bees in the flowers in the Schopp’s garden; with Mrs. Schopp’s voice calling us to tea on the table by the window overlooking an apple tree bearing huge red apples. In spring Mr. Schopp used to go round helping the bees; he would stand on a ladder, his head among the flowering boughs, pollinating his fruit trees with a paintbrush. I hear the sound of Exmouth waves as I re-read the *Song of Roland*, recall the gritty sand that sometimes blew in our eyes and into the midriff of the books. I can hear the disgusted tones of my three little nieces—Dorothy, Joan and Betty—with whom I was sometimes playing when Mr. Schopp’s figure wavered into view: ‘Here’s that horrid old man Schopp

coming to take away our Anne. We'll stick pins in him; we'll fill him with red-hot needles. Horrid old man Schopp!'

At about this time my father retired from teaching. He had been schoolmaster at Gorran and Caerhays for nearly forty years, and when he retired he did not wish to live where associations were so strong. Perhaps my mother did; I am not sure. My father had always liked being in places where he was not known. In his summer holidays he had been used to go off alone; usually staying with relatives, but making their houses a convenience as sleeping-quarters, while shamelessly giving everybody the slip by day; going off by himself, seeing cathedrals, hearing music, watching the Australians at the Oval or at Lords; or county cricket with Stan in Bristol. The two shared this passion; I used to tease them and say they grew alike watching cricket.

My father had a fancy to live somewhere near Exeter when he retired. Part of his own college days had been spent there and he cared, I think, for nothing else quite so much as for cathedral music. Then, too, there was a very strong bond between him and my brother Howard who was at that time organist of St. Michael's Church, Exeter. My father used to criticize the music, for he was naturally one to bestow more criticism than praise. 'The accompaniment was a little loud today, boy, I thought. No need to have it all organ.' Or, 'Too fast, boy; you take the psalms too fast; you never did have much sense of time. I remember at St. Ewe once . . .' Or, 'I don't know about your basses, boy. No balance! What you want is another good tenor. Boys good of course . . . but I noticed in the Te Deum . . .' He would argue with my brother who, he considered, played Bach too often. He loved Handel himself; and my brother would tease him by disparaging Handel. Susan would join in the teasing. She would sing, 'All we like sheep have gone astray' in joyful staccato tones. 'All . . . we . . . like . . . sheep . . . have . . . gone . . . a . . . stray. All we like sheep have go-o-o-o-o-o-one a-stray.' Why be so merry over it? she would ask. Surely we ought to be sorry for our sins instead of shouting out our joy in them so blatantly in God's ear. Susan thought Handel was of the devil's party without knowing it, as Blake said of Milton. On rare occasions my father praised the music and then my brother was elated; but it was very touching that my father's most unqualified praise of any service of my brother's was on the Easter Day before he died. The music had been exceptionally lovely on Easter Day, and when we came in my father said, 'I must congratulate you on the music, boy. It was very good. Beautiful I should say,' and he went away humming, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth'. My brother laughed and said he felt he had nothing left to live for after such a compliment. But it was my father who did not live to

hear another festival service. This was, happily, many many years later than the time at which I am writing. He who had been wont to say he would never live to take up a pension, lived to enjoy a pension for twenty-five years. I only hope for so good an innings myself.

After long discussions Exmouth was chosen as the place of retirement. My father loved trees, and Exmouth and the country round were wooded then. It was near enough to Exeter for frequent visits, but easy too for the fields and the sea; and I was there. Unluckily my father and I chose the little house, and our only idea of a house was somewhere to put his piano and my books. Neither of us cared to be in a house for long at a time; but my mother and Susan did. They did not like our choice of a roof. We could only say that we had hunted up and down and found nothing better; houses were scarce and dear. And they, because it was their nature to take the unpromising and transform it, resigned themselves. With beech leaves, or lilac, or bronze and red chrysanthemums Susan adorned the rooms we had; while I consoled my mother with airy pictures of the cottage and the garden we were never to have.

With my parents and Susan at Exmouth I found it not so bad to be teaching even needlework, and my intention of changing to secondary teaching receded. I continued classes in Exeter. Reading French books and English books was all my joy; but when I considered taking an advanced examination in what I had read I quailed; for nothing can be conceived more unsystematic than my English reading. I followed my own sweet will among the books. I went light-heartedly from author to author, leaping the periods and confounding the persons. If I decided, when I sampled an author, that I did not like him, I put him out of my sight. If I liked him I read everything of his I could lay hands on. I imagine I should still be working in this casual fashion and putting off the examination until another year if Miss Wright had not come as English lecturer to Exeter. She doubled my pleasure in poetry by sharing it; and it was she who suggested that I should abandon teaching for a time and give myself entirely to learning. But how was I to live? My brothers who at one time could have helped me were now impoverished by the war, and faced with many responsibilities. Miss Wright said that I could borrow from the Central Bureau for the Employment of Women. Darling bureau! What other people feel for some benevolent great aunt, I feel for that bureau. It lent me fifty pounds. And strange to tell, the secretary who wrote to me about the business was a Miss Kathleen Passmore, sister to Miss Mary Passmore of St. Austell school. No shower of rain has ever watered the earth more gently than that fifty pounds watered me. College awarded me a free studentship; I had fifty pounds in my pocket;

I resigned my job. The children in my class gave me little private presents as well as an official one, and I felt sorry to be losing precious affection; but I was out of school, out of school! I went round Hoopern fields on the first day of freedom—there were few houses up there then—saying to myself:

Colin he liveth careless,
He leaps among the leaves!

I was hardly able to keep my heels on the earth.

And then as though the gods were jealous of such light-heeledness as mine, Susan fell ill. The cold finger which I had been keeping out of the front door of my heart, closed tight against the war, came in at the back and touched me with a worse chill. For Susan was the dearest thing I had. Yet I had not really bothered when she had decided to go and make munitions in Exeter. My mother, she said, would no longer be lonely without her as she would have been at Caerhays. Susan's idea is always, if anything detestable has to be done, to help with all her might, and get it over. She hated the war as much as I did, but it was clear enough to her that we had to fight and win, or lose and die, and she would be directly helping to win, said Mr. Lloyd George, if she would make munitions. She began at first going to Exeter by day and coming home to sleep at night; then one day, when she had had to get up so early and was so sleepy that she put on one green stocking and one red one, and never noticed it till she happened to glance down upon her wicked legs walking along past Buller's statue, she decided to stay in Exeter all the time and live with Howard and Mary. It was lucky that she did. Mary has twice the eye for illness that we have, and three times the promptitude in action in an emergency. When Susan suddenly had an intolerable pain Mary got Dr. Andrew quickly enough for her to be taken to hospital and operated on for acute appendicitis in time. Only just. I knew how little poetry counts compared with a life while I waited.

Susan recovered; she made munitions again, working for victory. And Sister Léontia, Sister Augustine and Sister Célestine, to whom in return for French conversation I was giving English lessons at the Convent of the Holy Family at Exmouth, prayed for victory. I neither worked nor prayed. As soon as Susan was better I forgot all the vows I had made about being a more responsible woman and went tippling at my pleasures again. Now that there was no school to go to, I used to bicycle slowly into Exeter, going generally by Woodbury Castle, Clyst St. Mary and Clyst St. George for the sake of the birch trees and the wide space; and coming home by Topsham so as to go down Salmon-Pool Lane to sit among the twisted tree roots by the river, for the secrecy. I read among the roots, using them as armchairs.

Sometimes, now, a friend went down to the river with me. This was Muriel Price whom we called Cyrano because of her chivalrous nature and distinctive nose. She had a nose which made other noses seem half-hearted, and a mind unshaken by winds of false doctrine. She and I became special friends partly because we were both older than the average run of students, partly because we were opposites. She was endlessly surprising to me because she was methodical with time, and she could say what she meant. She knew what she meant before she said it, whereas I never seemed to know what I meant until it was out, when it often astonished me as much as her. Without Muriel I should have wasted all the good money of the Central Bureau for the Employment of Women. For to my infinite surprise as soon as I had all my time to do university work I found I did not want to do it. I fear that what becomes a duty is no longer a perfect pleasure. What pleasure is there in paying taxes? Whereas giving away anything is the greatest fun. Now I wanted to write poetry. This was partly Miss Wright's fault for she offered a poetry prize.

I would take out books as of old to study among the treeroots and instead, with a delicious sense of slipping out of Time, I made up verse. I found I had the knack. When I was not making it up I was running French ideas into it. I had to do an essay on La Fontaine for Mr. Schopp. Instead I set dozens of fables into English. One of them was a warning to myself:

A grasshopper, a merry mummer
 All the summer,
 Found that he had but little clo'
 When in the winter fell the snow,
 Nothing to wear and nothing to eat,
 No wing of fly, no worm's meat.
 He went to the ant and said, 'Ah, me!
 I've nothing to put in my belly,
 Perhaps you could lend me a bite, dear thing,
 To keep me going until the Spring,
 Then, on my jump, if I'm not gone West
 I'll pay you back with interest.'
 But the ant is far from the vice of lending
 To those who go their thriftless ways;
 She said, 'And in the warmer days
 What kind of service were you tending?'
 'Night and day to all who came
 I sang.' 'You sang? You sang? That's cool!
 My dear good insect, you're a fool!
 You sang! Well now, dance to the same.'

As I detested La Fontaine's ant, I embodied my own philosophy in an adaption of *The Labourer and his Children* which I ran into Cornish dialect:

A Cornishman, who felt his end draw near,
 Called to his children and said, 'Aw, my dear,
 I tell 'ee I d' feel most terrible queer.
 But there's a thing or two I'd like to say,
 'Fore you d' carry me up Bethel Way.
 The first is this, Don't 'ee go working hard,
 You wean't have time to think upon the Lord;
 The second is, 'Don't 'ee go working late,
 The Lord won't love 'ee for yer big estate;
 'Tis best I b'live not to be working 't all
 Then you can look 'ee 'bout and praise it all.'

I made dozens of French verse translations and I also wrote some verse which I entered for the poetry prize; it was a dash of Shelley, who was my angel then, diluted with my own variations on the abstract notions of truth and beauty; the whole mixed with the moonlight over the sea from Barns Hills. I had forgotten all about faith, hope and charity by that time. I signed myself 'Heligan', not with any ill-spelt reference to the sacred spring, but

after Colonel Tremayne's house between London Apprentice and Mevagissey. One day Miss Truscott, a St. Austell student, came into the common room to say that it was on the notice board that Heligan had won the prize and she was sure it must be me. Who else would have thought of using the name Heligan?

I had the fun of choosing books for my prize. I went in for quantity rather than for fine bindings. I chose Coleridge's Poems, a Herrick in two volumes, and two volumes of Andrew Marvell; and because I still loved my brother Howard better than anybody else I bought him a delectable little copy of *Lorna Doone* out of my prize money; it was fun to have him associated with my triumph and we both liked to read about Jan Ridd and Jan Fry going out in the snow of that bitter winter and bringing in the sheep. As I read and re-read my prizes, one sentence of Marvell's prose lodged in my mind for ever. He said, 'I think the Cause was too good to have fought for'. When I have nothing else to do I still take this idea out and ponder it. Andrew Marvell has been among the enduring of my fitful loves. I cannot imagine a time when I shall cease to find refreshment in *Thoughts in a Garden*. No actual ripe apple, no nectarine or curious peach has touched my mouth so voluptuously as those worded ones; nowhere else has fair quiet seemed so desirable. Spenser would never make me a Puritan; Andrew Marvell might. But if Charles II intervened I should forsake my dear Andrew for him no doubt.

Going up to London for the final examination was an adventure; I had only once been to London before. Now I went under Muriel's wing and we established ourselves in Harrington Gardens. I did everything foolish I could. I lugged up dozens of books which I hadn't time to open much less read; I never knew where I was going in London, but stuck to Muriel like a shadow; after the first paper I decided I'd failed and might as well go home, away from this nightmare of a city. Only the fact that I did not know how to get there by myself prevented me from seeking Paddington Station. The influenza epidemic was beginning and candidates on either side of me reeked of eucalyptus until I thought I should become metamorphosed into that hateful Australian tree for ever. I fancied I felt my sprouting leaves and branches when I ought to have been concentrating on Grimm's law. When the examination was over, if it had not been for Muriel, I should have been in a strange fix; for when we came to pay our bill at our boarding house my money had gone—clean gone. We ransacked my case; had I put the money between the leaves of a book? We shook the books, but no notes crying, 'Spend me! spend me!' dropped out. We poked, we prodded, we unpacked and packed again. Then Muriel who had a blank cheque filled it in to pay

both her bill and mine, and as her family had stayed at Harrington Gardens the cheque was accepted without trouble. I did not find my money until about a fortnight after when, hunting for a pair of clean stockings, I unwound a tightly folded pair, a pair I had taken to London. There neatly concealed and coy was my money. In good country fashion, I had done my best to protect my all from ‘they thieves up London’.

Now that my fifty pounds were all spent I had to consider getting some fresh money. The Reverend Mother at the Convent of the Holy Family at Exmouth suggested that I should come there and teach for a time. I taught the Nuns—Sister Augustine and Sister Célestine were preparing to take London external degrees in English and French—and I taught the children of the school. My duties were strictly confined to teaching certain subjects, the community preferring to keep all matters concerning the general policy and discipline of the school in their own hands. For me there were no duties and no registers. If anyone had been away the Rev. Mother came round in person to make inquiries. Once when I was giving a nature lesson to the little ones, and had drawn a squirrel eating a nut on the blackboard, the Rev. Mother came in to inquire for a child who had had influenza. Then she turned to the blackboard and exclaimed, clasping her hands, ‘Ah childrens! What a beautiful caat!’

They all shouted indignantly, ‘Ma mère! It’s a squirrel!’ She was not discomfited, she said smiling, ‘Ah! I am stupeed! I see now it ees a squirrel. I see his nuut.’ I remembered that at Truro the inspector’s comment on my blackboard nature drawing had been, ‘Knowledge of the subject good; but execution . . .’ and he had passed on. He was a thin drooping man with a mouth a little twisted away from the centre towards his right ear. His hobby was purple shadows. ‘You take an orange and what do you see? A purple shadow. You take a top-hat and what does it cast likewise? A purple shadow! You take a . . .’ He was almost too easy to imitate. Poor Purple Shadows! He considerably cheered our innocent lives at Truro.

I enjoyed working at the convent; it was a small school—most of the tiresomeness of school-life comes when the school is so big that masses of moving children have to be regulated. When fifty ‘units’ of the same age take the place of Veronica and Mary the game is up; to confuse bigness with goodness is one of the vulgar errors of our time. The Sisters had an immense advantage in knowing what they were aiming at. Their desire was to train the children not only in knowledge and feeling, but in virtue. They had no doubt at all that the soul of a child was the battleground of good and evil forces, and that it was their duty to incline hearts towards good and fortify

them against evil in the drama of existence. They had the advantage of a great tradition, a profound poetry, a symbol. That children are imaginative before they are reasonable Christian education has understood. I have never had a vocation, but I can feel the beauty of it; the Nuns were tranquil—at least to the outward eye. I was seeing the school, of course, with the eye of an adult. Certain children saw it differently. Some years later when my brother Maurice's children, who had been brought up in America, were spending some months in England and making Exmouth their headquarters, it was suggested that they should go to the convent school for a time. There were three of them, Roberta aged about ten, Marjorie aged about eight and Bill aged five. We thought, I fear, of saving not Bill's small soul, but his small pants. He used to slide down the Exmouth sea-wall until the seats of these were torn to shreds, and he walked with bottom exposed. Fully clothed, the three children set out for the school, Roberta looking rather like the sleeping beauty; Marjorie artistic and compact, thinking it would be grand to have a school hat-band; Bill, hands in pockets, walking with a pioneering air, alone. 'We men!' he sometimes said to my brother. Girls and man came back with a distinctly pugnacious air. They weren't going again. Nothing would induce them to go again. Bill said he didn't like those old black crows; and Roberta and Marjorie said the girls were proud. For the rest of their stay in England their education was on the beaches; and perhaps this pleasant alternative rather than any real objection to the convent was at the root of their obstinate refusal to attend. I murmured to the Rev. Mother something about the children's going back to America rather earlier than we anticipated. But I never went out with one or other of them hanging on my arm without meeting one of the Nuns: 'The children have not gone back to America? No!' And I would reply, as the children scowled, something about the uncertainty of boats nowadays.

The war came to an end while I was at the convent. I was reading *The Ancient Mariner* aloud to the assembled Nuns, to whom it was part of my duty to give a lecture on some English poet each week, when suddenly everything that would hoot, or ring, or clang in Exmouth hooted and rang and clanged. I danced about the room, and the Sisters momentarily forgot their habit of reticence and devotion. They laughed; their eyes woke up and sparkled. We were lucky as a family in that war. All my brothers came home. Cap'n was very ill; but he was alive.

Some time before, I had had news that I had been placed in the second class in the London examination. I should teach needlework no more. Instead I went back to Cornwall to teach English and French. At about this time Susan, too, decided to become a teacher, and this decision brought us,

if that were possible, even closer together. Unlike me she did not fumble. Her imaginative sympathy with children made her immediately successful; and she has played her part with hundreds of others who have striven to transform our infant schools into places of natural growth and gaiety.

CHAPTER X

NORTH CLIFFS AND GODREVY

Pendarves Street, Roseworthy Hill,
By lanes and hedges winding still,
Up the hot brambled path, and there
The cliff-top, clean and scented fair

With the warm scent of summer; thyme,
And heath bells drowsy with their chime,
And low furze offering to the skies
All its painted butterflies.

I am one with the earth whose child am I,
On the warm scented earth I lie,
Elbows in heather, knees pressed to earth,
One with the mother who gave me birth.

And there before me the sheer cliff edge.
I wriggle nearer, the extreme ledge
My elbows touch, and chin in hand,
Half in air and half on land,

I drink of the great grail of God;
No more am I one with the lifeless clod;
God's chalice is filled with the foaming sea,
The wine of beauty, O God, for me

This wonder, this passion of delight;
Come pain, come sorrow, come death the night
Of life, by this draught I can
Give thanks I am not earth but man.

North Cliffs

I have missed much of all I might have seen of the loveliness of the world through an irresistible craving for Cornwall. To think that if I had spent every fresh second of my days looking at a fresh glory I could not have exhausted all glories, and that I have hardly looked beyond the first I

knew, coming back again and again to what was familiar! Sometimes I am sorry; and sometimes I wish I had been narrower still, desiring not all Cornwall, but merely all Penwith or all Roseland, merely all St. Austell Deanery, merely all Gorran parish, merely our own garden, merely one foot of hedge in it. I sometimes think I could have spent all my life looking at one violet.

When I came back to Cornwall it was not to the St. Austell district where I was born, nor to Truro where I was at college; I went further west. I went to live in Camborne in Penwith, and came to know country governed by fresh heights. My new landmarks were St. Agnes Beacon; Carn Brea that held Redruth in its keeping; Trencrom confronting me as I sped through Hayle; and the smooth-running progression of Godolphin and Tregonning. I am not sure that I did not pray to Godolphin and Tregonning as the sun came up. But that was later. I came to Camborne to work in the Camborne County School for Girls, helping first with French and English, and later teaching English throughout the school. As soon as I got back to Cornwall and sniffed the air I knew that I was twice as fully alive there as in Devon. My very eyes seemed wider open. Camborne is an ugly town, yet I felt I would not exchange the treeless mining country in which it is set—a country so worked for tin that a house in a Redruth street might subside into an adit—I would not exchange its bareness and the stubborn, ghostly engine-houses through which the sky showed, for the green abundance of Devon. Devon breeds poets; but Cornwall is a poem.

I was met at the station by Gertrude Woodthorpe, another new member of the school staff, a young woman of about my own age, with tawny, shining eyes. She said to me in anguished tones that lodgings were so hard to get in Camborne, that we were sharing a sitting-room although, she thanked heaven, we had separate bedrooms. I said with equal anguish that our fate was hard, and together we went up Mount Pleasant road in the mist. During the course of our first evening together she said gloomily that she wanted a sitting-room to herself because she meant to write. I immediately said that that was why I wanted a separate sitting-room too, though I had never thought of writing until that minute. My versing had been mere play with words written anywhere. Our sitting-room fire would not burn; we tried to make it draw up the chimney by holding in front of it a copy of an old *Observer*. The *Observer* was a big paper in those days; it caught fire and blazed and blazed. If either of us had had a sitting-room to herself I feel it might have been blazing yet. Our combined beatings and smotherings put it out and we began to regard one another more amicably. We were hungry too; we were always hungry. That first year after the 1914 war was a hard

time for food; and the air round about Camborne, which we breathed on long tramps while we hunted for separate sitting-rooms, made us so sharp set that once we came in at tea-time and ate the whole of a large saffron cake. Shame at what we felt our landlady must consider our greediness brought us still closer together. We would debate whether we could bear to leave just a crust of cake so that we should not seem to have entirely swept the boards.

It was on one of our early walks together that I first saw the sea shining away beyond North Cliffs. What that piece of coastline between Godrevy and Chapel Forth came to mean to me I should find it hard to exaggerate. At first in Camborne I had only my legs to carry me, and I tended to walk again and again the country near at hand, with this piece of coastline as my first love in every weather; my perfect joy; better than any book or any person, more sublime to me than any church or cathedral. I delighted to leave the drabness of Camborne, to walk by the Mining School down the street to Rosewarne, to pass along a ferny lane and fields to Reskadinnick; to go along by the red tin stream in which the little wooden traps flipped up and down; to reach the bridge where a willow was the first to burst into golden palm in spring; to run for a minute into a little wood where primroses were out by the end of January, primroses growing safe from the weather in little bracken houses, the dead stems forming pillars, the crispy crumpled fronds an airy roofing. Then I would go up the last steep fields and on to the cliffs and drink the frothing cup of space.

But I also had to go to school—teaching has always been a great interruption to my way of life—and to find a separate sitting-room. By the time I had found it in the house of Mrs. Curnow, Gertrude and I were enjoying our joint ménage though neither of us would admit it. My new sitting-room was at the back of a little house in Veian Terrace off Beacon Street, a sunless room which looked on a mound with one tree. On that tree a blackbird would whistle a tune and repeat it. I have never heard any other blackbird so much in command of himself. He seemed deliberately to practise a phrase which also he taught me. As I whistle it I can see the linoleum on the floor and the hearth-rug turned upside down to keep the colours clean. Not till Susan arrived to spend a weekend with me, and promptly turned the mat the right way up, did I have the wit to know it had colours. I thought it had been born drab. It suited the harmonium and the little leather-covered sofa, the leather armchair and the four upright chairs. The paper was pale green with yellow roses ever-ready to burst into colossal bloom. On the wall was an enlarged photograph of Mrs. Curnow's son

Leonard who died in a decline. My bedroom, which was in the front of the house, was delightful, sunny and white.

Mrs. Curnow—her old mother called her Weeza, short for Louisa—was a widow. We took to one another, and soon I was no longer hungry. I grew fat on basins of broth, Cornish pasties, under-roast, saffron buns, jam tart, and cream. On Saturdays Weeza would make me a hot pasty, wrap it up in a napkin, and I would take it ‘out North Cliffs’ to eat. It was on one of those Saturdays that I saw one of the most beautiful sights I had ever seen since I was six.^[1] It was between Deadman’s Cove and Hell’s Mouth where the cliffs are more than ordinarily high, and where the waves wash round rocks haunted by shags and cut into fantastic shapes by the sea and weather. But on this particular day nothing could be seen. A white mist, the dull drowsy mist of Hakluyt’s northern explorers, filled the cup of space. No motion of the waves could be distinguished; only their sound reached my ear and the cry of the seagulls. Then the sun began to drink up the mist and the wind freshened. No revelation of all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them could have been more enchanting. The shoulders of the great rocks became visible through draperies of floating white. The grey waters were seen to tumble at their feet. Then in a moment the further sea showed a deep, heart-stirring blue; but stranger than all, at a point where the mist still lingered, there gleamed a concentrated, irised light, like a rainbow contracted into a saint’s aureole, or that truth-compelling light in the old tale which the child touched and the radiance remained on her finger. It seemed as though it could not fade. But even with the thought it grew thinner, phantom-like; its rose and pale gold rarefying into sightless substance. Soon only the fluttering sash of mist remained halfway between the cliffs and the horizon. All else was the purest, the most joyous blue, with great dark shadows where the giant cliffs still slumbered. Spray danced over the sunken reefs; the gulls flashed their wings against the sun; the bracken on the cliffs glowed gold and brown. As at the Creation a new world had arisen, steeped in the first dazzling and radiant light.

This experience was in autumn and I had gone to Camborne in January. By this time Gertrude had definitely decided to change over from teaching to writing and the other close friend I made on the Camborne staff—Marjorie Pascoe—used to go home to Truro for weekends, so that I was free to walk alone. I hate eating alone—unless it is a pasty on the cliffs—but in walking the way is sufficient company. In recollecting the country round Godrevy—later I lived near it in a winter cottage as well as in a summer tent—slide hustles slide on the screen of my memory, and I tend to confound the seasons. I no sooner remember the white roses with their delicate petals, and

smell the fragrance entangled in their grove of anthers, than I see and smell a great patch of maize-coloured furze, a spicery with greenness in it. I have seen furze so dazzling-thick with blossom that I have had to shade my eyes. Then instantly I see furze after swaling, with twisted black arms against the blue of the sky; or I see cowslips above Fisherman's Cove; or sheets of vernal squill; or I see blackthorn trees in blossom and find them crossed by the bare thorns of wintertime with dun-coloured sparrows flitting round them like pieces of the inanimate turf given power to fly. I have walked the cliffs in cold and wet when the sparrows and the gulls seemed the only things alive—the sparrows live earth, the gulls live sky. I used to wonder what I was.

I liked to walk from Godrevy by Hell's Mouth to Reskajeage in winter and have tea at a farmhouse there, tea with hot heavy cake, and splits with cream and jam or honey. Going in out of the wild and taking the first sip of steaming tea was wonderful. Hell's Mouth is not a wide inviting mouth, but like a trap and dark; the sun never shines into its caverns and there is no path down the cliffs. Gulls whirl round screaming. I used to like to choose a day of cloud and sunshine, for then the masses of cloud would help the masses of the cliff and the whole appear terrifically sombre yet exhilarating. It is a high excitement to stand on the little natural platform to the right of Hell's Mouth in a wind. The wind seems to have no relation to the normal air which we take in little sips sedately. It has a living quality and rushes us out of ourselves and into itself in a literal ecstasy. The view landward is a reminder of that 'windysea of land' of which Milton writes. It is almost bare of trees with long, low, sweeping waves and tumbling hollows; the outline of the carns sharp and clear; never fuddled. The eye passes from the slow curve on curve of the hills of Penwith, by Carn Brea and Carn Marth to St. Agnes Beacon; on the other side is Navax, with its line running smooth almost as water down the snout to its broken, ragged edge in the sea.

From Hell's Mouth I used to go by a path that dips into the cliff, so that the sea rolls below a green slope. But now and then the path sweeps upward and the open country comes into view on the right again. Carn Brea is the king; the active dominating carn. He seems to be playing tricks he is so active, now in this quarter, now in that, now showing his great shoulders, now wholly hidden, now poking up his crest again. The gully above Deadman's Cove leads to the top of North Cliffs, after which in those days the downs became wilder and gloomier—some parts are ploughed now. These Downs are at their most characteristic in winter. They should be walked on a November afternoon when a young moon will rise early and the wind is chasing clouds, and the waves are pitching in. Landward there are

no colours but browns and the rusted red of heath, and greens, and ashen greys blended with the slate of the cliffs and the madder of the sea-weed; but at sea the brightest colours may be out, sapphire and the most dazzling white; deep purple by the rocks and, in certain lights, as the waves arch their necks, a lovely luminous green. In some places the track is bare, in others springy with turf and obstinate moss which is trampled but persists, and is thicker and warmer for having to curb its feathers. Seawards as we near Reskajeage are two rocks which seem to be streaming out to sea, so that the Old English epithet 'utfus' might be applied to them. Their dark hard bases, ringed by the tide-line, are of a leaden colour shading to a reddish purple where the sea-weed clings; and the texture of the rock is streaked with white lines like cross lightning.

Reskajeage is forbidding, with a steep, shaded slope on one side and a sunny slope on the other. Robert Bridges might say of these as of another cliff that no June could stir them to vanity; yet June white roses grow most freely here. In November all is harsh and bare, and in the ear is the sea's winter music. From the cliff top all the sea noises are blended roundly into a satisfying harmony. Nearer the base, as the path descends to the narrow beach, is heard the grinding of stone against stone, and the boom as a wave breaks into a hollow rock—the drum of this wild music; the swish and hiss of the froth and, in the lulls, the liquid gurgle of unbroken water in the crevices, and the slap and swill between the great crescendos. Nothing here is human. The goats with their primitive yellow eyes—the seagulls have yellow eyes too—are the only living ones. They go about the cliffs, warm in their goat-hair, on their poor thin-looking legs which are yet so sure. I used to envy them their security against the weather.

Weeza's bright fire was pleasant when I got back to Camborne. And she would come in and talk of clothes; something new she had bought at Humphry Williams's in Redruth. She had all the Cornish instinct for dressing up; she told me once she just 'couldn't go chapel if she hadn't got a coat with a nice bit of silk-lining to put up, and a little hat cocked one side'. I can see her trying on a new hat and preening in the looking-glass that capped the harmonium.

My sister Susan astonished Weeza whenever she came to stay. If ever I ventured to bring in flowers and leaves Weeza made oblique remarks about the beastly old mess as she swept away the petals and laid my cloth with a firm hand; but Susan could have planted a whole horse-chestnut in the sofa and Weeza would have uttered no protest. From the moment Susan arrived, turned the mat the right side up, and remarked firmly that she didn't like and

couldn't eat cabbagey broth, Weeza recognized a master spirit. She was impressed by my friend Marjorie Pascoe, too. Weeza kept a wonderful front-room into which we never penetrated for the profane purposes of living, although keeping the front-room clean was an arduous weekly ritual. When Marjorie, who had recently become engaged to Harold Harvey, told Weeza the news, Weeza said, 'You'll find, Miss Pasca, that anybody ought to be made of wood instead of flesh and blood to look after a house as well as a husband and a family of children.' Marjorie replied that she hadn't the slightest intention of making herself a slave to a set of cushions. The answer struck Weeza. She fairly began to wonder whether she wasn't wasting her energies. But within a week she was saying as she smacked the furniture about, 'Miss Pasca do say she wean't be a slave to a set a cushions. Leave she wait!'

It was with Susan that I had a particularly memorable summer walk to Godrevy; part pure enjoyment and part sheer endurance of heat. Susan said I nearly killed her. It was partly that she had on elegant shoes and was anxious for their shape. She cannot bear sensible shoes; she hates the sight of her feet in them. She will look at a stout pair and what she calls a nice pair before taking a walk; and insensibly her feet will stray into the nice pair. Then, when we get to rough places, she will look down and caress her favourites, saying the poor darlings are being ruined as usual by one of Anne's short cuts.

We went early by Treswithian and Kehelland and Menadarva. Menadarva is one of the loveliest of the lovely names in the Camborne district. 'I went to Menadarva' is a little poem in itself. We went from Menadarva along the red river to Godrevy, taking with us pasties which Weeza had got up early to make. She would do anything for Susan,—Susan who wore a white piqué frock and bright jacket. Weeza pretty nearly bought herself a white piqué, but decided in the end she'd never play tennis. Godrevy is exquisite on an early summer morning when Trencrom steps out of the robe of mist and the whole wide bay lies dreaming between the arms of Clodgy and Godrevy Point. St. Ives, Carbis Bay, Lelant and Hayle are included in its sweep. But nothing can be seen of Hayle town. The houses spattered about Carbis Bay are baptized by distance, and St. Ives is nestled in the curve of the island as in the crook of an arm. Around St. Ives and Lelant the girdling beaches are smooth bright gold, but near at hand the breasts of the Towans are knobbly.

We lay on the warm turf; the best of the sea-pinks were over, but all the promontory was sown with little flowers, with thyme and trefoil and

centaury and tormentilla. I think every sense is pleased as a body reclines on a bank of thyme on a summer morning at Godrevy. We ought to have stayed there all day. Instead I wanted to show Susan the young gulls at Navax, so we went along a path which I liked because one could hear the wind frothing through a field of oats on the right and playing its deeper sea-note on the left. On the grey ledges of Navax it was easy, earlier in the season, to observe the nesting birds. Young gulls are brought up hard; no feathers, no moss. In the corner of a rock which can only be called nest by courtesy, they are hatched in the open and learn to fly into space. It is a half painful pleasure to watch the young birds fly. They are mottled grey and brown and almost indistinguishable from the rock; it is best to spot 'nests' on the ledges and watch selected families until they reach the age for flight. They sit and appear to ponder; and the parents wheel round and soar, and do trick flights, and fish and quarrel. Then the young ones stretch their wings, and nearly take off, and settle again; and stretch again; and then, they select a moment when I have shifted my eyes and miraculously they fly. Some are a little drunken at first, but they attain a swift strange proficiency, and seem to show off, and whirl about, and then come back and have a tremendous scream with the old birds.

We watched the gulls; and we ought either to have gone back the way we came or to have cut across the promontory and so reached the North Cliffs stile easily. Instead, I pretended it was just as near to keep to the edge of the cliff. I have walked that cliff path hundreds of times. It dips into the face of the cliff so that the traveller has cliff above and cliff below and seems to be walking between sea and sky, caught enchanted in 'that mortal and right lined circle that must conclude and shut up all'. The pure curve of dark blue sea against the fainter blue of the sky is so lucky a marvel. A shade more in the sky, a shade less in the sea, and we can imagine all confounded, the magical line erased. Nothing is more astonishing about the universe than the luck of it, and our luck to be in it, and provided with two such look-outs as eyes, and a nose for the fragrance. We came to a royal stretch of mingled heath and fern and honeysuckle, and I lost the path; and Susan, like the children of Israel, murmured. Her nice shoes! Of course there had been a short way across the top. In vain I told her to sniff the thyme and watch the bees. Bees could fly up out of it, she said; but how should we get up out of it through all that furze and fern, and bramble. She didn't care about Osmond the waterman or whatever else they called the Osmunda Fern Royal. Yes, Aunt Lye had hunted for one everywhere when we were small; and promised us half a crown if we found one and we never did; but here now was a boggy place to make our plight worse; and we wanted a path; it

seemed as though we were lost for ever between the blues. The sun began to scorch us. It was a grand moment when we at length pushed through entangling thickets and climbed up to a path that led between the sea-cliff and a field of clover with tall picris and tinker-tailors to the open world again. Fisherman's Cove was ahead, a cove to which one may descend by a winding ferny path, beautiful, but less beautiful than the path to the cove immediately adjoining it which some folk call St. Martin's Cove and some say it has no name at all. We kept above it, through ox-eye daisies, I never venturing to suggest a descent. I tried to keep Susan's thoughts on the flowers ahead; but she stopped and turned and looked back exactly at the point where it was clearest to see that we had walked right round a peninsula instead of across the neck. Above its hump the sea at Gwithian and Godrevy, so near though we had walked so far, showed like a land-locked pool. Susan has always used this summer day as a classic instance of my obstinacy in always choosing the hardest, longest way—except in the matter of washing up dishes when I hustle the plates I have washed on to the rack without streaming them under the cold tap.

We spent the rest of the day by Hell's Mouth, Susan refusing to be seduced into a little wood near by. I always think it a pity she missed the wood which may not be there now; it was unexpected then. It was reached by a grey and broken gate in the hedge opposite Hell's Mouth and was a complete wood with oaks and sycamores and ashes; but its glory was its ferns, harts' tongues and lacy ferns, and a whole fernery of ferns royal sweeping up with a curve that had the force of motion. Honeysuckles grew there, flinging out their arms joyously above, embracing anything, and bursting into a bacchanalian riot of blossoms. There are no other such tipsy flowers as honeysuckles. Wantons! I used to think it was like a Grimm's fairy-tale, for I would come to a place where the path lost itself under dark privet; and stooping through I entered a neglected orchard with three or four apples on crooked trees; and down the path came hens, not fluttering and inconsequent, but jutting their heads and walking with quick determined steps in a phalanx towards me, then falling in and moving with me like a guard of honour. Here were two cottages where Hans was probably in his cage putting out his bone every day instead of his finger to show the witch he was still too thin to make good eating. By the path to the left was a hollow where bog-plants grew, ragged-robin, and money-wort, and bog pimpernel, and white little starry woodruff. Skirting the thick black ooze I used to pass into a second wood. This was at first more stately and spacious with horse-chestnuts and beeches and tall oaks that looked like elms in the distance. And here were laurels, and hollies and a great flowering elder.

Then the path went through trees that dwindled, and through ranks of guardian nettles, over a gap by a rocky outcrop into the open sunshine of a meadow. To the left was a marsh with green-grey willows and yellow flags, and one heard the sound of running water. In front was the smooth hump of a field blocking the further view.

Susan would never have forgiven me if I had brought her face to face with that hump after our cliffy explorations earlier in the day. Instead we reclined on the cliffs until the cool of the evening, and then walked back through the fields to Camborne by way of Reskadinnick. It was the short way home.

[1] I have described the earlier experience in *School House in the Wind*.

CHAPTER XI

YES, MISS PRATT

Snowflakes lightly are borne hither and thither
In the grey air reluctant; they care not whence
Silent they come; they care not feckless whither
They go in the wide vessel of winter space.

Ever hesitating, yet without murmur at last softly
Wavering they alight fluttering by a resting place;
And like birds on slender feet by the wind driven
Skim, then drop to their nests and quiet lie.

But you, the seagulls, snowflakes of summer, swirling
And flashing between the blue sea and blue sky
Are never silent, the cliffs with your cries are riven,
Never restful, on your wide wings whirling, whirling.

To Seagulls disturbed at Navax Point

It was not only the proximity of the cliffs and the seagulls which made me happy at Camborne. I was happy in school. Camborne children became and have remained my favourite pupils. It was exhilarating to teach a subject I enjoyed to children who enjoyed it. Whether my exhilaration was good for my pupils' English is another matter. Children are fearfully exposed to teachers, and I unloaded my enthusiasms on them. I would come in from the cliffs murmuring Keats:^[1]

It keeps eternal whisperings
Round desolate shores, and with its mighty swell
Gluts twice ten thousand Caverns, till the spell
Of Hecate leaves them their old shadowy sound.

Soon a class would be murmuring these lines too. I used to dilate on words. *Gluts* I would say to children who hardly knew what a verb was, 'throw all the weight of the sentence into the verb'. Or I would dwell on the exquisite rightness of the epithet *shadowy*. Verbs and epithets! I hardly minded what the subject was. Always I had poems in my head.

Every morning the whole school assembled in the hall—there were about three hundred children, ranging in age from the kindergarten, who might be three, to a few sixth-form girls of eighteen. The school stood in lines, not horizontally, but each form like a long tail drawn up behind its ‘Captain’; so that Miss Pratt, when she appeared on the platform, saw the school not in tiers with the little ones in front and the school rising by different stages to the tall sixth at the back, but as a sort of low cliff sloping upwards to her left from the shingle of the kindergarten. I liked to stand by the kindergarten. They would be saying in their small, separate voices all down their line, ‘Good morning, Miss Pwatt,’ long after the rest of the school had finished their brisk, unanimous salutation and opened their hymnbooks. Miss Pratt smiled at the kindergarten with her faintly crooked smile. I think she liked them best of the school. She was a dignified figure on the platform, firmly planted in country boots, and with hair drawn off her forehead in an intellectual Girton way. She used pince-nez, and she wore a black velvet band around her neck. As she read the prayers I said poems to myself. My favourite for a long time was:

Upon a sabbath-day it fell;
Twice holy was the Sabbath-bell
That called the folk to evening prayer;
The city streets were clean and fair
From wholesome drench of April rains;
And, on the western window-panes,
The chilly sunset faintly told
Of unmatured, green valleys cold,
Of the green thorny bloomless hedge,
Of rivers new with spring-tide sedge,
Of primroses by sheltered rills,
And daisies on the aguish hills.

I would spend several days on end with Keats and then change to Blake—to the Mad Song or to ‘Hear the voice of the bard’, or to, ‘Oh, sunflower, weary of time!’ I did not say all the poems I myself learnt to my classes. I had some notion of the suitable. But I am bound to say that I thought very little of the children in comparison with poems. If I was shivering on the aguish hills they had to shiver too. I was hardly conscious of whether my pupils were bored or not. On the whole, I have gathered since, they were not. Camborne children were like me, only too responsive to words. It was therefore a real shock to me when a girl good at science, and with a genuine appreciation of English prose, confided to her mother, with whom I was friendly that she would like poetry if Miss Treneer would not spout for hours

about some favourite word or other. This remark gave me my first inkling of how not to teach English poetry. The final revelation came many years later when in another school another head mistress came up to my form-room to hear me teach. I am not tongue-tied with classes; far from it; my tongue is all too glib. But if any grown-up enters my form-room suddenly, I feel numb and dumb. The poem I had meant to teach flew clean out of my head; I could not catch hold of a single syllable of it. Then I remembered that the children had poetry books. They took them out of the desks; I borrowed a copy and turned to the first poem in the book. 'Will you begin, Julia?' I said. Julia was delighted as I should have been when I was small. She pushed back her straight hair and read out clear and bold. I said, 'Mary,' to the next child, and 'Helen,' to the next, and so on round the class. We read the entire poetry syllabus for a term in that one lesson.

I have more frequently failed through zeal than not. Although I always profess not to be zealous I feel a rising zeal as I teach—pure auto-intoxication, no doubt; teachers, like preachers, have something of the actor in them. I suspect that when a teacher goes away from a class feeling warm and delighted, the class is often stiff and cold. Then, too, I was fiercely critical when I first went to Camborne. I fell upon the children's compositions like a whirlwind. I shall never forget when a large girl wept. I had forgotten how easily I, although brought up in a critical family and surrounded by critical friends, was daunted and downcast by criticism myself. I felt like crying to think of the hurt I had done and, for a time, I was more careful of youthful feelings; but the sight of slovenly English makes me forget my kinder intentions. Now, as an experienced teacher of English, I think that criticism of their immature work is bad for children. It gives them a kind of mental stammer in writing; they pause in the act, and wonder what Miss So-and-so will think; and that is death to all live expression. Where would Pet Marjorie have been if she had had an English mistress like me instead of a wise old friend like Scott?

Luckily, both Miss Pratt and the Secretary for Education were wiser and more tolerant than I. Miss Pratt's great virtue was that she did not care a button what anybody thought. We need put up no show. The school had originally been a private school, and in its new County Council building it retained a spirit of independence. It avoided the worst features which girls' high schools have tended to take over from the boys' public schools. We evaded those moribund functions—Speech Days—for years. Miss Pratt was never doctrinaire; she was as free of red tape as my own father, and as incapable of being manipulated. She saw questions in a broad human light, not through the narrow beam of scholarship. She never let any method

harden round her; in an emergency she would turn her hand to teaching any subject, and expected us to do the same. My friend Marjorie used to say she herself taught nearly everything under the sun at Camborne, and to all ages, before she finally reached the kindergarten for which she had been trained. Miss Pratt was convinced that it was fatal to settle down. Just as I was preening myself on my English she said to me, 'Dear, I want you to take some senior Latin.' 'My Latin prose has never been good, Miss Pratt,' said I. 'Brush it up, dear, brush it up,' said she. And, with the aid of some private lessons from a classical scholar at Penzance, I did brush it up. However much our withers were wrung we always said, 'Yes, Miss Pratt,' in the end. We would laugh ruefully in the staff-room over, 'This little phrase which comes so pat, is, Yes, Miss Pratt':

One day I'll find myself near Hell,
And see the flames a-dancing well,
And there will come a little devil
To say, 'Now won't you join our revel?'
I shan't be able to reply
'No, thank you, Sir, I don't like fry,'
But I shall answer with a sigh,
Wiping my feet upon the mat,
And hanging up my only hat,
'Yes, Miss Pratt.'

Miss Pratt smiled at this ditty with the rest of us. And if we said 'Yes' to her she reciprocated with 'Yes' to us. 'Sir Frank Benson's company is playing at Plymouth, Miss Pratt, do you think we could arrange to take the Fifth Form up to see *The Tempest*?' 'Yes, Anne dear; and you had better have Marjorie to help with so big a party.' The fun of it—instead of going to school! My impression is that Sir Frank, as a hairy Caliban, went swinging from knotty oak to cloven pine by his tail. But I don't suppose he did.

Sixth-form work in the necessary variety of subjects is bound to be a difficulty in country grammar schools sparsely staffed; yet sixth-form work, both general and academic, is absolutely essential to the health and well-being of such a school. Travelling specialist teachers in some subjects might be a solution. I would rather have some travelling teachers than have some schools truncated of their sixth forms and other schools with big sixths. A school must have a head and a tail like every other living organism, even if it is a little head and a little tail. I think Camborne had a great advantage in its tail—the kindergarten. Surely big girls verging on womanhood, whose main function in life must, generally speaking, be with children, ought to

have some little children under the same roof with them while they are being educated. The kindergarten at Camborne meant that there was a flourishing Froebel class for older girls who were attracted to that work. Big girls separated too far and too long from small children, tend to become faintly monstrous. Camborne had an advantage, too, in not being rigidly academic. Children more interested in dairy work than French verbs managed to get in. And a good thing too. Could any scheme be more idiotic than the present idea of rigidly separating the academic and the practical? People learn by mixing with others unlike themselves, not by being tied up in similar bundles. It is good for a very bookish little girl to make friends at school with someone who will carry her off to stroke the horses and feed the calves. ‘With eager feeding food doth choke the feeder’—if only we could get away from the idea that our intellectual children need intellectual stimulus. They need to go slow; they need to live. A flame which is to burn steadily through life must not be fanned to too great a brilliance at the start.

A book which made me think at this time was *How to Lengthen Your Ears*, which Mr. Pascoe handed to me with an ironical comment during the first of the many weekends I spent at hospitable 5 Clifton Gardens, Truro. Mr. Pascoe, who had been schoolmaster, school inspector, and then secretary for education in Cornwall, recognized, for he himself had strongly felt, the profound influence of place and family in education. He had been born and brought up in Bugle, and his best stories were prefaced with, ‘There was a man up Bugle once’. I liked the man who wrongly guessed the weight of a pig in a weight-guessing competition. He said, ‘There now! Wha’s d’a think o’ that? I know’d that pig was heavier than I thought he was.’ And the man who thought he had been deafened by a mine explosion to whom a neighbour said, ‘Cean’t ’ee hear what I’m saying of?’ And the deaf one replied, ‘Not wan word.’ Mr. Pascoe used to tell me stories of when he first went round inspecting schools in Cornwall; I liked a tale of how he went into one country school and found the master brewing beer; he said he didn’t think school the place for brewing beer. The schoolmaster said it was the best place he had; and when Mr. Pascoe called again beer was still brewing. I suppose this occupation might be regularized under the heading of ‘Vocational Training’ now.

How to Lengthen Your Ears was a diatribe against compulsory education; whether well-written or not I do not know. It certainly impressed me very much. The argument was that only the rich could now save their children from being turned into asses by being compulsorily sent to school, and having their senses atrophied and their minds smothered with print. The only other book in which I have heard the common school education

inveighed against so roundly is in R. G. Collingwood's *The New Leviathan*. Parents should teach their children themselves according to the late Professor Collingwood; and teachers should merely be kept as pets, to be called in when both grown-ups and children need instruction in any particular specialist branch of knowledge. An enjoyable life for a teacher, I think, sitting in some sort of pleasant equivalent to a kennel, getting on with research in his own subject, and waiting to be called in. Whether I myself should have enjoyed instructing Professor Collingwood, together with his child or children, in the art of poetry, I am not sure. I cannot fancy myself saying, 'Whence come ye, merry maidens, whence come ye!' to Professor Collingwood. But I suppose no English pet would have been kept by the Professor. He would have instructed his children in English himself, and I should have retired to my fastness to shake my lengthened ears for joy. I suppose I should have shaken my ass's ears until somebody came along, took one look at me, and turned me out of the commonwealth. There is a perpetual spice of danger about the artistic or intellectual life; we have a way of looking enviable, as though we deserved a bash on the head.

It was an enviable life I led at Camborne with friends and books and a subject to teach which was my own chief source of pleasure. Marjorie Pascoe and I became firmer and firmer friends the longer I stayed at Camborne, and after. She was of a Cornish type supposed to be predominant, but which is not. There are as many fair as dark children in Cornwall; in the kindergarten were always some children with silvery-soft, straight hair. But Marjorie looked Spanish with hair blue-black, a creamy complexion without colour, and eyebrows arched over greenish eyes. Sudden sparkles of wit pleased her a second before she uttered them, so that she smiled in advance; I have known no more inward, yet free and illuminative smile. But it is impossible to recreate in a book a witty woman; wit dies on the pen. Even Meredith could not succeed in it. Marjorie's wit was born of the moment and was gone with it. Yet wit serves a woman well, not withering with her beauty. My sister Susan has it, my friend Marjorie has it; so that living with either of them is never dull; the unexpectedness of their replies is the only factor I can see in common between them and my mother, who also had a happy wit. She would look up with a flush at my father and say something compounded of the instant, herself and his last sentence. He was the more wise, and she the more witty without being sharp, so they fitted together.

Marjorie was no actress; she was too consistently herself, too little Protean. But I made her act in all sorts of plays. Of only one element in the teaching of English have I never had any doubt, and that is of the value of

plays—of play-reading and play-acting. To mix staff and children is a benefit sometimes, and when I had a play in which both staff and children acted, I hounded Marjorie into a part. As for me, I was always ready to produce, to stage-manage and to enact the best part. I was a female Bottom when I was young. The only thing I would not do was to learn my lines. I can see Marjorie and myself sitting on a gate by Penponds conning our parts the night before we played *Comus* in the vicarage garden. She was the Lady; I was Comus; the children were delighted to be animals. The brothers were even more stiff in our performance than in Milton's verse. *Comus* in the vicarage garden was not a real success, though I thought it was at the time. I would not risk it now; one becomes more of a poltroon as one grows older. I could not now caper about exclaiming, 'What has night to do with sleep?' to an astonished congregation; but I did then and felt exhilarated by it. Even more than *Comus* at Penponds I enjoyed scenes from *As You Like It* which I did with Troon players in the vicarage garden at Treslothan; and *Mr. Sampson* in which the senior French mistress, Miss Laity, was inimitably Cornish. We had our giddy heights and dizzy downfalls. One year the chairman of the Governors, Mr. C. V. Thomas, was so pleased with a performance of *Michael* that he gave each member of the cast a book of her own choosing. And the following year, when we tried *Riders to the Sea*, he is reported to have whispered to Mr. Pascoe, as a dripping body was brought in on a blackboard, 'What on earth made her choose this?' Mr. Pascoe is said to have replied, 'God knows.' But Miss Pratt cheered up the English mistress that night over a special crab supper. 'They've no taste, Anne. It was a splendid thing to try. I'm surprised at Mr. C. V. and Mr. F. R.'

We were always so eager and so rough and ready in our performances, that we generally had some slight contretemps which we weathered, coming up to the surface after being downed by a falling chair or bit of scaffolding. We had a very tiny platform which was temporarily enlarged for each show by Mr. Laity, the school caretaker. Mr. Laity had far too musical a disposition to be a safe carpenter. Once when we did *She Stoops to Conquer*, Zoë Parr, the gym mistress, who was enacting Tony Lumpkin with immense verve, cracked her whip and fell off the platform altogether; but she was immediately up again, cheering and whooping, and persuading the audience that falling off the platform was exactly what Tony Lumpkin had been meant to do at that point. Nellie Nobbs was a delightful Miss Hardcastle in that play, and Freda Westlake, her foil, a delicious Miss Neville. We did all kinds of plays; but Shakespeare was always my true love. We acted play after play of Shakespeare. It is nonsense to say that Shakespeare is spoilt by being read and acted at school; he is the only thing worth going to school for. I have

seen most beautiful and moving school performances. The full pathos of Viola's—

I am all the daughters of my father's house,
And all the brothers too. . . .

Of Cordelia's—

So young, my Lord, and true. . . .

Of Miranda's—

Oh, I have suffered
With those that I saw suffer. . . .

can only be heard on the lips of earnest children, unconscious in their hearts of what their voices carry. Grown women adulterate poetry with personal feeling.

One of the bugbears in the life of a teacher of English is marking; it is, alas, true that effective English teaching demands correction of exercises. A parent once suggested to me that her daughter's written work would improve if I gave more time to correcting it. I could not resist saying, 'Oh, Mrs. X, it is quite gone out of fashion to mark books; didn't you know? I put everything the children write straight into the waste-paper basket, it's so much better for them.' I only wish it were. We probably over-do 'composition'; it is cruel to make children write on themes about which they have nothing natural to say. Not all children are inventive. Written work in connection with history and geography—particularly geography—is likely to be more fruitful. A child once told me she hated writing 'English', yet admitted that she loved writing when it came to geography essays, the simple reason being that she was no longer searching in her poor empty mind and stomach for words. Yet pupils must write if they are to learn to use English properly; and I sometimes think that nothing is more important in education. 'Further,' as Doughty wrote at the close of *The Dawn in Britain*, 'it is the prerogative of every lover of his country to use the instrument of his thought, which is the Mother-tongue, with propriety and distinction; to keep that reverently clean and bright, which lies at the root of his mental life, and so, by extension, of the life of the Community: putting away all impotent and disloyal vility of speech, which is no uncertain token of a people's decadence.' Doughty's Arabs learnt to use their language in a pithy manner by talking; and I think children learn best by talk. I am not sure that I would encourage any child who did not ache to write, to use pen at all until she was twelve or so. Children are delightful in informal debate and discussion; they will consider eagerly all kinds of questions, and often

express themselves with a pointedness entirely lacking in their written words. Once, when with a class of twelve-year-old children I reached, by what strange route I have forgotten, a consideration of whether things were actually existent or only existing in the eyes of the beholder, a little girl called Rosemary stood up and said to me with great earnestness, ‘Do you mean, Miss Treneer, that this desk might be a solid thought?’ A metaphysician could hardly have put it better.

I think indirect methods are better than direct in the teaching of English writing. Why did the Elizabethans, who were not directly taught English at school, write with so much more colour, verve, and glow of wit than we? Why are their rhythms so warm and curling, while ours are so thin; why are their words so physical and ours so lacking in substance? Would frequent practice in translation be more beneficial than ‘composition’? We need to call up such Tudor schoolmasters as Ascham and Mulcaster to inform us. We might summon Alfred the Great, the first teacher of English on record, a noble and heartening ancestor. He translated for his people. I cannot but think that Arthur Waley’s translations from the Chinese and Japanese are among the most beautiful and enduring English writings of our own time. Perhaps the matter of China and Russia will be to our own age what the matter of France was to our medieval writers, and the great classical texts to the Elizabethans.

At this time I was still reading with enormous pleasure myself. I joined the London Library. Cutting the string of their beautifully tied up parcels, taking off the outer layer of brown paper, unwrapping the inner sheets of printed packing paper, and seeing which of my ordered books had come, and which ‘with the Librarian’s compliments, were not available at present, but would be reserved for Miss Treneer’—this was one of my major pleasures at Veau Terrace. On winter nights my fire would blaze, my lamp give a soft light, and I, hunched up on a chair with my elbows on the table, or reclining on my sofa although this position was too far from the lamp and made me squint, forgot all about the difficulty of teaching English in the pleasure of my own reading. I bolted books, or perhaps bolted is the wrong word; for at this time I was becoming very fastidious, not to say precious in my tastes. I was under the spell of Pater, Santayana and Max Beerbohm. Shall I ever forget discovering Lord George Hell and Zuleika Dobson in one and the same London Library parcel? It seemed too much. My emotions overflowed at the magnanimous generosity of Dr. Hagbert Wright. I believe I thought he tied up the parcels himself, selecting books personally from treasures piled up in underground caverns, treasures which ranged from *The Dynasts* to *The Watsons*; from *Marius the Epicurean* to *Peacock Pie*.

[1] *Keast*, which looks like a form of *Keats*, was a Camborne surname.

CHAPTER XII

WINTER PRIDE

I saw the hillside
Of Autumn's sowing,
Too green a-growing
Wounded for winter pride.

The lumpish cattle walk;
And bruised and broken
Lies April's token,
Till the triumphing stalk,

Pride's penance done,
Out of the dead
A gold head
Lifts to the August sun.

Winter Pride

Everybody laughs at theses now. And everybody thinks reading for degrees a waste of time. What lured me on to write a thesis I can hardly say. I suppose most of us fancy our names with decorations, and Anne has had some pretty ones in its day: Queen Anne; the Grand Duchess Anne; Lady Anne. I cannot think why we have made the word 'Dame' a title of honour; its associations are all dull. Dame Anne is worse than Miss Anne; but Anne Treneer, M.A., I thought this would look classical. The only book I had written before was a story for children; but I had far too wholesome a dread of the taste of the children I taught myself to attach my own name to that. All very well for me to criticize them, I thought in my cowardly way; but what about their criticizing me? I enjoyed the remarks incognito. Nothing can be more amusing, or more illuminating for a teacher of English, than to hear her pupils' comments on her own work. That I remained in hiding was, I think, base; there is an element of Jekyll and Hyde in it—writing poor stuff with one hand and trouncing it with the other. But hide I did; and I checked my facility with the pen by launching myself upon a thesis on George Meredith whose work I read in full after making the acquaintance of *The Victory of Aphasia Gibberish*.^[1] Max Beerbohm's other parodies were so good that I had to read Meredith in order to enjoy the 'Victory' as much as I

enjoyed the other parodies in the same volume of writers whose art I knew well. I still think this parody a better glance at Meredith's foibles than all the voluminous comment and laborious wit to which his prose has been subjected. The very title, *The Victory of Aphasia Gibberish*, touches the victim, recalling Meredith's pleasure in the naming of his girls and his preference for names ending in 'a' from Clare Doria Forey to Carinthia. The description of Gibberish Park is good; but it is in the dialogue that the parody is supreme, and in the little side notes on gesture which Meredith loved to make, in the mock aphorisms, the substitute phrases, the witty metaphors, compressions and leaps. I liked the parody especially where Sir Rhombus, the lover, is talking to Aphasia about the advisability of following the rest of the family to church:

'You have prayer Book?' he queried.

She nodded. Juno catches the connubial trick.

'Hymns?'

'Ancient and Modern.'

'I may share with you?'

'I know them by heart. Parrots sing.'

'Philomel carols.' He bent to her. 'Complaints spoil a festival.' She turned aside. There was a silence as of virgin Dundee or Madeira susceptible of the knify incision.

'Time speeds,' said Sir Rhombus, with a jerk at the clock.

'We may dodge the scythe.'

'To be choked with the sands?'

She flashed a smile.

'Lady! Your father has started.'

'He knows the aphorism. Copy-books instil it.'

'It would not be well that my Aphasia should enter after the Absolution,' he pursued.

She cast her eyes to the carpet. He caught them at the rebound.

'It snows,' she said, swimming to the window.

'A flake. Not more. The season claims it.'

‘I have thin boots.’

‘Another pair! . . .’

‘My maid buttons. She is at Church.’

‘My fingers?’

‘Twelve on each!’

‘Five,’ he corrected.

‘Buttons . . .’

‘I beg your pardon.’

She saw opportunity. She swam to the bell-rope and grasped it for a tinkle. The action spread feminine curves to her lover’s eye. He was a man.

Obsequiousness loomed in the doorway. Its mistress flashed an order for port—two glasses.

Sir Rhombus sprang a pair of eyebrows on her. Suspicion slid down the banisters of his mind, trailing a blue ribbon. Inebriates were one of his studies. For a second she was sunset.

‘Medicinal,’ she murmured.

‘Forgive me, Madam! . . . A glass. Certainly. ’Twill warm us for worshipping.’

Meredith’s novels and poems were my familiar companions for three years; after which I did not read them for twenty. But I feel that I could, with justice, send to Meredith’s shade the message which his own Lyra gave to her Uncle Homeware for her husband, Pluriel,^[2] ‘Tell him I ran away to get a sense of freshness in seeing him again.’ What amused and attracted me in him then—his cleverness and play with words—repels me now. He should have written for the living stage; it is the only thing that would have clarified his language. As it is, he himself has become a subject for the slim feasting smile of his own comic muse. But he can stand aloof and smile serenely back; for in each of his chosen modes, lyric and comedy, he achieved something absolute. *Love in a Valley* can never grow stale; and *The Egoist* retains its power to penetrate our thick hides. Yet Meredith rarely makes a reader laugh out loud as Dickens does; his comedy is arranged for a purpose. His natural, spontaneous genius was lyrical and passionate. I cannot help wishing he had never tried to do mankind good. When I used to go round the

Camborne lanes saying *The Woods of Westermain* to myself it was not its didactic middle which made me toss my heart up with the lark. I never learnt that part. Nor, in *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* was it the hard work which had gone into the moulding of the Baronet which made me admire. It was ‘Golden lie the meadows; golden run the streams; red-gold is on the pine-stems; the sun is coming down to earth and walks the fields and waters’. I used to like to blow with Meredith over the earth and hear his trees wrestling with the wind: ‘The bull-voiced oak is battling now,’ I would shout, as I whirled about Pendarves Woods.

For the smoky, forked flame of Meredith’s more sombre writing I cared less, admiring often without delight. I disliked in some of his work the presence of little gentleman Georgie. He was called little gentle Georgie when he was a boy by the unkind. His acquaintance with disaster in the failure of his first marriage gave tragic import to the series of poems to which he gave the title *Modern Love*. *Modern Love* has a fascinating form. It is a tragedy of manners to be enacted on the stage of the mind, with all its entrances and exits complete, and every gesture; comment, chorus, décor and dance all folded within itself. The masqued figures of the husband, the lover, Madam, and the lady advance and retire, conjoin and separate. I wonder that no one has made a ballet out of *Modern Love*. The stepping is accurate, the passion explosive yet stylized, and the whole conception searingly satirical. One theme is powerful in Meredith’s tragic writing. He had a feeling that past days were like eager ghosts alive to haunt the present. ‘The waves,’ he wrote, ‘wash long and wan off one disastrous impulse.’ His most grandly conceived, though not his most successfully executed work on this theme is the magnificent, unequal *Odes in Contribution to the Song of French History*. What a noble artist Meredith would have been if he could more constantly have wedded word and idea in the inevitable and terrifying union of:

The Gods alone
Remember everlastingly. They strike
Remorselessly and ever like for like,
By their great memories the Gods are known.

We who can cast our glance over a still longer period since Napoleon may well shudder at the long memories of the gods. I sometimes think if Meredith had not been vain he might have saved the world—if art could save the world. But he tried preaching. Preaching will never save anybody, however good the text. And I think Meredith had a good text. ‘More brain, O Lord, more brain.’ But I don’t know. Perhaps we need more feeling, not

more brain, we who seem as unimpressionable as rhinoceroses. Preaching hardens. What an amount of lay-preaching our young people are subjected to nowadays! People have never been so be-preached at and be-thumped with words since the days of Praise-God Barebones.

I did not enjoy Meredith when he preached and formulated his faith in the clear-eyed, courageous rejection of the faith in which I had been brought up; and yet in my contradictory way I did continue to read him partly in the hope of finding a religion. I could respond to earth as the bacchante mother; I knew her revelry of ripeness, her kind smile; I tried not to be afraid in the woods of Westermain. And yet my heart would not let me accept what to my reason seemed so feasible, that the individual must die, and live only in his offspring; that all that would be left of my friends after death should be a quintessenced memory going to build up some great dream of good. I did not care for any dream of good once the effect of Meredith's eloquence on me had cooled. I have said that I did not take Meredith to my heart when he tried to formulate a creed. Yet his faith in earth did act upon me in such a way that I tried to make a religion of it for myself. If I had not gone home so often I might have succeeded in becoming an apostle of Meredith. But my former faith retained its hold because of my affection for my parents and family, stronger-rooted than any mere ideas could be. I still went to church because they went to church. The wonder of God made incarnate in the mystery of human birth at Christmas; the impulse to repentance and penance in Lent, corresponding to how deep-seated a need in poor humanity; the awakening of life even in death on Easter Day—these were a more profound and permanent poetry than Meredith's reasonable faith could ever be. I still could not accept the symbol of a cross; I still did not feel the sacraments; I wanted the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, too cheaply; but I knew that my mother in her Christian faith and hope had an inspiration at once more human and more divine than any I had drawn from Meredith.

I did not read Meredith to my pupils; I preferred to keep him to myself. Reading him led me to all kinds of pastures, green and otherwise, in this period. In addition, he himself had been much written about, and I enjoyed reading other people's opinions of him.^[3] I am of those who like reading books about books. I even chased Meredith through the periodicals, and once I literally undid the out-porter at Camborne Station. One Saturday afternoon he came staggering up to Veian Terrace with a huge, heavy, flat, thick parcel for me.

'Whatever have 'ee got there?' he said, panting through the passage, and casting his burden on my sitting-room floor. 'Whatever es a? Need a horse

and cart he do. Scat me braces I have lugging of un up.’

His braces had been scat by a bound volume of *The Times*, in which the London Library had obligingly marked one short article for my delectation. After that, when making my London Library list, I used to add the proviso, ‘If not too heavy’. Whether I was being cautious over the contents of the books or their physical weight I left it to the library to decide.

It was about this time that I went to Paris and was startled there to find the moon almost put out by artificial light. I used to look up at her and wonder if she could also possibly be shining on the sea by Gurnard’s Head. I went to France with my brother Howard and we stayed first in Paris and then just outside it with the parents of two girls who had previously come to England as pupils in my brother’s house. All was novel to me. I had never stayed in a flat before; I had only drunk wine at rare parties. The volubility of Madame, the bow of Monsieur, the elegance of Marie, and the sulkiness of Robert were alike strange and foreign. I adjusted myself first to the wine—its colour; its sparkle inside me; and then its body. I had peaches in wine; peaches smelling of summer. Madame was like a damson. She looked at me after a day or two and said, ‘I do not like her hairr; it is ugliee. She will not get a maan!’ Then a day or two later she eyed me again and said, ‘It shall be wafed,’ and wafed it was. When I caught sight of the back of my head in a mirror I did not at first realize whose it was: I must admit that I was more than pleased when I recognized this nice-looking head as mine. But my brother did not like my curls; they looked unnatural he said. And when we went for a day’s excursion and rode water-bicycles on a river I was quite glad to fall in and be ducked and come up with curls all washed out. I cared more to please my brother than Madame.

We went to see half the church organs in Paris; and sometimes my brother tried the organs and we shook hands with organists. I did not like the churches. The Madeleine made me smell a kind of stale penitence until I gasped for air. There is much in religion that repels me. We went to Notre Dame on the Feast of the Assumption. I was shaken by the glory of the Mozart Mass; but when the Cardinal in his scarlet passed close to us, and worshippers pressed forward to kneel and kiss his ring, I was restrained from following their example by I know not what hint of Puritanism within my Pagan bones. What moved me most during my visit was a performance of *Andromaque* at the Comédie Française. Previously, in my ignorant way, I had without a moment’s hesitation preferred our English manner of tragedy to the French. Racine as I read his plays seemed to me not for an instant to compare with Shakespeare. What, I had thought to myself, was the value of

all these long speeches which merely described action? But when I heard French spoken by an actress in such a way that it vibrated my bones I knew that in drama, no less than in lyric and epic, the spoken word is of the essence; I have never forgotten that low, intense, rapid poetry.

On our way back through London we went to the Queen's Hall to my first Promenade Concert and heard Myra Hess play. My brother declares that when she had finished I said to him, 'And I thought you could play.' I cannot believe that I could have been so rude; but he says it shook his conceit. I do remember that we spent our last few shillings on the most English supper we could contrive in London and that, having no money left for an hotel, we dashed into the midnight train at Paddington to have a night's lodging and a journey in one. I got out sleepily at Exeter soon after three in the morning; my brother went on to St. Austell to join Mary who was staying at Caerhays Barton. He had been looking after our money; I forgot to ask him for any, and there I was in a drizzly rain without a farthing. I did not like to wake up any of my friends in Exeter; so, as it was a Sunday morning, I bethought me of sheltering in church. I went to St. Michael's and there fell sound asleep in the porch. Suddenly I heard footsteps so I got up and pretended I had come to Early Service. Then, as I knelt during the commandments, I thought of the early bus to Exmouth and, trying to look faint, I tip-toed out of church and fled from a verger bearing sal volatile into a bus which took me to Exmouth. It waited near my home while I dashed in to fetch my fare.

Next time I went to London it was in the wake of my thesis. My fluster as that examination hour drew near was extreme. I had done a vast quantity of reading, but I could not persuade myself into continuous writing until Time's hounds were not merely barking at my heels but leaping up my back. It was in vain that my friends warned me that I was being foolish; that my examiner would judge not by what was in my head but by what I had conveyed to paper. I was like a person in a nightmare whose will cannot make his feet move; or like a car in the snow when the wheels spin. I took a perverse pleasure in doing everything except the thesis. Even work I was much less interested in took precedence. When at last I had finished the writing, I found that I had allowed too little time to get the thing typed; that it was far too long; that I had lost my list of authorities; that the footnotes were confused. I slashed out whole chapters; I played cards with references. The thesis came back from a typist in the nick of time to be hurled into the post before the closing date of the London examination. Once I had posted it I decided that everything was all right. When any piece of writing of mine is

finished and posted, however wretched it may be, I feel like a lily of the field, unspotted.

In this complacent mood I went up to town and stayed this time at Sutton with my youngest brother Cap'n and his wife Edith. They took me to see Pavlova dance. Nothing in my life before had ever given me such celestial pleasure. In addition, Cap'n, who liked a little revelry, feasted me, and was amused at my new pleasure in wine. I am not sure that I did not reel into the examination room; but no doubt a little Gothic and Old English cooled me. There were papers in both subjects. Then, still exalted by Cap'n's pleasant ways of entertaining me in town, I went for a *viva* on the subject of my thesis. I have never been regarded by a more disapproving eye than Professor Edith Morley's. She sat facing me, thesis in hand. I know faintly what the Day of Judgment is like. By her side sat Professor Allen Mawer holding my indiscretions in Gothic. All the bubbles of Cap'n's champagne went out of me, leaving me flatter than the flattest beer. Professor Allen Mawer, whom I was to meet again in pleasanter circumstances, looked like a good-natured lion. Professor Edith Morley was large, dark red, and full of nature—like a glass of stout. Sickert might have drawn her leaning against a mantelpiece smoking a pipe. She began by telling me that I had an untidy mind, and then took me unerringly and unfalteringly through my subsidiary failings. I disowned myself; I set myself fairly up as a guy and looked on. I hadn't a word; and I felt cold as a fish. I was asked which Fletcher wrote *The Purple Island*. I had read *The Purple Island* but the name 'Joseph' eluded me. I said with a ghastly attempt at lightness 'not Beaumont'. I got out, and met Cap'n with a friend and told them the worst. I shall never forget the balm of their jeers at Professor Morley. They said I was a fool to be wasting my time on M.A.'s. What did I want with an M.A. at all? I did not admit that I thought the letters would look nice after my name.

I failed. My chagrin was extreme; and I was further mortified because I knew I had ridden for a fall and obtained it. I stamped on my thesis. I said I would never look at it again and I suppose if I had not been afraid of setting Weeza's chimney afire—she had a mortal dread of fire—I should have roasted it on the coals. Instead I forgot it in other adventures; I took my first little cottage and moved out of Weeza's into my new abode.

[1] *The Chap-Book* (Chicago), Dec. 15th 1896. A revised version, *Euphemia Clashthought*, was printed in *A Christmas Garland*, 1912.

[2] *The Sentimentalists.*

[3] Of these books G. M. Trevelyan's was a revelation to me.

CHAPTER XIII

ON THE TOWANS

A clear sea-pool in rock;
And one foot stretched to the shock
Of the green water.

Sun-cascades over me
Divide, where at the knee
Closes cool water.

Not with rude plunge and stir
Would I your crystal blur,
Pellucid water,

Yet fain from foot to chin
Would stand garmented in
Gown of green water.

Round fringed anemones
And uncouth weeds of seas
Glide, clearest water,

So, up my body trim
Let slip your liquid rim,
Water, water,

Till, closing over me,
Half in pale fear I see
You snake-like water.

Resist, incline, consent
To the coiled element
Water, green water.

Preparing to swim in Godrevy Pool

The cottage was at Venton League on the outskirts of Hayle. It was one of two cottages joined together, thatched and white-washed; it had a good-

sized sitting-room with a casement opening on to the prettiest of gardens, a back kitchen, two bedrooms and fleas. The bedroom windows were so low, and the front garden was built up so high, that on Saturday mornings the postman used to stand on the bank and hand me my letters in bed. I can still see the envelopes edging their way in between the roses. Eva, my new landlady, who lived in the second cottage with her lodger, Mr. Pippin, was an original, an ex-music-hall actress, still bursting with vigour, good-nature and song. She made light of the fleas. 'Fleas, dear?' she said, when I showed her my pyjamas all be-spotted, and asked what could be done. 'Fleas! Harmless little things, dear. When I had a poultry farm they used to be hopping about.' Impossible to describe the joyous lilt of her voice as it ran up, 'hop' and danced off 'ping'. However, she brought me some Keatings, though we never really got rid of the pest, one or two always survived to keep up the stock. Eva said I brought them in from the Towans; but these were no rabbits' fleas. Besides, I have often lived among rabbits; I like to keep so still on a warren that they come out to play regardless of me; and stamp with their hind legs to warn their fellows when I move. Yet only at Venton League have I ever suffered from fleas.

The Towans or sandhills at Hayle seem monotonous to the casual eye; they stretch from Gwithian to Hayle River, and reappear on the other side of the estuary between Lelant and Carbis Bay. The two churches on the Towans, the Church of St. Uny at Lelant, and the Church of St. Felicitas at Phillack, are peculiarly fit for Cornish worship. In the mist, and amidst the sand, they symbolize I know not what of mystery and permanence in the shifting blindness of our days. The Towans can look most desolate; the sea appear a waste of waters; but wide. Coarse bents have been planted in the sands to bind them. The wind streams through this green hair blowing it back; and the sun sends white light like fireflies glancing along the blades. The wind is caught alive, even in pictures, even in photographs of the Towans. And one is exposed or not exposed to this element at one's pleasure. There is generally one lew^[1] side to a sandhill from whatever quarter the wind blows. I have cheated much wind and caught much sunshine on the Towans. I used to snuggle into a hollow and laugh at the wind which could not catch me. The levels behind the sandhills are covered with turf, sown in summer with flowers; self-heal and thyme, and trefoil so low and thick that the whole is resilient underfoot and aromatic. Not all the plants on the Towans are low. Beds of alkanet flower in the loose wilderness. Alkanet is a borage, hairy and vigorous, with flowers more than sky-blue; I have stood amidst alkanet taller than myself, and extending so far round me that I seemed in a jungle of alkanet. The colour as one

approaches on a summer day is startling. In the meadows behind the Towans feverfew spreads its flowers as though offering them to the sky; here, too, poppies and white campion grow. I have never seen so many white campions as at Hayle. As for the scarlet poppies with their black centres, all July is in poppy petals.

I grew to like the Towans so well that I did not want to come in from them at night. And here I found the value of being a schoolmistress. Parents! How useful they are! The parents of a pupil of mine named Alice Bastion had a summer hut on Gwithian Towans—there were only a half-dozen or so huts at Gwithian then. They asked me to tea and helped me to buy my first tent. We scanned the advertisement columns of the *Daily Mail*. I was for something very small; but I must have a tent I could stand up in said Mr. Bastion; man wasn't made to crawl. I thought the whole thing must be light. 'Blow away with a summer puff,' said Mr. Bastion. 'We don't want to have to come out and catch 'ee by the leg to stop 'ee from being carried up aloft.' In the end I bought a cottage tent, for 37s. 6d. with ropes and pegs and poles complete, 'the whole enclosed in a stout canvas bag'. That tag in the advertisement still amuses me; for the bag was so very stout when it arrived that my idea of tying it on the back of my bicycle was ludicrous. It was so stout that it took Mr. Bastion all his time to lift it. However, we got it to Gwithian—men are so handy—in Mr. Bastion's car. Then Mr. Bastion, Mrs. Bastion, Alice and I put up the tent under the managerial direction of Mr. Bastion. Two poles in three parts fitting into little brass sockets; ends soaped under Mr. Bastion's orders so that they should come out of the sockets easily when we came to strike camp. We grew more technical in our terms every second. Alice and I each held a pole upright at a suitable distance apart; Mr. Bastion, hidden in the voluminous folds of my green cotton cottage slipped first one little button-holed eyelet over the sharpened top of Alice's pole, then the other little eyelet over the point of my pole. Mrs. Bastion shook out the guy ropes; Mr. Bastion shouted that we mustn't lose any pegs. Then to a volley of, 'Keep her straight, Alice; drive her home, Anne; there's a fold in the canvas there, Mary; suant, now, suant!' the tent went up and the pegs went in. They were wooden pegs which one could hit plumb on the head with a mallet. I went inside to enjoy for the first time my enclosed space of greenish light. But Mr. Bastion wasn't satisfied. We did a good deal of adjusting; we trenched the tent round. By the time all was finished to his satisfaction and we had eaten one of Mrs. Bastion's marvellous suppers—the tent was pitched quite near their hut—it was bedtime. I spread my ground sheet; I shook out my hessian bag of straw; I lay down under my blankets. But not to sleep. I listened to the sea; I heard the sound of a horse

moving, the steps coming to my ear through the earth. Then I saw a flash of lightning. My tent was open towards the sea, the flaps tied back with tapes. I tried to sleep again. But now the tent began billowing and struggling like a wild thing; thunder roared; lightning flashed. Mr. Bastion appeared with a lantern. 'Hadn't 'ee better come into the hut?' he said. But no: I was as frightened as a sheep, but I wasn't leaving my tent. Then the rain came, venomous rain it seemed, determined to get at me through the cotton. I felt a dewy, misty spattering on my face from the force of the pelting drops outside. But no drops of rain came in; I began to enjoy my dry, warm position in the midst of such a tumult. It is wonderful to be so near the weather and yet out of it. And when the storm subsided I looked out and saw the great torn masses of cloud and a gibbous moon reeling.

And then morning came, and I went to bathe in a tidal strait called Sheep's Pool. In Sheep's Pool the tide rushed up the narrows between the long sets of rock. Perfectly safe on an incoming tide; but boisterous and warming. Mrs. Bastion fried us bacon and eggs and made coffee. Coffee on the Towans at half-past seven on a sunny morning after a storm! Mrs. Bastion made grand coffee. And, ah! her 'yeasty splits' with plastered butter and honey!

My sister Susan and I had always wanted a tent when we were small; but we had never had one. My mother was glad to feel that she had her brood safely under her feathers at least at night. We used to play tents on our bed, one kneeling up in the midst as a living tent-prop with a sheet hung over her; the other pretending to do the work of a camper within the folds. Sometimes we tried to dress in tents. Susan came to stay with me at Venton League but she preferred the cottage to the tent. She loved the cottage garden and Mr. Pippin's ducks which quacked and waddled. She filled the sitting-room with roses.

I had to get up early when I was staying at Hayle or at Gwithian in order to get to school at Camborne by nine o'clock in the morning. Usually I bicycled. From Hayle it was quickest to go by Roseworthy Hill, a slow climb for a cyclist. But in those days it was not dangerous, the traffic on the roads being so much lighter than it is now, for a cyclist to keep his right hand on his own handlebar, hang on to a lorry with his left and go up the hill as though riding on straight-forward-moving roundabouts. A lorry belonging to Messrs. Hoskin, Trewithick and Polkinghorne regularly gave me a tow in this way. When I bicycled in from Gwithian I usually went by Gwinear Road and Barripper, always trying to fall in with a Mr. Hoskins who brought his children in to school in his car. I used to hold on to the back of that and

be conveyed to school in a most sociable manner. The children longed to see me fall off. They used to shout, 'Drive crooked, Daddy; shake her off, Daddy; whip behind!'

Very occasionally on extra fine mornings I got up early enough to walk by North Cliffs to Camborne; or I would go up the Red river valley by Mendarva and Kehellend to school. I remember one June morning a transparency in the air, a coolness and fragrance indescribable. The sun was shining through the dew-drops on the mares'-tails till they were alight like fairy chandeliers. I believe if I had lingered I might have remained enchanted in that valley for ever; but we shatter our own crystals. I often wonder what the world would be like if no one had a sense of Duty. Wordsworth's Ode to the stern daughter of the voice of God is not my favourite among his poems.

Catering in the cottage was not too difficult when friends came for a weekend. Marjorie and her young man, Harold Harvey, were the easiest guests, for Marjorie was the best hand at frying eggs I ever met with. Instead of chivying one egg at a time about the pan as I did, she would in a nonchalant manner, chattering the while, break half a dozen into the pan and fry them together and take them all up whole. Oranges, and eggs, and lettuces, with all the adjuncts for a salad, were easy to get and nothing is simpler to make than junket. Junket and cream and raspberries! Mr. Pippin used to give me raspberries. A fish-jouster used to come round with fish, but he went at such a lick in his cart shouting: 'Pilchards, fresh pilchards; six a penny, pilchards, fresh pilchards,' that by the time Eva and I had pulled ourselves together, seized a plate, and hunted for our purses he was half way up to Connor Downs. We caught him sometimes. Once when he said he had hake I said absently that I'd have one. He said, 'How many children have yer mother got, my dear?' I said there was only me. He said, 'What you do want, my handsome, is four pennard.'

People motoring through Hayle malign it; a dull, curving street they say, with a nasty bend left, a level crossing, and a higgledy-piggledy of houses and shops. A few nice square houses overlooking the Pool they say. They miss the old wharf and the ferry boat to Lelant; and all it has meant to seafarers to find this opening in the cliffy, northern coast, this mouth with the sea-tide running up the river which flows from Clowance. The Irish saints found shelter here hundreds of years ago. From the Lelant side in particular the estuary is dear to me. The cry of the birds, the smell of mud round the reeds at low tide, the vivid green of the weed, the river Hayle silting up, but still running; the brimming stillness of high tide on a quiet evening or morning. I

have seen the whole estuary liquid gold at sunrise, and I have heard the birds calling across the water as St. Uny must have heard them. Time has left its marks on Hayle—evidence of days when it was the port of the mining district, when ships were built and repaired and re-equipped there. Ships plied between Hayle and Bristol three times a week regularly when the Vicar of Bodmin compiled his Register in 1847. During the recent war Hayle woke up again; ships were built and factories were busy. But inland from Hayle, up the valleys and on the uplands, with the lines of Godolphin and Tregonning running clear, it is a timeless, unchanging area, separating the Channel and the Atlantic. Marazion to Hayle is only four miles. To see the lie of the whole district a splendid vantage ground is the top of Trencrom, the carn which lifts itself up two miles or so from Lelant. I used to walk up to the top of Trencrom and spend all day there with all my beauties spread out round me like a map. You can see the advantages of Hayle estuary from the top of Trencrom; you can turn from the sea that creams up towards the Towans, to the running carns behind, or to the sea in which rides the fairy castle of St. Michael's Mount.

I was as happy as a king at Hayle, and I cannot understand why I did not stay quietly there doing as I liked. Some nagging suggestion within myself that I had failed, some desire to show Professor Edith Morley that my mind was not as littered as she thought, impelled me one spring to take my thesis out again. I fell upon it with energy and spite. I cut and scraped, and polished, and white-washed. I ruined it with white-wash. I hid its joints, I modified its forthrightness, and I attached a list of authorities to its tail. I employed a careful typist. I re-read the Old English poets and the works of H. C. Wylde, and off I went to London again.

This time my reception was so different from my former one that I sometimes think I dreamt the whole thing. I was re-examined by Professor Allen Mawer, but, as his companion, Professor George Gordon replaced Professor Morley. I am told it is quite impossible that he should have conducted a *viva* in shirt sleeves; but that was my impression, and that Professor Mawer, looking more like a good-natured lion than ever, had his feet on the table. We discussed the Old English Riddles. Professor Gordon asked me no questions at all. He said he rarely enjoyed reading theses, but he had enjoyed reading mine. We shook hands. I was free, and I had obviously passed. I went out closing the door quietly, and began to waltz in the passage. Suddenly Professor Gordon looked out, evidently expecting another candidate. Our eyes met; he half raised a thumb. I hope there is a second life if only that I may take a turn with Professor Gordon to the strains of the celestial orchestra.

In due time my thesis came back to me nicely packed in superlative brown paper with gummed label. That day I chanced, in the staff common room at Camborne, to look at the advertisements in *The Times Literary Supplement*. The advertisements in this journal allure teachers and at the same time they keep us steady: 'A Senior English Mistress is required at — Grammar School for Girls. Ability to help with Boy Scouts a recommendation. Apply by letter stating other out of school activities and special qualifications.' This last clause makes one pause. Has one any special qualifications? And those boy scouts! As likely as not we stay where we are. But this advertisement I looked at was different. The William Noble Fellowship, Liverpool University, it was headed. No testimonials, no activities. Candidates were invited to submit a piece of work to the Adjudicators. All the winner of the fellowship would have to do was to write a book. My lethargic nature was stirred. I went out in a free period; I bought a gummed label from Smith's; I stuck it over the existing label on the already so beautifully tied-up parcel in which Meredith reposed; I directed it to Liverpool University, named my references in a letter-card, and was back teaching Lower VC within half an hour. After this piece of concentrated activity the whole matter went out of my mind.

I was awarded that fellowship. I went back to Hayle one Friday night to find a letter awaiting me from Professor Oliver Elton. He said that I had been elected to the William Noble Fellowship for the coming session, that he himself had liked my study of Meredith, and that he would be glad to have me working in the English School at Liverpool. I went tearing back to Camborne to tell Miss Pratt, nearly breaking my neck on the way by hanging on to a fast butcher's cart and not noticing a lorry approaching from the east. I had supper with Miss Pratt who was as pleased as I was. She said she was sure she could get the Governors' consent to a year's leave of absence for me, so that I need not say farewell to the cliffs and the Mount for ever. I could come back when I had written my book.

Then in the night a hundred doubts and fears assailed me. Could I write a book? Did I want to read the works of George Meredith once more? I did not. I was reading Conrad just then; I was far out on eastern waters with Tom Lingard and the mysterious Edith Travers. Then next morning, skipping along the sands and chasing the waves between Gwithian and Hayle, I had what I thought was a blinding flash of inspiration. I would write a book on 'The Sea in English Literature', beginning with the Seafarer and the Storm Riddles; including Spenser's horror, and Smart's shout of glory; Smollet's types, and Swinburne's surges, Marryat's straight tales and Conrad's exciting psychology. In that book St. Michael's Mount could be set

fleeting anew. Cornwall would have a splendid place: smuggling . . . the Falmouth Packets . . . Devon . . . Raleigh . . . Sir Humphrey Gilbert . . . Drake, Westward Ho! I hurried into my cottage and wrote Professor Elton saying I was tired of Meredith and wanted instead to write a book on 'The Sea in English Literature'. Liverpool was on the sea, I said, so that would be very convenient to me. In his gravely courteous reply, without a trace of a smile—we did not smile together over *The Sea in English Literature* until years later—he said he sympathized with me over Meredith, but considered 'The Sea in English Literature' a less good subject for a book. A little vast perhaps. But he was all for people choosing their own subjects and having their own way with them. Liverpool—on the Mersey—would no doubt be as suitable a place as any in which to write the book if, after reflection, I still wished to do so. I was faintly dashed; I wished I had remembered about the Mersey; but I was not to be put off my large designs.

As I was not due to go to Liverpool until October, and the school broke up at the end of July, I had an extra long summer holiday. I went to Austria for it, to Vienna and Salzburg, travelling with a group of people for the most part academic, who wished to polish up their German at the university in Vienna. A course had been arranged. I, who had no German to polish, had the more opportunity of seeing people and places. I remember my confusion of mind; my alternating moods of delight, and of shame and misery. It was the summer of 1923. Austrian students met us on our arrival with nosegays of flowers. I lodged with another student of our party, Nannie MacCullum, in the house of an ex-colonel and his wife. They said they had never meant to fight us; we said we had never meant to fight them. We had vast bundles of paper money; they had lost all their savings. They gave us beer—a drink which I detested—but did not afford beer for themselves. I never ventured to try to persuade them to drink what would have been a pleasure to them, and was a pain to me. I was shy. Once I poured my beer into a plant while our landlady was out of the room. She came back with little cries of pleasure and said, 'Ah, you like the gut beer; yes!' and refilled my glass—tall glasses with waists they used. Nannie and I peered at one another over the brims. Nannie was a delightful companion, a Scot; a good German scholar, and speaking English with what was to me a novel accent; she trilled her r's. When I mocked her she said the only good English spoken in the world was Scotch. She once heard a man say of a woman who spoke good English that she must be either a Scot or a very well-educated Englishwoman. I maintained that the purest English was spoken in Cornwall round about Truro. We liked each other; she was a lilting, gay person.

Of the excursions we made, those which took us on the Danube or up the mountains exhilarated me beyond all telling; but when we went to see museums, galleries and palaces I sought the word *ausgang*. I liked getting out, and away from these things. I have never been able to enjoy collections, any more than I can enjoy the whole programme in a long concert. The collector's instinct is one of the stupidest of the stupid instincts of man. I pitied King's treasures, no longer cherished in their separate beauty, and pictures hung in gangs; just as I pity flowers bunched by the head in florists' windows. Mass! I hate mass. Men in ranks look like wood toys. Women in ranks are still more frightening because it is more foreign to women's natures to be merged and rigid and commanded. Men have been broken to it for generations, but with us it is just beginning. We seem to be following men down the road to perdition, doing what we are told, thinking what is expected, and perceiving what others perceive. We shall soon be blessed fellows to whom the sun looks like a guinea. We are forgetting Blake. He said:

‘What,’ it will be question’d, ‘when the sun rises, do you not see a round disc of fire somewhat like a Guinea?’ O no, no, no, I see an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty.’

In Vienna in 1923 hatred of the Jews was freely expressed, and, since it was the first time I had met with this hatred, it struck me dumb with fear. Compressed hatred explodes. It is a bitter and humiliating thing to realize for the first time that in our incapacity, our ignorance and malice, we must always in some form or other shift the burden of guilt from ourselves to ‘them’ or ‘it’. Being abstract-minded I had blamed a personification of war; I had blamed It. The Austrians were blaming Them for all the ills that ever they suffered. Their hate was stirring towards action. The first grown-up short story I tried to write was of a hunted Jew. I made him hide in the ice-caves to which we had climbed on one of our excursions. I made him escape into Germany. I did not know that in Germany he was being hunted too; that he would be hounded through the world. Ernst Toller and Adolf Hitler were young then. I had never heard of either.

[1] Lee.

CHAPTER XIV

LIVERPOOL INTERLUDE

In the morning of summer what glory
What worship! The sun is up-rising,
With gold and with crimson surprising
The fields that lie grey with dew hoary.
 In the morning of summer what glory
 What worship!

In the noontide of summer what benison
Falleth of fruit and of flower!
Man's festival innocent hour;
Bread and wine which the Carpenter's Son
 Took with thanks. In the noontide of Summer
 What benison falleth!

In the evening of summer what Breath,
What Holy Breath moves in the leaves!
'Tis coolness, coolness He weaves,
And comfort, comfort He bringeth.
 In the evening of summer what Holy Breath
 Moves in the leaves!

For a Summer Festival

When, one rainy October evening, I got out at Lime Street, Liverpool, and looked about me, I thought I had perhaps died and reached purgatory without knowing it. Then I decided that this was hell itself. I reached University Hall—to which I had chosen to go rather than find lodgings—wondering which Circle I was in. But the Hall was light and cheerful. Miss Chapman, the Warden, spoke a rarely musical English; the young women next door to me, Margaret Stoyale who was studying Modern Languages, and Kathleen Shedlock, preparing to become a veterinary surgeon, were friendly and welcoming. I had a room of my own and a coal fire.

But I never learnt the geography of Liverpool. All my time there I felt like a waif. Every street played tricks on me, even the street I lived in. One day University Hall seemed to be on one side of it; and the next day on the

other. I have never known stationary objects so malevolent. It was some time before I even had the wit to realize that all the tram-lines converged on Pier Head. The first time I went to Birkenhead I insinuated myself on a cattle ferry instead of on a passenger one. Then, perceiving my error, I pretended I had sheep aboard, and became fearfully involved when I was unable to drive off my imaginary flock. In Liverpool all things were in motion without order. Only the procession of lighted trams, which I watched from the steps of the Picton Library, had order. Except for these moving galleons of light, the sunset splendour of Pier Head, the choppy grey waves of the Mersey, the seagulls which could fly to Godrevy, and the ceremony of ships, I remember no more of Liverpool than if I had been a snowflake. One angry altercation I remember which conjures up a whole scene of cloth caps, and shawls, and shouting, and derision, and two angry faces, and faces turned to laugh. A taxi-driver yelled to an old woman who did not jump nimbly out of his way, 'Hey! Ma! D'ye think you're home in bed?' And she yelled back, 'Not so much of yer *Ma*. When you've bashed yer head in by the Grace of God 'tish't I'll nurse yer.'

I went to the university buildings to call on Professor Elton and wished, not for the first time, that I was tall. I have to look up. Professor Elton when I first knew him was like a lofty crag, rocky. He was the least soft of critics, and had a way of making the washy look washier. As he walked up and down the room he turned now and again and, focusing me with his eye, volleyed a couple of sentences in my direction. I tried to return the ball upwards and outwards. But it is hard to hit a moving object; our interchange grew slower and slower and at length ceased altogether. A steady silence settled in. It was then that, with a sudden lightening of his aspect, as though a good thought had occurred to him, he said, 'But you will like to meet our Miss Trenery; she too is Cornish.' And I found Grace. Grace Trenery was lecturer in the English school at Liverpool University. Her father had been a captain in the Merchant Navy; he came from Hayle; she knew Hayle; her uncle knew Hayle; her mother knew Portloe; and would I like to come to tea on Sunday? I went to tea pretty nearly every Sunday while I lived in Liverpool.

It is impossible to describe the comfort of these Sundays. Mrs. Trenery with her kind person, her love of poetry—like my father she knew much by heart—had the lovely politeness of the Cornish women of her generation; there was warmth in her courtesy which was inherited by her two daughters. Hospitality is the queen of virtues. However cold and cloudy the day outside, however ugly the Liverpool congeries of warehouses, shops and dwellings, I opened the door of the flat into humanity and laughter. I

remember a ship in a glass bottle; the sound of the kettle singing; Mrs. Trener's welcoming smile; and Miss L. K. Barrie, head mistress of Wallasey High School at that time, and later of King Edward's, Birmingham, sitting on a divan in front of the fire and saying very little. She was like an island; a piece of silence surrounded by conversation. But when she did talk she made me see parts of Scotland in my mind's eye as vividly as I could see Cornwall. She had a great gift for delineating wide tracts of country and making the colours glow. Next to walking myself over open country I liked to hear her describing it. Her words were springy as heather. And she had an apt way of recalling to Grace their various encounters with strange people. *Casual Encounters* is the title of a book which Grace must write some day. The encounters arose partly because Grace has no sense of direction anywhere, not merely, like me, no sense of direction in Liverpool. She could lose herself in a hazelnut, and time has little meaning to her or to anyone in her company. I was invited to spend an evening with her once at Professor Case's. She said we might walk; the distance was not great. We walked up and down streets and other streets and round corners, I taking no count of the way. Grace herself is a territory sufficient; when I enter in I feel folded warmly round, and unwilling to come out into the cold. I remained snug; but with an uneasy consciousness that the Cases expected us at eight. 'Oughtn't we to be nearly there?' I said at last. We stood still and gazed about; Liverpool has few features. I recognized nothing; Grace recognized nothing. Luckily she did remember the address and we managed to find a taxi which took us, late and apologetic, to the door. Professor Case looked Elizabethan with a trim pointed beard. Grace had worked with him on her fine edition of *Much Ado*, one of the volumes of the Arden Shakespeare of which Professor Case was editor-in-chief. He was an exact and exacting scholar.

I was not exact but I was swift. Within a fortnight I had sketched out my entire book down to modern times. No doubt if I had had the gift of prophecy I should have garnered in the future. A wide sweep with quotations from all my favourite authors through the ages: that was my idea. I submitted my sweep to Professor Elton. He took my sheaves as he called them, invited me to meet him again, and I passed a most illuminating and appalling half-hour. Whatever kind of writer I was to become in future it was not a sweeping one. I grew cautious in thirty minutes—only I have a little devil of incaution in me who will always up and out again. Professor Elton's method of giving a writer a sense of responsibility towards his subject matter was quite simple, and depended for its effect on the impact of his personality, and the respect one felt for his own work. He would say,

pointing to a poor specimen of my perishing sentences, 'Did you really mean this?' Or, in reply to a doubtfully hazarded remark, of which I immediately perceived the futility once it was out, 'Would you repeat that?' He went through my 'sheaves' and annotated them. Often I perused his annotations with hot ears and speechless fury. But an occasional marginal hieroglyph, which he said was to be interpreted as a compliment, kept me wrestling with expression, though jibbing at the labour like a refractory horse. I am not one who likes emendations and third thoughts. As for my subject I never really regretted choosing it. It taught me more than a more sensible pursuit might have done, since it carried me through many periods and kinds of literature and left me lingering in many a splendid place. Released from the onus of examinations I read with a delicious sense of freedom in the English Library—an ugly room, but with books all easy of access on the shelves. I dearly love to go exploring among books, taking them out and sampling them at my pleasure. The well-chosen English Library was a paradise of convenience and temptation. In addition there was the Picton Library, and the University Library under the guardianship of Dr. Sampson. This library was the reverse of free and easy. I spent considerable time in University Hall heartening students who were due to be interviewed by Dr. Sampson for some lapse in the entering or returning of a book. Strong women wept on my hearth-rug at the mere anticipation of the dread moment. It was in vain that I told them they couldn't be hanged, and that nothing else was irremediable; they passionately bewailed their carelessness. I must say I have never been so careful myself in any other library to fulfil every jot and tittle of the law. I once took, quite unintentionally, a valuable book out of the Bodleian with my own books; I knew what it was to feel that the hounds of hell were on my traces as I raced back with it. The library was closing, but I prevailed on a sandy man with thin hair to allow me through the exhibition room and so into the English reading-room where I insinuated the book among the others under my reserve slip. How appalled Joseph's brethren must have felt when their sacks were opened and the golden cup disclosed! I felt extreme guilt while that Bodleian book was in my unlawful possession. I suppose hardly any other Bodleian book has ever been out in the fresh air almost to the door of Lady Margaret Hall. I committed no such offence at Liverpool and I never saw Dr. Sampson angry. The only time I encountered him he was very peaceable though pungent. He came into an inner room of the library where I was reading a copy of Saewulf's *Pilgrimage*, the story of the journey of an English merchant in which there is a grand description of a storm off Joppa. The pilgrimage, originally in medieval Latin, had been translated by T. Wright and included in his compilation *Early Travels in Palestine*. Dr. Sampson came and looked over

my shoulder, making me jump. Except that he was better looking, he was a little like one might have expected Dr. Johnson to be, in an untidy coat. He said, 'Do you know anything about the Saewulf manuscript?' I said that there was only one manuscript which was in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. He said, 'Don't you want to see it?' I said no. He said, 'Don't you want to study old manuscripts?' I said no. He said, 'Don't you want to learn paleography?' I said no. 'Do you trust that editor?' Yes, I said, I did. 'And that translator?' 'Yes.' 'Who is T. Wright?' I said I didn't know. He said, 'You'll always be happy; you have faith,' and he never took any interest in me again. But I took a great interest in him and in his gipsy poems. I happened to be staying in Oxford with the Eltons many years later and heard Professor Elton's account of Dr. Sampson's funeral with full gipsy ceremonial in Wales. It is the only account of a funeral by which I have been profoundly impressed.

I did not study paleography nor prepare myself for a scholarly interest in manuscripts. But I became more and more interested in reading Old English literature. I went to Professor Allen Mawer's lectures and I made attempt after attempt to translate Old English verse into modern verse. Professor Elton had tried his hand, but said he was not proud of his results. But he showed me the manuscript of Lascelles Abercrombie's Nightingale Riddle which was so good that I was convinced that translation of Old English into a modern idiom could be not merely adequate but beautiful. I tried *The Seafarer* and the Storm Riddles and the fine sea poetry of *Beowulf*. But I never succeeded in pleasing myself. As an instrument for expressing the wintry sound of the sea the form of verse used by the Old English writers is unequalled. The peculiarity of the music of a breaking wave is that it starts from many points, not from one fixed point. This peculiarity is echoed in the Old English line. The three combined stresses and alliterations are like the curled lips of the wave, from which the music is variously poured; and these breaking points shift in every line. There is no monotony and there is no rest. As the wave withdraws, the rough shingle of the consonants prolongs the roar. I knew exactly what I wanted to get. I could hear it in the holidays when I was walking on Vault Beach, near Gorran Haven, but I never encompassed what I sought. I never managed to enmesh either the pebbly dispersed sound, nor the sound of the crowding of the storm, nor the hiss of hail, 'coldest of grains', nor the laughter of the iceberg as she dug into the sides of ships. Nor could I recreate the forelands and the nesses and the windy walls. A few lines of H. C. Wylde's prose achieved more than anything I managed for the cliffs—'steep rocky slopes, toilsome upward

tracks, narrow paths where only one can go, ways hard to find, towering headlands, and many a place where goblins dwell’.

Apart from Old English the sea poetry which gave me most unfading pleasure was Spenser’s. He did not, like the Riddle-makers, let his spirits fly out into the storm and go heaving and smashing and exulting with it; he shuddered at the deep, gaping mouths of the waves. The interest is transferred from the furious glory of the elements to the man at their mercy. Spenser expresses fear. But it was not Colin Clout’s horror of the Irish Channel to which I returned; it was to the magic of the sea fantasy in *The Faerie Queene*, renewable as morning and summer. How lovely I thought the wavering story of Florimell’s love for Marinell, when first I gazed through the clear pool of Spenser’s music at its intricacies. It spreads itself out like the tree sea-weeds which as children we used to watch floating with other treasures in the sea-pools of the rocks. If the story is taken out of its element it collapses into a damp mass, like those same sea-weeds if taken out of the pool. Poetry can never be transferred.

But in its proper place this poetry is a spell which enchants us as direct natural representation could never enchant. Even physical sensation is heightened by it. It is impossible to express in a direct way the sensations of a human body being lipped by the waves and borne up by them. But Spenser achieved it indirectly once for all when Florimell casts herself into the sea and Proteus takes her in his arms:

Her up betwixt his rugged hands he reard,
And with his frory lips full softly kist,
Whiles the cold ysickles from his rough beard,
Dropped adowne upon her yvorie brest.

I can read the story of Marinell and Florimell and its consummation in the marriage feast of the Thames and Medway over and over and over again. In Spenser the English waves on a summer strand are changed before our eyes to sea maidens:

Their watchet mantles fringed with silver round.

I sometimes think that Spenser alone among the poets has vivified, in a truly poetic form, England’s sea and rivers. His liquid words are the dappled surfaces of water. I have never seen the Medway except in the bridal dress Spenser made for her, a vesture:

That seemed like silver, sprinkled here and there
With glittering spangs that did like starres appeare,
And wau'd upon, like water chamelot:

Spenser saved my senses in Liverpool; his poetry is an incomparable solace to those who are away from where they long to be. Perhaps he made it so faerily tangible because he was away from where he wanted to be himself.

Liverpool that winter seemed to me, when I could penetrate beyond its dead-dragon-like bulk, to be surrounded by flat fields, with last year's birds' nests frozen in the thorns. When I went to Exmouth at Christmas I was in such a whirl of excitement that I nearly seized and kissed the wrong man for my father on the crowded Exeter platform to my father's annoyance, for he never liked to feel shame at the foolishness of any of his family burn in his own bosom. He was humming a hymn tune hard by the time I reached him. But nothing mattered as long as I was home. He had felt, too, that I was a long way away in Liverpool. He thought his sons had better brains, but he missed his daughters more. Whenever Susan went away he was inconsolable till she came back, and I had my impregnable place. We used to go to Black Hill together to fish in the reservoir. He looked exactly like a fairy on Black Hill. It was his unwrinkled fresh-coloured face, his little pointed white beard, his bright blue eyes and something timeless in his figure. No one ever enjoyed his retirement more I think. He could fish, staying out nearly motionless all day, watching the water but not catching anything. He used to say he would like to live in a wood; but he never did. I hope there are beech trees in heaven, or meadows with buttercups, or something resembling Dartmoor with bees humming in the heather. He loved to be out of doors as much as my mother loved to be within, reading by the window, her lips moving as she read the most absorbing parts. All my excursions beyond my home merely warmed up my heart afresh to come back to it. The more I was away, and the more I got to know a great variety of people, the more I realized how enormously lucky I was to have been born into a family I not only loved but liked. I had thought this affection was usual; I began to perceive it was quite rare. Susan and I slipped down to Caerhays Barton for a few days in January, but it was too early for primroses. That year in Liverpool is the only year of my life in which I have not found wild primroses towards the end of January or the beginning of February. Susan sent me primroses and violets in a great biscuit tin, enough for me and all my friends, but she could not send me Trevennen Wood or the Woodbury lanes.

The flowers I remember vividly round about Liverpool came out after the Easter holidays. There were bluebells and buttercups, buttercups that made the flat fields shine with summer. I used to set them glowing in a basket among grasses and take them to surprise Mrs. Elton. Mrs. Elton had come to be, with Grace Treney, my compensation for Liverpool. She was a Highland Scot, the person most compact of poetry in its changings and its unchangings I ever met. Her nature responded to every breath and reflection, yet stayed clear, and retained a morning, fleeting quality. I suppose it was a quality of truthfulness to itself, an entire absence of falsification or of coating. It was not that she was easy to know; but whereas most people protect themselves by a hardening and thickening shell, she protected herself by an increasing delicacy, and tenderness, and fineness of touch which, though it made her the more vulnerable, made also for more instant withdrawal. I remember her first note inviting me to lunch and to spend the afternoon; I remember my absurdly early start so as not to be late; changing buses would take time I thought! I remember loitering about in the searching cold for the right moment to ring the bell, and the pleasure of being shown into a room of which an image still lives for me in the firelight colours. Mrs. Elton could never live in an ugly room. It was as natural for her to make her surroundings harmonious as it is for me not to have any surroundings at all or heterogeneous ones. With her the useful and necessary had just sufficient of order, seamliness and ceremony to redeem daily life from flat familiarity. I always think the most beautiful moment in the story of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus is when their Companion by the way is made known to them in the breaking of bread. It amazes me when I look back to consider how unselfishly Professor and Mrs. Elton extended their hospitality to the raw and shy. Mrs. Elton had been shy herself. When I knew her better I used to love to hear of her girlhood, of her friendship with the Burne-Joneses and others whose names and work I knew. Instead of mere integuments linking the generations here were connections still vital, still feeling. And Yeats, my favourite of poets, Mrs. Elton had known him well and his sister, Miss Lily Yeats. J. B. Yeats, the poet's father, had been a close friend of the family; he had called Professor Elton the Englishman, which was a good soubriquet. Yet this quintessential Irishman and this Englishman had been able to make allowances for and appreciate one another. It was perhaps because Professor Elton, though he was the Englishman, had no trace of the provincial or of the sectarian in his mind; nor was his perception contained by any particular period or century. Literary fashion and the criticism which depended on it he despised; and he could examine with interest manifestation of the human spirit foreign to his own temper. Nothing, I think, could be more alien to him than the various

manifestations of religious enthusiasm—in his massive adherence to reason his mind was eighteenth century in tone—yet his essay on Enthusiasm is an acute and even a sympathetic study. He had a truly critical mind; his instinct was to examine and judge; but he did not pre-judge—except perhaps the ‘odd’. To the odd he was not indulgent. He was equipped to judge by the immense range of his accurate knowledge; but his criticism has also the vitality which comes from force of feeling. He did not pretend to a feeling for poetry in order to make pronouncement; he made pronouncements because his feeling for poetry was profound, and extended to the literature of many nations up and down the thread of time.

He had a stately sense of metre and rhythm and proportion. His reading aloud, for combined meaning and music, was the best I have ever listened to. I only heard him once in Liverpool; but later in Oxford, when I was a frequent guest in the house, he could be persuaded to read aloud after coffee at night. One could even make requests. One request of mine was for Byron’s *Vision of Judgment*. I had it that night—the wit, the mockery, the gale of laughter, the tremendous swell of indignation, the mastery of the thing. Other renderings of which the echoes linger in my ear are of Spenser’s *Mutabilitie Cantos*, Smart’s great *Hymn to Creation*, Marvell’s *Upon Appleton House* and Skelton’s *Philip Sparrow*. When I first knew him Professor Elton’s main interest was already beginning to swing from English criticism to translation. The Slavonic languages—Russian, Polish, Czech, Serbian—he learnt them all in succession and translated their poetry into English. Listening to some of these translations read aloud—some short versions of modern Serbian poetry in particular had great power—I tasted a communion with strange peoples which no political oratory has ever produced in me. Nations are linked most closely by their poetry; more poetry and fewer pamphlets; and a council of translators perhaps! Fine translations are too few and those which exist are not disseminated.

Mrs. Elton’s poetry was more lyrical; her pity nearer home. She had pity especially on all prisoners and captives. She was singular I think among those in whom pity is strong in that for her those whom she pitied retained their humanity. ‘Objects of pity’ is a perilous phrase, terrifying because of depersonalization. Objects have no rights. But for Mrs. Elton people in prison were still people to be connected with the world outside and with their own past. She had known women prisoners in Liverpool. Her recent book *Locks, Bolts and Bars*, a study of prison conditions during the Napoleonic wars, with stories of the escapes of English and French prisoners, emphasizes the abiding humanity of the fugitives. A hundred little touches, matters of choice, mark the book as hers. But she can be contained

in no book or poem. Her meaning was in herself; her appreciation of the absurd; her richly-stored memory; her voice—she spoke on up breaths as well as down breaths; her manner so utterly her own; a certain felicity inseparable from her; her occasional, rare Scottish stories; her elegance.

As soon as summer came I no longer felt like a prisoner in Liverpool. I could get out of it on my bicycle. The longest trip I took was to the Lakes, setting out suddenly one day, merely because after a visit to the bank I had money in my pocket. It was one of those early June days which come as rare gifts, and which convey the impression that it will never rain again. After leaving the bank I had bicycled so far through grimy ways in order to get out of Liverpool and its worse satellites that it seemed a pity to come back. I had a thin mackintosh in my saddlebag; I added to it a toothbrush and a cotton nightdress which I bought for 1s. 11d. I wired Miss Chapman at the Hostel, and I reached Lancaster in time for bed and breakfast at a C.T.C. house. Those lodgings sponsored by the Cyclists' Touring Club I have always found satisfactory and in those days they were cheap. The sun next morning was as splendid as the day before. I bicycled through the air grinning with pleasure; I remember chiefly wild roses, the pink ones; and I remember coming to the level lake of Windermere and feeling so sharp set with hunger that I felt I could eat a Hansel and Gretel's cottage, roof and all. I remember the beauty in evening light of a little polished lake, and I remember the lodging I found at Grasmere, my bathe in the lake, the supper of cold boiled beef and pickles and going up Dunmail-Raise in the sparkle of morning. Sometimes I left my bicycle and climbed. I climbed Helvellyn. I remember the glory of Thirlmere as the mist, lifting, revealed it in its primal clarity; how at the top my pleasure was spoiled by the chill which struck through the cotton frock and the short woollen jacket I was wearing. Unpreparedness is not the watchword for mountaineering. This truism I did not fully appreciate until, after bicycling and climbing for a week, I went round the lake on which Keswick stands and turned my wheels for Windermere. It began to rain. I knew Cornish rain, but not rain like this, relentless rain without a rift anywhere in any region of the sky. A lowering sky and malicious, sending forth rain which took pleasure in smiting at me, in running down my neck and into my shoes. The drops pelted and spun. Mud splashed my cotton garment until I had the appearance of a crustacean; my hands grew so cold that when I stopped at a pub for a hot drink my fingers could not undo a button. I made for Lancaster pedalling hard. The wild roses did not smile at me now; they were, like me, in eclipse. I began, not for the first time, to perceive I was no true tramp; I discovered how, as soon as wet rain soaked me, I began to think of comfort, of a hot bath, of a fire, of steaming coffee. I

began to think how pleasant University Hall was and pictured Kathleen and Margaret brewing coffee. I smelt hot buttered toast. By evening I reached Preston and took refuge in the despised train, my bicycle going into the luggage van with other bicycles, and I going into a third-class carriage with other third-class women who did not like the look of me. On few occasions, I must say, have I presented a less pleasing appearance. I was too well watered for society. One old lady gave me advice. She said, 'My dear, do you know you are saving up for yourself a future of misery and dependence, misery and dependence? Rheumatism!' I thought I felt a premonitory twinge in my wrists. I began to steam. I tried to take my mind off rheumatism by thinking of lying in a bath right up to the neck in hot water; I could feel the ring of water slipping round my neck; I could feel the water as I played with it; I could feel the weight of it as I tried to lift my stretched out legs. 'Bath salts!' I said to myself. 'Kathleen's best bath salts!' And with that I went to sleep, and the old lady who had threatened me with rheumatism woke me up at Liverpool. I slipped unseen into the Hall just before midnight, stripped off my garments into one hot bath, and insinuated my person into another. It was better than roses. I sometimes fear that of the two strange constituents of which we are compounded there is more body to me than soul. Yet I am slight in figure. My soul must be the merest shadow of shadows.

The next journey I made was after I had bidden farewell to the University of Liverpool and my status of William Noble Fellow. I had had a good year. And I would busily have prayed for the soul of him 'who gave me wherewith to scoleye' if I could have thought he would have liked it. On the whole, from what I could gather of the late Mr. Noble, it seemed to me that he would have condemned the practice as Popish. I had heard that he handled his beautifully bound books in gloves, and that he provided clean pairs for any guests he took into his library. His soul was probably in a better state of grace than my own. Still I thought of him as I made my way out of Liverpool. The kindest benefaction, the freest, the most gracious any rich man can bestow is, I think, to give a young man or a young woman, or an old man or an old woman if it comes to that, time to write a book, entirely unregulated time to write a book in a place where he is likely to make some friends. I was not sorry to say goodbye to Liverpool. I was extremely sorry to say goodbye to friends I had made there.

The best of friends is that they abide and can be found again. I was leaving friends in Liverpool, but I was going towards friends I had made earlier. Bertha Wright and her friend Catherine Maclean were at Caerphilly near Cardiff, and my idea was to bicycle slowly down through Wales, stay a couple of nights with them, go on to South Devon to my family, and then

into Cornwall to Truro to be a guest at my friend Marjorie Pascoe's wedding. I posted my wedding garments and my wedding present; I made arrangements to borrow a hat on the spot; and, free of care, I set out again on my travels unencumbered with goods; this time my improvident trusting was not punished. It seems to me now incredible that I should have started without a map, trusting only to fitful memories of odd words dropped here and there which had made me want to see certain places. I skirted the north coast to Conway, and then zigzagged south through the midst of Wales, going sometimes by directing posts, sometimes by what people said; staying in cottages some nights, sleeping out some nights and hearing frogs croaking. I forget where I heard the chorus of frogs. Time was all my own. Nobody was expecting me at any particular moment. I felt a participation, an outgoing of myself, with Wales, which I never experienced in the Lakes. The people seemed akin to me. They told me funny stories before I went to bed, and made me practise pronouncing with a proper Welsh accent the enormous long names of places. Nearly all my hosts were chapel-goers, but some denounced the Bible-punchers. There was a man, I was told, and he made the collection indeed at the chapel. And he was asked one Sunday how much it was. And he said, 'It is in my own pocket with my own money, whatever. I will tell you of it next week. And to market he went, and a little heifer calf he bought. And it was Charity they called her when she grew into a cow indeed. A fine cow she was.'

The weather was hot in Wales. I remember going up a turfy mountain because it was in my way, and my gratitude for the solid shade of a rare rock under which I rested, moving myself round with the shade as the sun moved in the sky. It is idle to tell me that the chariot of the sun is not driven across the sky every day. He flamed in Wales. I went by green ways and heard the music of falling water; once by Festiniog I found myself among the slates; one night I knocked at a door and was told by a woman who was not Welsh, and who minced her words, that she was sure her boarding house would be too expensive for me. I said I hoped all her sheep would die. But I don't suppose she owned any sheep. Parts of Wales smelt of them. I can remember the outline of Cader Idris against an orange and lemon sky as I turned away from that prim house and the mincing woman. Three weeks or so of July I idled in Wales and I do not remember that it rained at all. I became summer's tanling in the Black Mountains. And I came to Brecon, and so down to where I began to look for precise directions to my friends' house near Caerphilly. It seemed miraculous to me that the roads they had indicated on their little plan should be there; that those roads had remained still and quiet while I had come down from Liverpool; that the house should

be just where my friends had told me it would be, and that I should go in and find them both, and be welcomed, and delight to listen to their voices, so different from the voices of my companions by the way. Catherine gave me unguents for my burnt face; cooling and fragrant appliances. And I went into a bath, head and all. I remember the fruit we ate; and the talk at night. I remember a new volume of Mr. De la Mare's poems, and how I cut the pages open with my forefinger, not thinking of its being Catherine's book until I perceived the jagged edges; I remember going to bed; the coolness of sheets; a bedside light; and making up verses:

In your spare room lies abed
My body clean and comforted
With nightgown smooth and linen sheet
And fleecy fall of fine blanket. . . .

And then I fell asleep.

CHAPTER XV

UP TROON

No whisper of wave, yet caressingly, curve on curve,
Smooth lines open and swerve
Around me. In the still air,
Wide arms and quiet breast
Woo me that I may rest
Lovingly there.

I would not seek for home or human fellow
In this silence the carns hallow;
Silent the sky is spread
Without rift or fold descending
From the high arches bending
Over my head.

Then in the silence was it the mist's white finger
That warned me not to linger,
Or was it the hoofs of Pan
Heard far away in the hollow
And seeming to follow, follow
Me as I ran?

On Bodmin Moor

From Cardiff, taking my bicycle with me, I crossed by steamer to Weston-super-Mare and thence, by easy stages, now skirting rivers, now hidden in lanes, now flying down the moorland hills and now crawling up them, I came to Truro, to my friend Marjorie Pascoe's wedding. As I went I chanted sometimes snatches from Spenser's *Epithalamion*:

Open the temple gates unto my love,
Open them wide that she may enter in.

It was a fine thing to be married I thought; but better to be drinking the air before me as I rode.

The wedding impressed me very much; I tried to pray. I remember the arch of light illuminating Marjorie as she entered the church with her father;

and how the sunshine received her and Harold together as they left the darkness of the aisle when the service was over. I drank champagne and was wild to be off again, free of my wedding garments, and feeling the air opening and closing behind me in the lanes of light. I wanted to reach Bolventor on Bodmin Moor that evening, and soon I had left the Goss Moor behind me and entered on the wilder waste. On a summer evening the moor is still; there are no trees with leaves to rustle. In winter when a wind blows it hisses and froths through the wiry vegetation with a timeless, desolating sound that links us with what is most ancient in man's history. As I bicycled over the moor that evening on the main Bodmin-Launceston road it was absolutely quiet; only near the occasional pools—Doughty's 'like liquid flint' best describes them—were birds flying low and calling. At Bolventor I put up in the little post-office on the opposite side of the road to Jamaica Inn, had supper and went walking on the moor. All the heath seemed soaked in summer, the earth warmer than the sky. Swallows which lilt even in their downward motion—I can imagine liting up but not down if I were a bird—darted round me as I reached the summit of a tor. I began to wish I had never arranged to sleep cooped up in a room like a lidded box when I might have inherited a moor and an entire sky for my sleeping chamber. The enchantment of the moor is in the suggestion of fluidity fixed, the long, sweeping lines that flow and yet are motionless, smooth-backed waves that will never break. By the sea there is always a murmur even on the calmest night; in farm lands the wind is in the oats and the wheat and the barley; it whistles through thorns in the hedges. In the woods it has a thousand instruments to play on. But on this summer night on the moor, within four miles or so of Bolventor, all was incredibly silent, as silent as snow. And tranced in the silence was all time past. I was not frightened. Then, almost without my perceiving it, the summer haze became a mist. I did not mind; I still loitered; there was plenty of time. It was only when I began to make my way back that I knew the deceptiveness of distance; the confounding of space; the bewilderment as direction is lost; the cattle-tracks that lead only to other cattle-tracks; the silken cotton-grass that gave warning of the sucking sound of quagmires. I remembered stories of cows and horses caught in quagmires, victims too terrified to help those who were trying to get them out with ropes. I wished for a friendly tree with life in it. Here were only ling and furze and bedstraw white with devil's spit; peat; stone outcrops orange with lichen; and brown pools like fathomless eyes. If I had been a witch I could not have felt further removed from the human events of the morning. I began to run, I fell down, I should be caught. I got up again. And as suddenly as I became frightened I ceased to be frightened; I was free of fear. I was only walking in the mist on the moor not very deep in from

Bolventor. I should get back quite easily. I did get back but not until well after midnight, just in time to prevent the old lady with whom I had arranged to lodge from rousing a couple of men to make a search. No will-o'-the-wisp mis-light thee! If I had seen a will-o'-the-wisp I should have felt reassured. It was the nothingness of everything which unstrung me. I have often felt the shadowyness of existence. 'Let me never be confounded!' I sing the canticle with a double intention. Identity? What is it? I can puzzle myself stupid over that. 'I am; say that I AM hath sent thee.'

When the holidays were over and I went back to Camborne to school I was not as sorry as I thought I should be. Teaching has compensations. Camborne children are not undemonstrative and I felt welcomed home. Poor children! They little knew. For now, refreshed by my long spell, I was like a whirlwind in the school. The course I chose for the upper school was enthusiastically wide. Instead of 'set-books' I chose a syllabus known as 'Outlines of English Literature'. We made a chart to show how the great English writers and their works fitted into time, and then we read what we liked—which often meant, I sadly fear, what I liked. We trusted that something in the English paper of the Cambridge Senior Examination—there was a 'general' paper in those days—would suit us. Some girls, who no doubt would have cared for literature anyway, grew to read with attention and delight under this scheme. But for some I think on looking back it must have been burdensome. It demanded more than a fair share of time from girls with a scientific or mathematical bent. Yet a narrow course of set-books can be deadly; no single book suits thirty different girls. More than any other subject the teaching of English needs leisure. Given time every child in the land could enter into some corner of his birthright. One has only to watch small children listening to stories, or girls of eleven acting them. I especially like to watch girls of twelve or thirteen when they perceive that a story is funny. The reactions of children to literature, children not brought up to feel that there are some things they ought and some they ought not to like, are very downright. 'Aren't we going to read anything but these old stories of Gods and Heroes?' a black-haired gnome of a child asked me once. 'I hate these old Gods and Heroes.' I asked her what she had been reading under the desk. Children never realize how completely their faces give them away when they are reading under the desk. When told she could read her book openly—it was *Jane Eyre*—something was lost to her. There is a stolen, breathless enchantment in reading under the desk which open reading lacks. From eleven to fifteen or so most girls are in the ravenous stage for reading. They need enough; good and bad alike; they take plenty of roughage. We need to lay in large provision and give ample opportunity for sampling. It

grieves me to the heart in the present time of shortage (1947), that educational publishers should be producing, instead of good reading books in abundance, idiotic 'Courses in English' and 'Comprehension Tests'—all the dull paraphernalia for the study of language; as though language and literature can ever be separated alive.

But often I have had my doubts about the teaching of literature, especially when I have been preparing candidates for entrance to Oxford or Cambridge. Papers seem to be set to test maturity of taste in immature persons. Taste cannot be assessed. It is a matter of experience and personal idiosyncrasy. I remember my hot rush of shame when first I read Mr. Somerset Maugham's *Christmas Holiday*. Was I, in teaching, like that frightful mother? This satire of Maugham's is an awful parable for all those of us who are engaged not in producing poetry and pictures and music and sculpture, but in peddling them. We talk. We can hardly escape damnation. When I think of Venetia showing her children what to feel in the picture galleries of Paris; when I see her in her dining-room with its pictures in the most modish taste, and its electric fire simulating flames, I always decide to resign from teaching. To trade in feeling is the worst of trades. In these periods of doubt I shun literature, I elicit groans from all the upper school because, instead of reading poetry or acting stories, we practise diligently analysis into clauses and written exercises which I mark with furious attention to 'correctness'. 'Alice's spelling still needs great care,' I write in the terminal reports.

Evangelists are busy with the arts, busier than ever. As an army of caterpillars I sometimes see us, preying on the fairest flowers and fruit. 'From all who are interested in the arts, from all teachers, lecturers, regenerators . . .' do we need some such new clause in the Litany?

The fear of being a cicerone made me begin to scheme, as soon as I got back to teaching, to get away from it again. Two years of freedom I aimed at this time. I began casting about for money to live on during the two years and decided that I must save up; I, who had never saved a ha'penny in my life, now adopted this unlikely expedient. Thoreau's *Walden* gave me an idea, but I did not resort to the woods; I took an unfurnished cottage in Troon, my landlord being the Mr. Bastion who had helped me to erect my tent at Gwithian. The Bastions lived in Troon where they kept a shoe shop, and where Mr. Bastion made and mended shoes. My cottage was one of four standing in a row in Troon Square. On my left was Mr. Percy Rowe's shop; on my right a farmhouse owned by Mr. Jewell stood at right angles to the cottages. At night I could hear a rat making his way from Mr. Jewell's

outhouses to Mr. Percy Rowe's sacks of barley-meal. I never saw him; I heard his pilgrimages, and the pilgrimages of his kind. My cottage was too lean for his visits compared with Mr. Percy Rowe's; but through my walls he danced his gallop galliards on the way to the feasting. I had three bedrooms in two of which I placed beds, and in the third a tin bath. I had a kitchen and a sitting-room which I furnished with Miss Pratt's kitchen table and five pounds' worth of remarkable antiques. I surprised Troon with Susan's taste in blue curtains. Susan came to stay and thought both Troon and the cottage ugly. It is true that when she arrived I had lost the key so that she had to get in through the window; that I could not find the matches for some time and that, showing her round with a bicycle lamp, I let her trip down the unexpected step into the kitchen. She has never forgotten the fine casserole of chicken I provided for her supper though.

Food flowed in Troon. I had had the notion of combining with a saving in rent—I only paid four shillings a week for my cottage—a saving in food. Beans had been Thoreau's main dish. I bought beans. But even when at long last I succeeded in cooking them so that they were soft I felt a strong distaste for them. Beans are not a human food. I would as soon not eat as eat the unaccompanied bean. Instead of attempting it I went to see Mrs. Lovelock in her shop and Mrs. Percy Rowe in hers. With these shops at my door and Mrs. Bastion near, it would have been the merest affectation in me to subsist on beans. Instead I ate everything that was nice. Although times were hard in Troon, and unemployment throughout the district brought despair to many an honourable man, although the railway station was the frequent scene of farewells as men from the old Cornish mines went out to use their skill in the new mines of other lands, food was abundant and sound, various and cheap. We received the tribute of the world. Yet it was the food produced near at hand which I enjoyed most. I stepped about two dozen paces for cream and rich butter, chickens and eggs. Troon wives were good cooks. How I should like a Troon split with cream and honey, a saffron cake, or a hot pasty now. The Galloping Major (an old lady riding on the shaft of a donkey-wheels) used to take pasties hot from the home-ovens, down to the men at Holman's Foundry. I was always being given something either to warm my nattlings or the cockles of my heart. Some homemade elderberry wine did make me feel that it had reached and set aglow these mysterious organs. When Mrs. Bastion baked splits she put some through the window for me. A casual acquaintance in Beacon—not even a parent—remarked to me once as I was on my way through the village to school that he'd heard I had no leeks for winter. 'What, no licks? You must have licks. Licky broth and licky pasty are the thing for your vitals in this bitter weather, my dear

maid.' When I got back to Troon that night licks were sprouting like young palm trees on either side of my door. My fecklessness provoked compassion and some scorn. I hate the look of a naked rabbit. Skin one I could not. Mrs. Lovelock said to me, 'What! a great maid like you cean't skin a rabbit? You ought to be 'sheamed.'

The Bastions had had my cottage distempered cream. Alice darkened my sitting-room floor with some such stuff as oaker-line. The bedroom floors I did not even darken; they retained their boardiness. Mrs. Bastion said she thought Troon would think it funny if I didn't have a bit of carpet or canvas on the stairs, seeing the stairs were the first object that met the eye when the front door was opened. I don't remember whether I succumbed to a bit of canvas or not. I rather think I did. It is always foolish to be thought 'funny' in a village. Once a handsome toad found his way into my front passage; I got him to hop on the fire-shovel and was bearing him to the door when the postman opened it. I nearly precipitated the toad against his middle button. 'Why didn' 'ee take un up in your hands?' said he. Why indeed? Why shouldn't I touch a toad or a bat? Perhaps it was memories of Grimm and Andersen. Wicked stepmothers and witches placed toads in their bosoms and exchanged malice with them. Perhaps my fire-shovel scared all the other toads away. I daresay my toad told the other toads of the great terror, how upon the platform of an engine he had been lifted up. I never had another toad in.

Water was a difficulty at Troon; we all had to fetch it from the spout in buckets or pitchers. I was lucky in that Mr. Percy Rowe fetched his with a pony-contrivance drawing a barrellful at a time; and I was welcome to use from his store while it lasted. I only drew water with my pitcher when the barrel was empty. I had my own rain-water barrel at the back. So had we all. I used to hear one of my neighbours washing outside in the mornings. He would sing a hymn, often trying a four-line hymn to a six-line tune or vice versa, and fitting the words in as best he could between the gurglings he made as his hand passed over his mouth in washing. 'There is a green . . . gurgle-gurgle-gurgle . . . hill far a-a-way without . . . gurgle, gurgle, gurgle . . . a city wall.' When I heard, 'There is a green hill', or 'Oh, where is my wandering boy tonight?' or 'When the roll is called up yon . . . gurgle, gurgle, gurgle . . . der . . .' I knew it was time for me to wash myself and get ready for school. 'Rimmington' was at that time a tune which had suddenly taken hold of Troon. Boys whistled it; the Galloping Major sped her donkey on with it; men added grace notes to the main. We all sang Rimmington, though Miss Eustace's aunt declared that there was no more tune in it than a stick of rhubarb.

My daily bicycle ride from Troon to school was largely through built-up ways; down through Beacon I would speed, down Beacon Hill to the school by Camborne Railway Station. But before I began the descent I could look over the low stone hedges to a landscape opening under the eyelids of the morn with a radiance that set me singing. Tregonning and Godolphin lift themselves clear of the darkness or the mist. Even in rainy weather or cold, even in furious gales or hopeless drizzle through which the derelict engine-houses gloomed, I never reached school without feeling my heart glad. I quaffed the air; and it enlivened my ghost. As I reached the school gates girls would be streaming in from Redruth and Portreath; from Lanner and Carnkie; girls from as far afield as St. Day and St. Agnes. Girls from Hayle, Gwithian and Conner Downs; girls on bicycles from Praze. From the familiar Camborne streets they came walking, and from the near farms and hamlets, through Treslothan woods or Knave-go-by fields. I felt especially drawn to the country children, children who, on Saturdays and Sundays, were living almost unchanged such a life as I myself had lived at Gorran and Caerhays. Lilian Blair and her sister from the schoolhouse at Praze especially used to remind me of myself and my sister. They would come sometimes, on nipping days, with little hot bottles of water in their pockets to warm their hands. Bicycling is cold work in winter for the first mile or two.

On Saturdays and Sundays I enjoyed bicycling to the villages from which the children came; I liked to know their journeys. I particularly recall Crowan as I saw it one Sunday afternoon, a Crowan drenched in sunlight, a Crowan given over entirely to sleepy cats and a sheep-dog stretched out on the crown of the road too happy to raise his head as I passed. Sunday-dinner seemed to have overwhelmed the world. Once when Susan was staying with me we went out beyond Praze to Clowance, and explored the deserted gardens. We wished the empty house were ours; we would not have left it desolate, we said, like those St. Aubyns. The river Hayle rises in the Clowance woods. Susan has not my passion for trespassing, but when she does trespass she trespasses in the grand manner. I once gave my name as Fanny Price, Mansfield Park, Hertfordshire, to a gamekeeper who asked it of me in some wood I had reached from Liverpool. But Susan one day assumed without ostentation the air of a Pendarves. She was taking her ease in a private part of Pendarves Wood when fellow trespassers approached her, wavered, and said, 'We hope we are not intruding.' 'No,' said Susan, a Jane Austenish idiom springing naturally to her lips with the pride of possessions. 'Pray, go anywhere you wish.'

During winter evenings in my cottage I continued to struggle by fits and starts with *The Sea in English Literature*. By this time my enthusiasm had frosted over. To prepare a subject is a pleasure; but to set out one's findings in order on paper is a sore task. Words are small units. If the Liverpool Adjudicators had not approved my first draft and given me a grant in aid of publication, and if Professor Elton had not periodically suggested that I should send him my 'sheaves' I should have kicked the whole thing into the waste-paper basket. I did kick it there frequently, but never in that final manner which ends in a bit of shrivelled ash. After much pain of writing and re-writing, my manuscript was ready. I had meant to write a kind of Introduction to Conrad; instead I had reached to within three hundred years of him and laid down my pen. The Liverpool University Press published the book. When I returned from blowing about on the cliffs one dark November afternoon to find my six presentation copies awaiting me in a neat parcel I was elate. But when I opened the book almost the first quotation which caught my eye was a comic misprint. I had quoted J. C. Squire's poem:

There was an Indian who had known no change.

The line read, in my book:

There was an Indian who had no change.

I was hot with shame and confusion. But when the reviews came in, and reviews were long and laudatory in those days, no one had noticed my error. Only Professor Elton and I exchanged, when I next went to Oxford, our final smile in relation to *The Sea in English Literature*.

The next thing I did was to buy a motor bicycle. I was walking in Exeter High Street with Susan during the Christmas holidays when I saw displayed in a shop window an elegant little motor bicycle, a two-stroke, a Velocette, the latest model. I kept on returning to eye its blackness, its sheen, and its slim mile-devouring look. I asked the price; forty-odd pounds; and I had forty-odd pounds saved up towards my two free years. I compared the distant pleasure of two free years and the immediate satisfaction of the Velocette. Distant prospects have a cold appeal; the immediate is enticing and warm; I should save railway-fares I said to the reluctant side of myself, and the Velocette became mine. I bought it that day and went up to take delivery two days later. As in bottom gear I chugged up and down a lane, and strained my ears to catch the instructions of a beery voice, I wished with all my heart I had kept my eyes fixed on distant hopes instead of setting myself astride a snorting little dragon. By the time I got into second gear my spirits lightened; in top they rocketed. My instructor whirled me out of Exeter on the pillion; at the top of Exton Hill he left me and off I went to

Exmouth. Had there been any traffic to speak of on the road I should have broken my neck. As it was I arrived triumphant and hooting, but unable to stop, outside our dwelling. I had to go down the street and up another before I found wit to stop and get off.

A week later I set out on my new possession for Camborne. A motor bicycle likes to eat up the miles fast, but I was ill-prepared to digest them. I had no overalls, and it was a sparkling, frosty, January day. My luggage was not well adjusted. I had tied it on with a bit of string. Round about Okehampton the air seemed to crackle with cold, and my hands were no longer my obedient servants. An R.A.C. scout gave chase. He warned me that my luggage was falling off. 'Vibrations, you know,' he said. 'You new to it? Nice little machine you've got.' I glowed. Yes, I was quite willing to subscribe to the association which maintained such very helpful persons; for while talking he had made my luggage so secure that it cost me an effort to dislodge it at last. I went through Launceston Gate into Cornwall; over Bodmin Moor to Bodmin; over the Goss Moor to Indian Queens; from Indian Queens to Redruth. The terror of Redruth steep high street! It was a Saturday afternoon and Redruth inhabitants, thronging their own legitimate highways, challenged me to kill them if I dared. There is nothing in the world like Redruth's bodily resistance to traffic on a Saturday afternoon. And in those days there was no more skiddy track than the three miles, complete with tram-lines, between Redruth and Camborne. When at last I pulled up in Troon Square I felt as though I had been through the difficulties and dangers of an Arctic expedition and a jungle exploration combined. Redruth is not even a still jungle; all the teeming vegetation is on the move, unforeseeably in motion. How glad I was that the Bastions were always ready to make and share tea as I sat by their fire and recounted my adventures. My clutch was a bit fierce, Mr. Bastion said as he examined and tested my machine. I knew well how fierce it was. Had I not nearly sprung like a tiger at the chest of the policeman on point duty at the foot of Redruth High Street?

When I began going to school on the Velocette I missed my old silent swoop to Camborne. In compensation, instead of pushing a bicycle up hill when my work was over, I went flying up faster and faster to Troon and as far beyond it as I wished.

In Mr. Bastion's opinion I gained my education as a motor cyclist cheaply. Showing off was a temptation to me as it had been when I had ridden Dart as a child. In those days when I was showing off the pony always shied and threw me; the Velocette seemed to have the same talent.

One Sunday night, when fools' corner by Camborne Church was well lined with idlers, ironical eyes watched me take the bend too fast and nearly precipitate myself through the plate glass of the Co-op; only the Society's prudent erections of railings kept me and the Velocette out of the premises. A remark of Bob Lovelock's taught me sense. We were discussing freewill and predestination in the shop one night. Bob, or perhaps it was Jim Lovelock, said that during the war the thought that comforted him most when he went over the top was 'what is to be will be'. I said I didn't believe in this. Supposing I went full tilt down Beacon Hill, I said, and discovered too late to pull up that the gates across the level crossing were closed, and I smashed right into them. I should be dead, but I should have chosen; it wouldn't have been a case of 'what is to be will be'. Jim Lovelock replied: 'I was always supposing you wasn't being a damn fool.'

I learnt not to be a damn fool with my Velocette and soon I felt as safe on my two wheels as on my two feet. I could worm my way at snail's pace through the congregation of Redruth citizens, or fleet the miles carelessly over Bodmin Moor. For long-distance travel on main roads a motor bicycle is perfect; the rider does not notice his own noise or his own smell, and the speed exhilarates. A friend of mine used to say that when he'd had a couple of pints at the Ring of Bells he went home of a Saturday night feeling full of rhythm. That was exactly as I felt after a journey on the Velocette; I felt full of rhythm. Time after time I made the journey between Exmouth and Camborne, entering Cornwall sometimes by way of the ferry to Torpoint, sometimes by way of Tavistock and Gunnislake; more often by the Launceston Gate. Once I did it in the very early morning, reaching Camborne in time for school at nine o'clock. Speed kills reflection and induces a cheap beatitude. I who was horrified that men should kill one another in a passion, or for greed, or to maintain the right, or because they were commanded, never considered the more revolting chance that they might kill one another because they were in a hurry, or drunk with speed. Sheer luck and some skill, not caution or any sense of responsibility towards others, saved me from collision. I felt as safe on the roads as if I were in God's pocket. I became the motor cyclist complete; I read the *Motor Cycle*; I quoted Ixion; I followed the races and, in fancy, cheered on the Velocettes. I even felt that my Velocette ought to be at my distant beck. When I had ridden to Land's End, left my Velocette and walked along the cliffs to Porth Curnow, I used to feel that I ought to be able to whisper a magic phrase and call my steed of steel to where I was from where it was. I began to put faith in the twirling of a pin. I frequently used the Velocette to bring me within walking and finding distance of some old quoit, some stone-circle, or cross,

or holy well. For this new interest I was indebted to Carwinnen Cromlech which stands in one of the Pendarves fields near Camborne; and to Mr. C. V. Thomas, chairman at that time of the school governors, who gave me the run of his library in which there was a good collection of Cornish books. Previously I had passed stone circles and cromlechs time and again in different parts of Cornwall, and thought of them only as landmarks and familiars or, with conventional flippancy, called them devil's frying pans. They need the dusk and mist, or a storm, or a lowering overcast sky to make themselves felt; or to be seen in wide, treeless wastes which have themselves a savage grandeur. But Carwinnen Cromlech is only about one and a half miles from Camborne. To reach it from Camborne I used to go up Pendarves Street, through Pendarves woods, round Treslothan Church, up Lovers' Lane and over the hedge into a field. Because it is in a field Carwinnen, notwithstanding its powerful uprights and grand coping stone, is a little subdued, a little domesticated, a little as though put in a cage to be a specimen, patronized by Pendarves. I used to wonder whether, in a home field, it felt like a Red Indian in an urban villa. But although on one side are the grasslands, woods and park of Pendarves, and even a house—Pendarves House—on the other side the furzy brakes which flank the field lead up to the wild moors about Troon, Nine Maidens and Wendron. I liked to wander about the moorland above Troon. On the moor, or standing under the great coping stone of Carwinnen, personality was dwarfed and petty problems melted away. I used to think to myself that the moor and the stones remained, but the men who had lived were gone, and had left nothing but the grey stones set up here and there not as memorials of themselves, but as reminders that the moor had continued in rain and shine while man, so alien to earth, had wandered on it beset with his other fancies. What does the moor know of continuity? What does it know of the succession of flowers and fruits? Yet it remains while man with his passion for continuity dies, and only leaves the stones which he has set up, stones which moved him because they were, unlike himself, independent, without the pangs and uncertainty of blood and sap.

CHAPTER XVI

WEST PENWITH

I am fire of the fiery sun whose ray
Kindles my clay;

Of one substance with earth, her wine and wheat
Quick in my feet;

My dancing blood follows the motion
Of moon and ocean;

And I am the word, to weave and wear
The living air;

Lapt, lapt in Thy livery,
And breathing Thee.

To the Giver of Breath

While I had my Velocette all Cornwall was open to me at weekends. One Saturday I could stand on Pentire Rumps and Point, the next on Dodman. I had become like one of the old giants, taking giant strides. It almost seemed to me as though I could have one foot on Rough Tor and the other on St. Agnes Beacon or Carn Brea; one on Trink and the other on Carn Kenidjack. I surveyed my land; only the coast between Padstow and Hartland was a little beyond me. That stretch I haunted later. From Troon I got to know Gweek and Constantine and Manaccan; Cadgwith and Coverack; Kynance, Mullion, Poldu and Gunwalloe. From Fowey to Lizard was mine, and from Lizard to Land's End, with all the creeks and windings, the bottoms and the downs. But most familiarly of all I got to know West Penwith, that extreme western tip of Cornwall which is a little Cornwall in itself. Just as the Tamar makes Cornwall almost an island, so Hayle River makes almost an island of West Penwith. I came to know it by heart as I know Gorran and St. Michael Caerhays.

St. Michael had his footing in my new territory as in my old. In West Penwith his splendid mount is lifted up. The mount was my place of pilgrimage, not to go on to, but to look at from all quarters and heights, in all

seasons, and at all times. If I live to be a thousand years old I shall not weary of looking at the mount. In my thousand and first year I shall crawl up past Sancreed Church by Sancreed Beacon to look on it from there; or I shall totter down from Mr. Green's farm at Busullow till I reach the field-stile to Madron; or I shall pant my way to the top of Castle-an-Dinas and see the mount from there. If I am too feeble for that in my thousand and second year I shall manage to get into the train at Hayle when the columbines are out, all the purple columbines that take the eye on the railway banks, and see the mount beyond the ugly railway litter and the bulrushes of Marazion Swamp. In a bath chair I shall be wheeled along the Promenade and see the mount anchored in lead and silver, or floating in the blue:

It seemed amid the surges for to fleet.

That line of Spenser's is the most visible thing ever written about the mount.

Penwith is wild; the flow of the land is wild, for all the tillage and civility, for all the growth of Penzance and the gardens up the Gulval Valley; for all the sheltered plots of early 'taties', jonquils, violets and anemones which snuggle into the very cliffs themselves. The rock is near. Between Penberth and Porth Curnow the path may lead you through garden nooks where the dark earth is so tilled that it looks sifted fine as flour. But close at hand, starting out to sea, rearing its gigantic crests is Treryn Dinas, naked and impregnable. More soaring is Tol-pedn Penwith to which my favourite approach was along the cliffs from Land's End. Land's End, compared with Tol-pedn and Treryn Dinas, is disappointing. On the landward side it has come to look like a shabby old fur, worn, dingy. But the trodden paths cannot spoil its seaward strength; its piled cubes, its space of unused air, its sea navy-blue with a heady sparkle, or grey, or lucent green. Out to sea are the Longships. To the right is the smooth line which slips into the neck and runs over the head of Cape Cornwall. Nearer, between Land's End and Sennen Cove, the cliffs have the storied, sculptured formation that Sir Humphry Davy loved. He knew the broken arches of the cathedral caverns, just as he knew the beauty of the moonlight lying on Mount's Bay. Davy, to me, is very present in Penwith; I thought I saw him once before it was fully light on a midsummer morning. I had ridden over from Godrevy to see the sun rise. But it was a cold grey misty morning, and the sun never rose at all. I was cold and hungry, and I thought I saw Davy in a coat with capes.

Planned occasions rarely turn out well; beauty is always a lovely chance. It is given every chance between Land's End and Tol-pedn. I used to go along close to where the Armed Knight rears himself out of the sea, past Enys Dodnan, with his soft head and fine carved claws and caverns. The

cliff path at first winds along by a hedge of great stones roughly built, and hoary with lichen; then the hedge breaks off and the path is open—a path to race along, with air on both sides to buoy a person up, and make him feel like Mercury with winged sandals. The coast here shows some sign of crumbling. In places the cliff is earthy and, when the tide is out, there are fleets of smooth boulders upon the shore, and rocks round which in calm weather the sea lies in green lagoons. There is a first funnel-like creek, Zawn Wells, but no sand as yet only huge stones with shingle at the head of the creek into which the water churns at high tide. I used to look back from the next cliff at the great natural archway through Enys Dodnan, and at the crests of the Armed Knight, and then speed onward to Pordenack.

Pordenack is like a good poem, never disappointing to return to, grander than I remembered, with always some fresh aspect to show. It is formed of cubical rocks, pressing and flattening one another, in massive pillars. The deep groovings lend to individual rocks a peculiar expressiveness. Some have grand expressions such as are graven by time on noble faces; and some are comical or peevish like cracked old shoes. In decoration wind and time play odd tricks. Here are rocks with the flat foreheads and long muzzles of monkeys; rocks like coquettish tam-o'-shanters; rocks nuzzling one another like little fond animals; rocks like grim old men or angry duchesses. Some stones balance themselves impossibly all along the coast. They laugh out in the wrong place. They are ridiculous because we feel we must contradict them and tell them they cannot possibly remain like that. The rocks between Pordenack and Carn Boel help us to appreciate sculpture. Here again is felt the thrill of related shapes, the tenderness, the strength or the impudence which can be implicit in poised masses.

Among books which describe this coast my favourite is Blight's *A Week at the Land's End*, published in 1861. If Blight does not know the name of a place he makes one up. I once asked a man who was ploughing the dark earth with a cloud of gulls in his wake, the name of a creek. He said, 'I doan' know; he abn' got no name, b'lieve. He's only a little small wan.' Blight will have none of that. From him we know when we are passing the Lion's Den and the twin crests of Carn Evall; from him we recognize Mozrang and The Horse's Back and Zawn Reeth on the way to Nanjizel, or Mill Bay as some call it. Nanjizel has beauty landward and seaward. To the east the rock with its slim opening through which the light shines is unforgettable. Someone called this cove the Song of the Sea; perhaps because of the combined music of a brown, sweet, tumbling brook with the sea's resounding bass; but I think he was not Cornish. We are a people shy

of being so openly poetical. We are much more likely to grunt something about the old wind blowing of 'ee inside out on the old cliffs.

It certainly can blow 'ee inside out on Carn les Boel, with its hooded forms retreating from the sea. Above, the turf is close shaven, with great outcrops of grey stone. The path winds by rocks which seem like the burying places of giants, with squat turrets for watch and ward.

Down to the sea and up into the air one goes by gully and cliff until Tol-pedn is neared. It is a mighty promontory, with its back humped, and with great claws set in the sea. As one approaches, the sea at Porth Gwarra shows behind the neck of the promontory. All the claws are nobly set, but Tol-pedn itself is the grandest. By the chair ladder, where the granite soars sheer upward, the cliff-climber most hardened against giddiness may find his heart turning to water within him. Here is the place to feel the thrill of the perpendicular and the perilous forward slant. The actual funnel from which Tol-pedn gets its name, 'the holed headland' is disappointing compared with the seaward cliffs. The cliffs have a purposeful air in their strength, whereas this great rent is a jagged accident. But the whole headland impresses itself on the wayfarer, in summer or in winter, but most of all in winter. Then, towards evening, the sea is black about it except where it boils in foam; and the wind sweeps over the treeless downs behind. Here Lear might have wandered; for here 'the bleak winds do sorely ruffle; and for many miles about there's scarce a bush'.

Fierce storms can lay a land bare of all but the most closely fitting vegetation, but it is below the tide-line that the enduring grain of the rock can best be felt. Here the sea works delicately into the bone itself. Where it washes on granite no hint of softness can remain, no lichen as on the upper rocks, no crannies filled with sea-pinks, hardly a roughness for sea-weeds and limpets to cling to. All smooth and clean. Every excrescence swilled away. It is from such rocks with their purpled roots in the depths that the great cliffs rise between the crags of Land's End and the promontory of Tol-pedn. One remembers them not least for their infinite variety. Now the cliffs are in soaring exultation, abrupt, with broken uprights, turrets and sharpened spires; now starting backwards, now heavily projecting; here huddled from the storm, here poised in stupendous masses; now showing a wild energy of fantastic outline, now depressed, frightened, stunted, beaten. The whole is grand but grotesque, enduring yet changing, defeated yet for ever triumphant. A history of storms is in the grooved and haggard face of Tol-pedn, with its crossed conflicting seams, the great rending of its base, the inconsequent perching of its wild decoration. It is worth days and nights of

travelling to come once more within sight of this promontory, and to continue by the cliff path to Porth Gwarra and St. Levan. I like to go when new celandines are sparkling under the old bracken fronds, and the blackthorn is snowy; and out at sea are waves turned back by the wind.

Corresponding with Treryn Dinas on the north coast of Penwith is Gurnard's Head; corresponding with Tol-pedn is Bosigran or, perhaps, Botallack. I used to leave my Velocette at St. Ives when I wanted to go to Gurnard's Head. I used to walk the path through the fields from St. Ives to Zennor, pay my respects to the Mermaid and to St. Senara herself, most delightfully named of saints; I used to read once again that sad remembrancer engraved on the sundial: 'The glory of the world passeth', and so on to Gurnard's Head. Sometimes the season's successive flowers trod on one another's heels. Once in May I picked honeysuckles on the cliffs, and a fisherman said they must have cheated the wind and caught the sun. On certain days when sky and tide are just right the sea round Gurnard's Head is unsurpassed in the range and depth of its colour. The sea is deep inshore; and this liquid, coloured light varies in hue through peacock and clear green to purple. I have seen pools of peacock floating in the green. I have sat among the opening bracken and bluebells, or on tufts of sea-pinks, caressing the throats of their red buds, and watching the colours change out at sea.

Inland the four parishes, Zennor, Morvah, Madron and Gulval, which meet at Four Parishes Rock behind the Galvers, are an amalgam of wildness and fertility. The flowery Gulval Valley leads from the south up to the moors, and the ancient mines, and the tremendous cliffs about Bosigran, Pendeen Watch and Botallack. Inland the lines of the carns flow into one another like a melody. They stretch, they run, or they lie still without fuss. The pattern of the fields within their granite stone hedges does not obscure the shape of the treeless land wide open to the face of the sky. If the fields could fly away they would fly in patterns like the starlings that wheel over them. The sun is all alive there, chasing the shadows; and the present is all alive in the shadows of the past, shadows that seem to go back almost to beginning of time. You cannot walk across country north, south, east or west from Mr. Green's farm on the Bosullow Downs without stumbling upon some ancient memorial to the human spirit, or some ruined monument of human labour, or some high place, or inaccessible cliff castle to which people were chased; or some hut in which they lived at home; or some quiet holy well or cross for worship.

It is the ruined monuments to tin and copper that take the eye first, though only Geevor Mine of those about Pendeen was working when last I was there. The masonry of the engine-houses and of the walls on the cliffs between Pendeen Watch and Botallack has a strength that crumbles very slowly. One is reminded of the old work of the Giants in *The Ruin*. The Brisons out at sea are hardly more savage and desolate than the granite walls and towers with their arches, and their empty window-sockets through which the sky looks and the wind howls. The figures named in the books, or quoted traditionally, of the depths of some mines and their tunnellings under the sea make the imagination reel. I have never been down a mine; I should always think to myself, 'Suppose the top closes in before I can get out!' To peer down a disused shaft, or to hear a stone strike the distant water is enough for me. The only remains of mining I take comfort in are the shallow scratchings, scooped holes now filled to the brim with ferns and flowers. These tiny miniature valleys make green hiding-places. It is a curious sensation to lie in one of them in a secret green world, made almost to fit one's body, and consider the luminous sky unfathomable overhead. The bal tracks over the downs lead from town and hamlet and solitary house—we Cornish like solitary houses—to the mines. Men used to walk along the bal tracks from as far as St. Ives to the Levant Mine or up to Ding Dong.

Old engine-houses like Ding Dong, said to be the most ancient mine in Cornwall, are landmarks for circles of miles; I used to quarter Penwith by landmarks, going across country from area to area dominated by its familiar. At different times I have walked from Trencrom to Trink, and from Trink to Castle-an-Dinas, and from Castle-an-Dinas to Ding Dong. I have been from Ding Dong to Chûn Castle, and from Chûn to Carn Kenidjack, and from Carn Kenidjack, now lost, now found, to Chapel Carn Brea. Rhythmically the heights change about one; it is a tremendous harmonic progression. There are days of intense clarity. Penwith is light. The atmosphere can be so pellucid that one's very body seems to be without density and to thin itself into the air.

On dull winter days light that has soaked into bracken gives back its radiance. I have seen dead bracken on the slopes of Castle-an-Dinas burning with colour in November; and yet not exactly burning. It is a deep quiet glow. And yet not exactly a glow. It is saturation. November violets are similarly drenched and steeped in colour. Moist grey days bring out the tones of green, and dun and russet while, in the distance, the Galvers darken to purple. Carn Galver is like a great, modern battleship heading for the sea. From all directions this carn is a shapely sight. All Penwith is shapely. It has wiry outlines. The enduring beauty of St. Ives is in its form, which no

building has quite been able to spoil; and in its everchanging colour. The sands about St. Ives and Carbis Bay and Lelant are yellow with the stored sunshine. And then, too, St. Ives has its harbour. Who could be dull watching the boats, and the nets, and the seagulls, and the water rocking the light, and the fishermen working or lounging. But St. Ives has become a resort, and resorts are exposed to insidious dangers; they are kept women. And artists kill the thing they love. Fishermen are safer custodians.

Resorts always seem to have cut themselves off from the ancestors and to have no future. They are sprouts. But it would be difficult for any place in Penwith to cut itself off from the ancestors. The dead have an equal share with the living in Penwith. I think no one could come suddenly upon Chûn Cromlech without a strange feeling. It is about four miles from Penzance, some distance in to the left of the main Penzance-Morvah road. A turning to the left leads to Great Busullow. Where the road ends a cart-track circles gradually to the right. Just when you think you will never find Chûn you see it, like a great stone mushroom, the uprights seeming to be giants ossified while bending their might to support the coping stone. Chûn Cromlech and Chûn Castle keep the solemn downs about them. Lanyon Cromlech, on the right of the Penzance-Morvah by Lanyon Farm, is too near the main road to have any but a landmark's power; and the antiquaries point a finger of derision at it because it has been restored. Men-an-tol has been altered, too, they say. But that does not spoil it for me. Men-an-tol, the holed stone. The holed stone is a thick, strong block of granite rooted in the earth. It has a round hole through which a person may creep, or his body be passed; on either side of the holed stone are single upright posts. The whole suggests some rite to be practised, some rite which men might perform protesting against it in their souls yet fearing to omit because, though law is not to be cajoled, chance is capricious, and therefore vain, cruel, revengeful, sudden, open to blandishment. In this place where Men-an-tol stands, where all seems savage, where there are no trees, no refuge except the rocks, human fear might readily master human reason and lead to frenzies. Or perhaps as cooler heads would have us believe all this is lurid fancy, and it is best to laugh and creep through the hole to insure ourselves against the rickets.

Men Scryfa, the written stone, is not more than about a quarter of a mile from Men-an-tol. It is a single upright shaft of granite and on it is written RIALOBRAN CUNOVAL FIL. Men Scryfa seems less old than the other stones; perhaps because it is written on. The Nine Maidens give an impression of great age, though they are not now considered to be so old as was once thought. Like others I have been seduced to study the stones. I like to read the antiquaries. But as one walks on the moors, the stones are not interesting

antiquities to speculate upon; but part of the personality of Cornwall—things we accept as we accept the features and characters of our friends. Chûn and Men-an-tol, even if you do not choose to go out of your way to visit them, are there; with Carn Galver, and Ding Dong, and the bracken, and the brown pools, and the pink stone crop in its season on the tops of the grey hedges with their huge, untooled granite boulders, and the half sharp air which anyone who has tasted must always long for. They are part of Penwith.

In its essential aspect no country could be more pagan than the country round Ding Dong, the Galvers and Zennor. Its aspect is not humane, not civil; but savage, desolate, splendid and, above all things, unchangeable. To know how our ancestors felt we have only to go into one of the huts which cluster here amidst brambles and bracken. Then we not only know how they felt but we know that we are they; that time is only a figure; that all life exists concurrently. I suppose most people have from time to time the feeling that they live, ordinarily, in a particular channel of time, but that sometimes they slip out of it into a sea of other time. Then the idea of time as a cord on which separate existences are strung reasserts itself; and we wonder at this gift which has come through to us and understand what the ancients meant by piety. Reverence and dutifulness towards those who have been before us cannot but be felt in this place strewn with memorials. Antiquaries are divided in opinion as to the ancient purposes of the stones, but it seems natural to believe that they were first memorials to the dead, then altars to whatever power presides over death; then, since men have relations not only with the dead and with God and the Devil but with each other, solemn meeting-places to discuss human affairs. This does not preclude the idea that the stones were set with due regard to the movements of the heavenly bodies. The feeling that the same spirit is in the round ocean and the living air and the heart of man and the ancient heavens did not find expression first in Wordsworth. Antiquaries are like editors, a little apt to bury the poem beneath the comment. And the erected stones are Cornwall's poem. They are in keeping with the natural stone fantasies of coast and carn and, harmonizing thus with the character of the land itself, they express it as it has never been expressed in words. Ireland has an ancient literature, and Wales, but not Cornwall. There is, in the ultimate sense of the word, no Cornish poem. We have romance. We still hear Jenefer's weeping in the waves off Boskenna, and Iseult is the Cornish queen. But we cannot read her story or Guinevere's story in old Cornish. And apart from Arthurian romance such legends as persist do not probe deep. There is a strange obscurity, a sense of withdrawal about this land which has been peopled so long by men whose fitting memorial is the grey silent stones. They speak to

us in a way which Truro Cathedral cannot speak. Tender associations and memories gather round the cathedral for those of us who have been confirmed in it, and educated to reverence it. But the old stone circles and cromlechs appeal to a side of our nature which Christianity has never touched and which is nevertheless our virtual selves. On wild evenings when all is bare and the wind rises and the moon races on her back now dipping behind masses of cloud now swinging into the open sky—then the little people awake, not in their own quaint persons as the old folk have told us, but alive and in ourselves—in these strange living castles where alone with us they have their dwelling-place and their immortality.

It is not strange that Cornwall should have been preoccupied with religion. The Cornishman is bound to feel his dependence. In a country narrow, difficult to cultivate, and open to sea and sky, it would be hard so to ring him round with comfort and security that he should grow to forget the slenderness of the thread of his life. On the cliffs and moors man is involuntarily humble and involuntarily yearning. He does not want to be quite alone. He seeks communion with something which is not in the earth but which, since it is in himself, must also be somewhere else; but stronger, more perfect, more admirable than in himself, worshipful and to be thanked. This land fosters us in an atmosphere of mystery and grandeur, exposes us to sudden dangers, and makes us conscious of the forces working behind appearances. The glory revealed when the clouds are swung open at sunset, the sweeping winds, the majestic obedience of the sea—these transcend common acceptances, the habit of taking all for granted, and so people have sought a God. Every period of Cornish history has produced its seekers.

What were the older expressions of the religious feeling in Cornwall we can only dimly divine. I imagine that we were a people more prone to terror than pity; to unite with the storm in exultation rather than with the victim in mercy and pity. But Christianity came to Cornwall early and hermits and saints made it their dwelling. Some stories of these are boisterous enough. Many saints had as good times as giants. With Christianity, as with the older religions of Cornwall, it is not the word or legend which reveals, but the things that remain—holy well, and stone, and cross, and towered churches, and meeting-houses built with devotion.

I liked particularly to visit the holy well at St. Levan with its worn granite steps leading down to the water, and its ivy-covered coping above. But most frequently I went to the holy well near Madron Village. There is a stile on the right beyond Madron Church which leads through fields to Bosworthan Lane. A little way down the lane is a gate, and a path through a

sheltered brake, and by a wooded hedge where birds sing. Ash, elder and thorn give way to a marshy place which makes a fastness for the well. The walls of the baptistry are still standing, and there is a doorway; but here, as with the stone circles, the sky itself is roof. All round everything is green; within, it is still and hallowed. The well is a well of quietness, and the altar a stone which could not be profaned without a wrench to natural piety. Some say that St. Madron was a woman, and it is a sanctuary a woman might have chosen; though it was probably a man, for men as a rule have more time to be saints. Had I been Madron I should like to have been friends with the hermit of Roche Rock, to have exchanged at intervals the amenities of my cell for his wild aerie. The disadvantage of being a saint is being a saint all the time.

Holy wells were wells of healing. The water of a holy well might purge away more than physical stain by its cool repose, its cleanness, and because it is so deep that it has no need to hurry away from itself for fear of stagnation. To me, too, the grey crosses which the wayfarer comes upon casually in every part of Cornwall are symbols of endurance and comfort rather than of suffering. They are not tortured signs. I have said, and I think it is true, that no country could be more pagan in aspect than some parts of Penwith—saints have liked to neighbour the wilderness. But everywhere in Penwith is the cross; sometimes a stone of an older time signed with the new sign, the symbol of hope, the new, potent talisman against the evil and death. There are crosses by the wayside, and on the moors, and in the church-towns; spaces sealed with this sign are known as the Cross. We always spoke of the enclosed space outside Gorran Church as the Cross. John Lloyd Warden Page in his book, *The North Coast of Cornwall* has happily quoted from the fifteenth-century *Dives et Pauper* in this connection. ‘For this reason ben Croysse set by ye waye, that when folke passynge see ye croysse they may thynke on Him that deyed on ye croysse, and worshippe Hym above althyng.’

At the time I was exploring West Penwith I was reading Charles Doughty. Here was a writer who had manifested in words the vast tract of Arabia as I could never hope to manifest my little Cornwall. Or could I gain at least some inkling of the way? Often in his poetry Doughty brought home some springing English scene as vividly to my senses as, in his prose, the wide desert. I saw in his sky and seascapes the work of a master. But there was something beyond. These pictures were painted in the execution of some large design and took their sheen from it. Doughty created occasions for his lyric flights; he ventured, and yet was steadfast. The poems were objective and yet I felt in them, as in *Arabia Deserta*, the spirit of Doughty

himself, his courage, his truthfulness, his freedom from vanity. There was a dual quality in Meredith, the presence of something showy in his mind of which there was no trace in Doughty. What the two had in common to attract me was command of image and scene. Doughty had known both the splendour and the gentleness of the sun. He could write:

Sun cometh forth horned, and bearded be his looks
In token of fervent heat.

Or he could fit words to a desert shower:

In that there fell an April shower that shone about us like
golden hairs in the sun; and the desert earth gave up to our sense a
teeming grassy sweetness.

I found many a gibe in Doughty at the glibness of Victorian English; he had sought and found his telling words in the earlier reaches of our language. But were his changes in the accepted order of words justified in an analytic language? Had he done anything more than forge an idiom suited to his own genius? I wanted to study his words and their origin as I read not only *Arabia Deserta* but *The Dawn in Britain*, *Adam Cast Forth*, *The Titans*, *The Cliffs* and *The Clouds*. I decided to give up teaching again for a time in order to read and think. I went to Oxford. I had only enough money for a year. My father said I was foolish. What about my pension? But I did not care for pensions. I started up my Velocette and away I went out of my dear Cornwall. The Prefects at Camborne gave me, as a parting gift, the one poem of Doughty which I did not possess—*Mansoul*.

CHAPTER XVII

OXFORD INTERLUDE

Michaelmas daisy and dahlia
Put off their full regalia,
 Each crown
 Is ragged grown.
But the beech-tree tall,
More lovely in her fall
Than in her prime,
Puts on the splendour of time:
 Her proffered gold
 Resumes all glories that her growth foretold.

Beech Tree in October: New College Garden
(To the Memory of Mrs. Oliver Elton)

I had been admitted as an advanced student to Lady Margaret Hall; but this was not my first visit to Oxford. I had frequently spent time there, reading in the Bodleian and drifting on the Cherwell. The Cherwell and the Bodleian were Oxford to me. In the Bodleian I felt all ghost and no body, and on the Cherwell all body and no ghost. There is no pleasure in which the body feels more fully ‘poured out in looseness’ than floating under the willows of the Cherwell. But it needs some preliminary effort to be lazy on a river. I saw the Cherwell first with Professor and Mrs. Elton on an August afternoon. Professor Elton, when he could be induced, was a wonderful guide. He had taken me to see various colleges including his own, Corpus; then we walked in Christ Church Meadows by the river and, as we stood, a swan came and took my shoe-toe in his beak, and held it for a second before moving on. I kept still because I did not have the sense to do anything else, and I was surprised that Professor Elton thought my stillness a form of courage. His fancy pleased me very much, though I knew it to be without foundation. It takes courage for me to touch a bat, but not to stand still when a swan gobbles at my shoe.

That summer afternoon we watched girls and young men glide along the river. Punting looked very easy to me. I got up early next morning and wandered among the willows until a representative of Mr. Timms was ready to oblige me with a punt and a pole. I stood on the punt where the girls and

young men had stood and, saying nothing of my lack of skill, found myself adrift upon the Cherwell. Mr. Timms's young man had the fun and I had the fury for at whatever angle I inserted my pole, and however I shoved with my ungoverned strength, the punt swung round instead of moving forward. There was I, the focus of a revolving punt and of the derisive eyes of the youth who, shouting instructions at me, made me first confused and then angry. When guided from afar by shouts my hands and arms and legs turn into a lot of independent devils, spiting me. At last I secured sufficient equilibrium to shout at my instructor in my turn to go and get his blasted breakfast and leave me to it. He said, 'Well, if you fall in and drown don't blame me.' I said I had not the faintest intention of falling in and drowning. With that I plunged my pole into the water again, slung all my weight on to it and the punt, instead of going round, shot forward at last—but without me. I could not part company with the pole. For a second I must have been exactly like a monkey on a stick, and then I was in the Cherwell. A slow-motion film of this performance would, I think, be exquisite. The young man found it exquisite enough in quick motion. His was the kind of laughter you only get in Dickens; it had shaken him nearly into an apoplexy by the time I had swum on to the landing-stage leaving punt and pole separate and at large on the river. I was hastening off without a word when he said, 'Ere, you 'aven't paid.' There were demonstrations with thunderbolts which must have been enormously gratifying to Jove; but I don't suppose even he ever delivered a bolt when wet. It is extraordinarily de-thunderbolting to be wet. I do not imagine that anyone, wet, has ever got the upper hand of anyone dry. Beowulf and his nicors were all wet together.

I did not next morning get my punt from Mr. Timms. I went further up the Cherwell. I went several mornings and, during the days, I primed myself with hints on how to punt. Whoever I happened to be talking with the conversation tended to veer towards the art of propulsion. Some spoke with clarity and some were as cloudy as cabinet ministers when, though determined to reveal no meaning, they use words. I could, of course, have asked a friend to come and teach me, but that would not have been the same thing. I wanted the skill to come to me when I was alone one morning. And it did. It came suddenly with pleasure and ease like a tune. And I went up the Cherwell, under the trees and over the trees' wavering reflections; and out between the meadow banks where the cows were grazing; and past the reeds and the meadowsweet; and I tied up for the first time for a whole summer day near a swan's nest by Water Eaton; and I came slowly drifting back at night, trailing my pole in a way I never permitted myself after I became a member of Lady Margaret Hall.

Once a member I was rapidly taught 'L.M.H. form' on the river, and have never dared depart from it. I can hardly bring canoe, punt or sculler into the bank or to a landing-stage without feeling the critical gaze of Trixie Jackson or Charis Waddy upon me. I thought I had learnt all there was to be learnt about boats from Tommy Johns. Not so. I had never done a trick on bow or turned a canoe in the minimum number of strokes. Tommy had never told me to keep my elbows in. I loved the early mornings on the river. If anyone says L.M.H. to me I see the thatched boathouse and the ladies' lace which grew so luxuriantly up the creek in June. I hear the notes of cuckoos and pigeons. Or, in autumn, I see the yellowing leaves afloat on the water and smell the breakfast sausages as we return to the hall sharp-set.

Apart from rigorous supervision of my form on the river, my two years in Oxford were the freest I ever spent. Professor Elton, who had retired from Liverpool, and was living in Oxford, was again my supervisor. He and Mrs. Elton were living in the Woodstock Road and their house bade me welcome. Mrs. Elton's room, opening on to a garden beyond which the air was free to Wytham Woods, had a charm for me which I can never hope to recapture in words. From the delicate water-colours on the walls, from the books on the white shelves, from the colours a-tuned to a quiet harmony on the hearth-rug, there emanated a peculiar inducement to be happy now. I loved that room, and the time I spent in it, from the moment I eagerly entered to the moment when I reluctantly went away. Mrs. Elton has died now; we shall never see again her smile with its hint of glee, or hear the sound of her voice, as delicate as wind-stirred leaves. She was more purely a theme for poetry than any other woman I have ever met, and to be with her was a solace. She was framed for laughter too. She made me laugh, and I made her laugh. Her memory was stored; but she enjoyed any little fresh experiences too. She slept in a punt, a covered punt which I had on the Cherwell, during my last Oxford vacation; and her pleasure when she awoke early to the scent of the meadowsweet and the swaying of the water-flags, and the birds singing, and the cows munching, gilded the morning.

She went with me to hear the May Morning Carol from Magdalen Tower; we heard much music together. But she did not, like me, go to Christ Church, or New College, or Magdalen College Chapel to hear chant, and fugue, and anthem. I liked to go on Sunday morning to Christ Church for the exquisite singing of the Litany. The ears are charmed in Oxford with the sound of bells and with singing. One need not make arrangements in advance. These services are eternal at the appointed hour and season. At Whitsuntide one is not defrauded of 'Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire'.

There is a lovely and safe recurrence as of the sunshine on Magdalen as one walks down the High.

While I was at Oxford I was *in statu pupillari*, but not irksomely so. Members of the Junior Common Room might not, I discovered, ride motor bicycles, but Miss Grier quickly arranged that I might ride mine. I liked Miss Grier. She was large; adequate both physically and intellectually for the work she had chosen. She was just the opposite of the aunt in one of Mr. Joyce Cary's novels, an aunt who had become merely a sense of strain. The Principal of a women's college needs to rule without seeming to; no flock is more difficult to manage than a flock of young women. They will not be driven; but neither will they respect ineffectiveness. Miss Grier was effective because of the person she was; it was impossible to imagine her ducking or sidling. I had not much talk with her; but I knew that she was one with whom, if need arose, I could talk without reservations. She had not those little closed territories in her mind which some administrators acquire and which have to be skirted; but she had nevertheless, I imagined, a firm hold on what Jane Austen called principles. 'What are her principles?' Miss Grier, I think, would not have been in doubt. I still was. Perhaps that was the secret of her attraction for me. Or perhaps it was a certain humorous comprehension at which one guessed; a tolerance both of the solemnities and the flippancy of young people. She did not exalt minor incidents into crises. I liked her lack of hurry. I move fast. Miss Grier's was the rhythm of a larger nature; and she gave the impression of having plenty of time; even when one knew she hadn't. I wish I could see her again in academic cap and long black gown bicycling, upright and stately, down the Banbury Road; bowing, from the waist down, in recognition of acquaintance. I should like again to see her stand and deliver a sermon; or walk, in barbaric splendour that far outshone the wealth of Ormuz or of Ind, to her place at the High Table. She was a very complete person, loving learning, but not sequestered; able in all affairs, aiding education far beyond the limits of Lady Margaret Hall. I have often tried to picture her in China, a country to which, as Representative of the British Council, she has gone since she retired. She would be rather like Doughty in Arabia or Professor Elton among the Irish. It is well not to be too adaptable.

I found it very difficult to adapt myself to a flat and civil countryside. I found myself seeking Boars Hill and Shotover for a breath of air. But even on Boars Hill civility was present. I wrote an angry verse:

How I hate the unassuming
Houses on Boars Hill!
How I loathe the humble pretence; be presuming
You poor half-timbereds, and lord it;
Get up, for Heaven's sake, and crow over it;
Don't be deprecating still!
Your cultured unobtrusiveness labels you;
You didn't mean to spoil it, did you?
You're preserving it from the herd, aren't you?
You're preserving it dead, pretending you haven't killed it,
Damn you!

Of places to which I bicycled from Oxford, Upper and Lower Slaughter touched me most memorably with their beauty. I shall never forget seeing them in summer when the lime trees were in flower so that the air was perfumed, and the ear was filled with the murmur of insects. I remember the honey-yellow sunshine, and the trees above their shadows, and the clear brown of the little tributary of the Windrush; and larkspurs blue against a Cotswold stone house.

I used my motor bike; but not so very often. In Oxford I forsook my habit of hurrying away from where I lived. I drew in. I found that in Oxford the very heart of the place was best. I drew the Bodleian round me. During several holidays I had spent some of my time in the Bodleian library. It was blissful when I first became a reader and was able to sit, small, compact and unknown, in the midst of time and books. Other people in the Bodleian never seem real to me, and I imagine myself entirely disembodied to them. It is strange that one should come to feel so much alive by being so be-spirited and de-personalized. I loved to order books and see them mount round my desk in ramparts; books some of which had, perhaps, not been handled since Doughty had handled them sitting, possibly, where I sat, and dreaming of the poem he would some day write and which he did write in thirty-six years' time. *The Dawn in Britain* was long in the imagining. Sometimes I read books which had little to do with Doughty. The magic words, 'For purposes of study', would bring me any book. I commanded Genii. I could intoxicate myself with books; and then dance down the wooden steps of the Bodleian, making little patterns of sound to please myself as I skipped round the corners, and out into the quad.

Who can describe the gravity of the Bodleian Quad, a gravity courteous by day, remote and harmonious as a dream in moonlight? It takes the heart with its beauty. I used to let my eyes run up the lines of its solemn walls,

then drop to the worn stones under the several doorways to the medieval schools. They are hollowed by the tread of a multitude of scholars' feet. They are humble. The Bodleian Quad has an indwelling spirit, some quality of the medieval mind, God-fearingness perhaps and absence of brag. I admire too with all my heart the large design of the Renaissance Cardinal. But I feel it to be different. I liked to pass through the portals of Christ Church, pausing under the lovely staircase roof, and go out into the Meadows, to feel the wind with freshness and vigour blowing the elms; or the cattle might be feeding in quiet, while the trees held in their branches the blue haze of Oxfordshire. Oxford air is coloured. I liked to pass under the walls of Merton and Corpus, to nod at the flowers that looked over the wall. But the most beautiful thing I ever saw in Christ Church Meadows was the reflected sunset sky in flood-water, and the astonishing appearance of buildings which one thought could not possibly be reflected at such a distance. How could Tom's Dome, and the flutings of St. Mary's, and the Cornish strength of Magdalen Tower, find place together there? And yet in my dreaming memory they did; in the cold twilight, in the leaden yet rosy depths, a city was inverted in a watery world, liquefied. The walls could be made to waver by a pebble, yet they were imperishably pictured.

Once I walked in snow round Addison's Walk and Christ Church Meadows accompanied by a student from Johannesburg. She was as excited as a puppy by the snow. She cupped in her hands the ivies filled with snow; she laughed with joy at the birds' foot-prints; among the tree trunks, all striped on one side with the long snow-mark, she stood enchanted.

One of the pleasures of Oxford was to know intimately other students from various parts of the world. Among those doing research who became my friends was Elizabeth Handasyde, an elegant Scot. When I first met her, immaculate from head to toe, at dinner with Miss Janet Spens, I was conscious that I had caught back my hair with a paper-fastener, and crushed my long skirt into motor-bike overalls. I was crumpled; she was shining. But we liked one another. She had a lucid mind, cool, but open to poetry and to humour. It was she in recent years who lent me John Aubrey, and Arthur Waley's translation of *Monkey*. Dear Monkey! Elizabeth had been ordered wine. She could not, she said risk becoming a secret drinker. When we knew one another well how delightful it was that my busy mind could present me, among other reasons for not settling down to write, with the suggestion that it was time to dash along to find Elizabeth and save her from the vice of drinking alone. She commanded her clothes and they obeyed. Her summer dresses, after a day on the river, would look as though freshly taken from the

laundry parcel and donned that minute. But she was not inordinately vain of this good gift. She recognized thankfully that it was from heaven.

Hilda Prescott was another friend who idled with me on the river. She was a senior student of L.M.H. who had returned to work at the book which afterwards became *The Spanish Tudor*. We referred to it, less felicitously, as *Bloody Mary*. Lying back among the cushions of a punt Hilda, with her tall person, her distinguished narrow face, her marked features, her dark complexion, her dark straight hair cut in a bang, her eyes with their secret fires, her strong religious sense and fanatical spirit, looked more like a Norman lady than any actual Norman lady ever probably looked. She had strayed out of time and could, as she talked, draw her friends back with her into imagined epochs which she peopled with creatures partly of her own fashioning and partly historical. Together we read Traherne. I knew *Centuries of Meditation*; she introduced me to Traherne's poems.

Olga Bickley was different again. She had come from Italy where already she had done admired work. Born of an Italian mother and an English father, she had inherited the precious qualities of two countries. A sun more potent than ours had given her her dark rich colouring, and added strength to her abundant hair. In everything she was the opposite to the scrimped and niggardly. Brought up in Italy, moving with ease in literatures I knew only in translation, she was, nevertheless, passionately of the present. She gave herself to her innumerable friends with prodigal devotion. She would strain all her resources for a friend; but for herself she was the least calculating of women. She was a cordial. When with her one felt that it was jam today. Others among us were Christine Burleson, an American, lively and Jamesian; Catherine Lament, a Canadian who warmed my heart to all Canadians; and Mrs. Barnes, a Swiss student, learned in the intricacies of language, but not proud. All gave the lie to the popular conception implied in the name 'blue-stockings'.

We worked; but I found, as always, that I worked less well now that I had plenty of time than when I had to wring time out of nothing. I doubt whether I ever feel any urge to write until somebody asks me to wash the dishes. In Oxford there was no equivalent to washing the dishes so I read. If reading maketh a full man I was brimming over. I never wearied of reading; but writing was another matter. Absorbed in a book I was dead to the earth and my friends; but when I was preparing to write all sorts of little devils danced about and tempted me into the sunshine. They turned themselves into water-lilies, white and yellow, and floated before my eyes until I went to find Catherine Lamont so as to paddle with her in our favourite canoe, the

Windrush, to Islip. I would hear the dry, old man's cough of a swan in my mind's ear, and never rest until I had persuaded Elizabeth to take the double sculler to Water Eaton to see papa in state, leading in procession the orderly cygnets, while mamma, bringing up the rear, her leg stuck out amidship in *dégagée* fashion, floated on the keel of her own inverted breast, her stately neck a prow undulated by every ripple. In Doughty's poetry I found the essence of summer days by English river banks. It was one of the never-to-be-exhausted pleasures which kept me faithful to him. In vain Professor Elton told me that, while admitting the splendid prose, he could not away with much of Doughty's verse. It was, he said, to his ear like a stick drawn along railings. Greatly daring I blamed his ear and, in my writing, quoted passages which occasionally wrung from him an endorsement, and an assent. In the meantime, I could enjoy without needing company, poetry which so well suited my private pleasures:

I stayed, where pleasant grassy holms depart;
Those streaming water-brooks, bordered all along;
With daphne and willow-herb, loosestrife, laughing robin;
With woodbind garlanded and sweet eglantine,
And azure-hewed in creekly shallows still,
Forget-me-nots left our frail thoughts to heaven.
 Broods o'er those thymy eyots drowsy hum;
Bourdon of glistering bees, in mails of gold,
Labouring from sweet to sweet, in the long hours
Of sunny heat; they sound their shrill small clarions.
 And hurl by booming dours, gross bee-fly kin;
Broad-girdled, diverse hewed, in their long pelts:
That solitary, while eve's light endureth,
In Summer skies, each becking clover-tuft haunt.

Even when, as sometimes happened, I grew tired of cultivated Oxford, it was Doughty who transported me to the austere delicacy of desert, or to the northern seas. I liked to read of the voyage of Joseph of Arimathea to Britain, and listen to the tales which old Adherbal, the pilot, told:

The pilot old, tells, how his ship-feres cast
Away, far in the sides were of the North,
Where hanged the steadfast star, above their mast;
Nor this, that we know, day, nor night, is there,
But each, by long returns of half the year;
Their year one day: men plough, at dawn, and sow,
Harvest at noon; and gather fruits, at eve.
Yet in their long night, is clear flickering gleam,
Of frosty stars. Cold cliffs, of that sea-deep,
Are blue-ribbed ice; whence oft strange lofty sounds
Are heard, as lute strings knapped, of the ice-god.

I came to know Doughty well through his prose and verse—which is as he would have had it; but I had never thought of him as having lived in part contemporaneously with me. Not that I agreed with those who said he was an Elizabethan strayed out of his century; Doughty, in all his thought, belongs to the scientific age. I knew very well as a fact, that he had been born in 1843 and had died in 1926. Therefore it was clear that he had breathed the air of this world, gone to sleep, wakened up, heard the birds sing for thirty-five years during which I, too, was breathing the air, going to sleep, waking up, hearing the birds sing and seeing, in a very narrow compass, the world he had seen at large. I knew from Hogarth's biography that Doughty had married Caroline, daughter of General Sir William Montagu Scott McMurdo, by whom he had had two daughters. But it had never occurred to me to think of them as alive. I would as soon have thought of seeing Milton's 'late espoused saint' as Mrs. Doughty. Mr. Cockerell (now Sir Sydney Cockerell) changed all that. Doughty's Scribble Books, the notes he had made and carried on his person throughout the hardships and perils of the Arabian Journey, the notes from which he had composed *Arabia Deserta*, were in the Fitzwilliam Museum. So I kicked up my Velocette and off I went to Cambridge to see them. Cambridge was not coldly official; it was kind. I examined the Scribble Books at leisure. Mr. Cockerell took me home to tea and showed me other treasures including the black-letter Chaucer which Doughty had had with him in the desert. Mr. Cockerell had known Doughty; he had letters in his handwriting; he gave me one. He asked me if I had met Mrs. Doughty and he promised to give me a letter of introduction.

And so it came about that I was soon kicking up my Velocette once more and, this time, heading for Kent; for Merriecroft, near Cranbrook. Merriecroft seemed to me the very name for a house and garden in which blackbirds would have a ripe and merry note, sheen-winged insects would

hum, and the coloured flowers be like some silent music of earth's field. I hardly thought of Mrs. Doughty though, as I neared the place, I fingered her letter and read again her directions for the way. The directions were clarity itself, but I nevertheless shot up the drive of the wrong house. I therefore arrived at Merriecroft in the guise of one who had made an initial error, and I have never lived it down. The name bestowed upon me by Mrs. Doughty, and which has clung, is not complimentary.

I felt that I knew the house and garden in advance. But I had not remotely imagined Mrs. Doughty.

She was an artist; she lent out her eyes. Through them I saw many things as freshly as a painter sees them, and she talked with that perfection of idiom and liveliness of phrase which our generation has lost. Every word was individualized on her lips without forethought. Whereas Mrs. Elton was imaginative and witty, Mrs. Doughty was quick and downright. One risked precipices; nothing was sloped to ease a perilous moment. Slap! bang! down I went! But I could recover. I could get up and tilt for a fall again. No small mercies were offered. I have rarely felt more exhilarated than when talking with Mrs. Doughty; the danger of it, and the gaiety, and the pleasure I had in her spoken English. Listening to her I agreed with what I had somewhere read—that great ladies are, in the naturalness of their speech, the custodians of language. Even before I met Mrs. Doughty I knew how mistaken were the critics who said that Doughty had lived only in Arabia; he only lived fully when he got back. His poem *Adam Cast Forth* resumes *Arabia Deserta* in a more complete fable of human existence. It makes Adam's acceptance of the human condition the climax towards which the poem moves. Doughty was no mere bookish poet.

But he had adored his masters, Chaucer and Spenser. I had the privilege of working in his study which remained then much as he left it. His notes were there. I could see how he worked; what books he had constantly by him; what methods he had used in his practice with words. I knew Blake's 'Without Unceasing Practice nothing can be done. Practice is Art. If you leave off you are Lost'. Doughty never gave up practice. He delighted in words as a painter delights in paint. He sought and tasted them, admiring those of high lineage, words which had endured through centuries of work and thought; words which were exact; words which preserved nice distinctions. He hated the confounding of substance in a general term. His scorn of 'costermongery' flashed out; here was no costermonger but a poet who was determined in his making, like a medieval mason, to use the best stone. From the time when I first read it I have always been moved by the

figure at the close of *Mansoul* in which Doughty likens the work of a poet to the building of a cathedral; Mrs. Doughty told me how he liked to sit alone and meditate in Ely Cathedral. Something of its sublimity passes into the work of the man who was big enough to admire it creatively. Doughty's own thought was that of a man trained in a branch of exact science, and trusting in science. It is to me a great moment when, in his myth, he makes his seeker-after-truth pass under the arch of humility into the temple of adoration; frustrated, yet filled with awe and praise.

Doughty moved to an unhurried, deliberate rhythm; in the desert he was the opposite of the bird-witted Arabs. His portrait, painted by his daughter, Dorothy, shows him as the genius rather of the radiant, than of the burning sun; as the genius of that 'mere humanity', by virtue of which, he said, there is no land so dangerous through which a man might not pass. Like Chaucer his poetry has an April quality; birds' notes are in it.

Both Doughty's daughters had received from their parents a creative gift; Dorothy had her father's boldness in conception and his large-hearted valiancy; Freda his delicate perception. Both were distinguished ceramists. The fancy which had set earth-born elves and great-bearded little wights leaping over the clods on Claybourne Cliffs was active still, though with other materials. Dorothy and Freda disclaimed any gift with words; yet I have never heard the difference between a gull's manner of flight and a rook's expressed so graphically as by Freda Doughty. Both sisters had been given something better than formal schooling; they had been helped by their parents to look at things. They had not their mother's quick, piercing, indomitable virtue with words. I loved to hear Mrs. Doughty tell some story of the day-to-day happenings at Merriecroft; or to hear her laugh if I managed, in my turn, to tell some Cornish story to please her. 'Delicious!' she would say, 'delicious!' and turn away to the garden, to the scented plants near the house which were her favourites. When I think of Merriecroft I smell roses and mignonette, lavender, rosemary and geranium leaf; I see a sweet-chestnut tree and hear the quacking of ducks; and I have a sudden perception in the house of Arabian scenes; the Eastern sunshine of Mrs. Doughty's pictures on the walls. I am one that sees things suddenly after passing them a hundred times without noticing.

Through Mrs. Doughty I met the first critic who had written a full-length study of her husband's work. Professor Barker Fairley, now of the University of Toronto, and a much praised authority on Goethe, was at that time Professor of German Literature at Manchester University. He lived at Buxton and to stay with him I rode my Velocette to Ashbourne and walked,

for the first time, the Valley of the Dove. As I held in my heart both Isaac Walton himself, and Doughty's presentation of the scene in which that honest, civil lover of the chub had fished, I immensely enjoyed my walk up the dale until, indulging in what Susan calls one of my long, short cuts, I got entangled in the surrounding hills, and saw no less than seven donkeys together, mournfully and without irony beholding me, their slaty coats hardly distinguishable from the dun background. I asked them the way and one hee-hawed. There is nothing like, for enjoyableness, hospitality received after a day of scrambling. Margaret and Barker Fairley and their children, when I finally reached Buxton, were a glorious contrast to the seven donkeys. I was stimulated and heartened to talk of Doughty with friends who cared for his work as much as I did myself. I received immense help from Barker Fairley, most generous of minds, and also from Margaret who, when my book on Doughty came to be published, corrected the proofs, a heavy task; for printers hate to print Doughty's punctuation. He intended it to mark pauses for the voice, not to point the grammar. Doughty, like any other sensible poet, meant his verse to be read aloud—though not in an organ voice a-tremble with anticipated emotion. That voice reminds me of a stop in church organs. My father would walk out of church if anyone used it. 'Do you hear that, Anne?' he would say in an agitated tone meant to be a whisper. 'Give me my hat, my dear.'

It was Barker Fairley, at that time preparing a book of selections from *The Dawn in Britain*, who encouraged me to bring my book to the point of publication. His own fine book on Doughty, now alas! out of print, had been published by Jonathan Cape; he advised me when at last my manuscript, after much pulling, and poking, and burning, and a dip in the Cherwell was ready, to send it to the same firm. Edward Garnett praised it; I was electrified. The thing became a book; how trim compared with the bruised and battered typescript. Printed books seem stand-offish and aloof to their poor parents. My father, Professor Elton, and Mrs. Doughty praised it. My brother kept it at his beddēs head—it was a splendid soporific he said. Susan murmured. She said she had never liked patchwork, and a page studded with quotations looked patched. But ah! the pleasure of confounding them! Of waving the *Spectator*—my family has always been respectful to the *Spectator*—before their eyes, and rolling on my tongue the praises of my fellow-admirer, my co-efficient in Doughty, Dr. Herbert Read, a poet himself. A poet, too, was Hugh Macdiarmid, who had always acclaimed Doughty, and who now took occasion to sound the trumpets for him afresh. These champions I set up on high with Mr. David Garnett. As for Doughty's

denigrators, those Haddocks' eyes, I worked them into waistcoat buttons in the silent night.

My book was most unworthy of its great subject; but I think the pursuit was a grand way of completing an apprenticeship. My name was by this time chastely embellished, for I had been awarded the Oxford degree of B.Litt. I was ready to start teaching again. But was I good enough to teach? I knew I was not. No one ever is good enough to teach—and everyone is too good to teach all the time.

CHAPTER XVIII

TWO PARISHES AGAIN

Where Belinda's garden slow
Falleth to the Cornish sea;
Where the tall white daisies blow,
And bright poppies stand a-row
Round a path whose pebble and shell
Washed clean by the ocean swell
Are the sole paving, even thou
May'st find peace now.

May'st find peace now;
Nor wait for thy rigidity
When, in thy pale perfection,
The warm flesh shall forsake the bone,
And the Breath shudder and win free.
Whilst thou art in thy fine body
Seek quiet where the hollyhocks grow,
And the marigold's a-glow
Where Belinda's garden slow
Falleth to the Cornish sea.

Belinda's Garden

I was still as poor as when I had borrowed fifty pounds from the Central Bureau for the Employment of Women. I should never, I began to feel, write one of those letters I fondly imagined, letters of a wealthy woman, letters running something like this: 'Dear Miss Passmore, I wonder if you remember me? I am enclosing a cheque for a thousand pounds in slight recognition of the benefit I received in the year . . .' Or, 'Dear Miss Grier, I am enclosing a cheque for a thousand pounds in slight recognition of the Bursary you awarded me when I was on my beam ends in the year . . .' Or, 'Dearest Susan, A thousand pounds, darling, in slight recognition of all . . .' In these imaginative flights I always sent a thousand pounds. I love the rounded simplicity, the pure beam of a thousand pounds. But I never gained even enough to buy the cottage I promised my mother, and which we talked about in the firelight. This cottage was to be in a sheltered place like Trevarrick; it would have a garden with flower-beds and box-borders; there

would be lemon verbena and a moss-rose bush by the porch. At the foot of a little orchard full of Lent lilies would run a brook set with water-cress, and ferns, and having a single plank to cross by. Susan, too, fancied such a cottage with shells on the window-sills. But my father habitually scoffed at it. Damp! Crippled with rheumatism we should be. Think of old Alfred Snell hobbling about on two sticks! My father's denunciations of the cottage were more real than the cottage itself. They almost brought it into existence. Outside sanitation! He knew all about that; a closet down the garden path hidden with lilac! How long was lilac in flower? Cosy? Nonsense! A sitting-room like old Mrs. Sargent's, stuffy with the door closed and draughty with it open. If he was going to own anything he wanted something spacious, something in which he could have a little organ.

Alas! we never had either the cottage or the space. My mother died in 1932 at the age of seventy-five, after an illness during which she was most tenderly cared for by my sister. It was incredible that she should die; she looked young still, and her face had in death an appearance of serenity, of expectation utterly fulfilled, almost as though the riddle of a breath had been solved. A great stillness replaced the instantly-changing expressiveness which had been her grace in life:

She could curl up in sleep, awake could range
The wide world over, now a bitter change;
So straight and still, nor any room to turn,
A rigid discipline is this to learn.

My father missed her hourly when he was indoors; no other loss could have been so grievous to him. Most happily, however, he had resources out of doors, pleasures in which my mother had not shared. He could still go fishing, watch cricket matches, and garden in his allotment. Instead of the rather cold-hearted, windy gardens which had been his in Cornwall he was now co-partner with Mr. Baker, a retired schoolmaster from Bradninch, in a plot which sloped southwest to the estuary of the Exe. I liked to sit with my father there in the sunshine, praising his green peas, and maintaining stoutly that they were better than Mr. Baker's, though Mr. Baker grew the most astounding, plump marrow-fats. His pods cracked with peas like the pictures on the seed-packets. This richness was due to bone-manure my father used to say. It was my job to fetch the bone-manure. 'Go down on your bicycle, Anne, my dear,' my father would say almost as soon as I got home for a holiday. 'Go down to Pratt's and bring me up a little bone-manure. Susan, you know, draws the line at bone-manure. Says it smells. But it's what Mr. Baker uses.' My father's fish, too, had to vie with Mr. Baker's. 'Only one

today,' he would admit, opening the fishing basket he wore with a leather strap slung over his shoulder; 'only one; but it's a fine mullet! Baker has five or six wretched little pollock.'

He loved the summer and the light; and he hated the winter and darkness. Indoors his wireless was his greatest solace. I can hardly imagine anyone who has more enjoyed the miracle of music over the air, or who has been more annoyed by indiscriminate applause. 'If they think that well played,' he would say testily after a prolonged claque, 'they have no more sense of music than this cat'—pointing a finger at Tweedle, purring unconscious on the hearth-rug. But he often overflowed with applause himself and when, as sometimes happened, my brother Howard suddenly appeared, pretending to conduct the whole orchestra, sharing in my father's enjoyment, his cup of pleasure was full. The two pairs of blue eyes, so alike, and so alive, would sparkle in unison.

My father lived to be ninety-one, moving more and more stiffly, but with his senses unimpaired and his mind unclouded. He died in the midst of war, in 1943. Like many another Cornishman of his generation he was one of the innumerable frail links binding England and America. Of his grandsons, one, Capn's second son, Victor, fought in the Royal Navy; another, Maurice's son, Bill, once the little boy who had worn out his pants sliding down the Exmouth sea-wall, fought with the American Marines. Only a short hour before his death my father was listening to a speech by Mr. Churchill. He was utterly confident in him. But in the old days he had been wont to inveigh against 'young Churchill' and call him rash and a hot-head. It was not until 1940 that my father entirely forgave Mr. Churchill for changing his party in 1902. His admired man had been Mr. Balfour. Both my parents were Conservative to the marrow. My mother was shaken once, and that by her favourite, Mr. Baldwin. We had been wont to tease her about her dear Stanley; but he made, with my mother, the tactical error of publicly recommending a book, *Precious Bane*, by Mary Webb. She hastened to get it, looked at the end as was her habit, and then began to read at her quick usual rate. I happened to be in the room when she had finished it. She said, 'Well!' Then she took off her glasses and gazed thoughtfully at me. 'I begin to wonder, my dear, whether we can trust Mr. Baldwin's judgment,' she said. But she voted Conservative again in the next election. After all Mr. Baldwin was not the Party.

On leaving Oxford I looked about for a job in Cornwall and, finding none, I went to teach English in King Edward's High School, Birmingham, while waiting for something in the west to turn up. I was attracted partly

because Miss L. K. Barrie was head mistress of the school and I felt that we shared ideas about schooling; but even more because, in the excellent, free, old high school tradition there was no regular afternoon school at King Edward's. I spied leisure, and a fresh region of England to explore. Out of my first month's salary I put down a deposit on a new Velocette, took delivery, and heigh ho, for the Malverns! I came to them, saw their melodious line, set my Velocette to a rubbly path, fell off, grazed my knuckles, abandoned the bike, walked to the top of the Beacon and took a breath. Ever since, exploring all that Malvern country has been to me a main delight.

But the Malverns never ousted Cornwall. Cornwall was still my chosen of all destinations.

I did not know when, on my Velocette, I went speeding to Oxford, that I should not return to Cornwall to work again; that Cornwall would become my holiday land, but not the land in which I taught. Instead of being my settled home it became a destination. Three months is the longest stretch I have ever spent without seeking it; but visiting a place, however frequent the visits, is not like living there. Yet the visits have lent to Cornwall for me the glow of holiday-light. I have come speeding on through the counties in hoar frost to Tintagel. That was on my new Velocette. I have come, how many times, by the night train, turning out at Bristol to join the dim nocturnal life between eleven-thirty and one, reaching St. Erth in the morning, and walking over the Towans and through the nut grove, to St. Ives, having breakfast with Florence Drew, walking by the lower path or over the hills to Zennor, down to Gurnard's Head, up to Mrs. Green's on the Bosulow Downs, across to Land's End and Tol-pedn Penwith, or to Mrs. Bailey's at Lamorna, and back through Sunday night on the night train from Penzance. These weekends, little breathless sips of Cornwall, renewed the life in me. Short holidays are sweet.

But long holidays are sweeter. We have spent them in farmhouses, in cottages and tents, often returning to the two parishes, Gorran and Caerhays. Latterly, since my parents died, my sister and I have preferred our summer holiday in tents. In the wet we lie low and read until it is fine again; we have sometimes lain low a long time it must be owned. We have clung to our ropes in order to prevent ourselves from being carried up on high. In 1946 storms raged as though in winter. The waves hurled themselves up the beach at Hemmick, forced a way up the little river, blighted the water-cress beds, hurtled stones as though they were sticks, and churned the froth to spume. At Vault the backwash withdrew screeching through the shingle. One

morning after the wildest of nights Mr. Bunny rose, hastened to the window, looked out upon our patch, and said to his wife, 'My Gor, Mary! they tents is still there; they maidens must have pegged they down proper.'

But this summer (August 1947), we have come into the golden sunshine, that sunshine which always has its turn to transfigure the earth if one goes on living and hoping. As I write the last pages of this book Susan and I are encamped once more in our three little tents—one each and one for the saucepans—on the same patch as during the rainy August. It is a triangular patch, part of our friend Thomas Grose's farm of Treveson; it lies between the hedge of his last steep field and the road that leads from Boswinger to Penare. By the side a little brook runs, bordered by loosestrife and watermint, bramble and the great white cups of bindweed. Hemp agrimony grows tall. Janey Ashton, once Janey Kendall of Cotna who, like her mother, cherishes flowers and babies, told us when she came to tea that the name was Virgin Mary and that the flowers picked in their prime, and dried and steeped in water were good for gatherings. The plant had virtue she said. We watch the butterflies—cabbage-whites and painted ladies; red-admirals; the shy flitting blues and saffrons; the rare orange-tips. Two dragon-flies with a blue-black rattle of exquisite wings chase one another. Ahead long tranquil waves gather darkness in the early morning and sun-sparkles at noon before they turn lazily to foam. Behind is a cornfield in all the beauty of sheaves set up in shocks. The patterned lines are lovely, for the field is not flat. It slips over a curve at the top and lies in dips and folds. The harvesters are Tom Grose and his brother John, and their Uncle Will Nott, eighty but still able to bicycle from Trevarrick to Treveson and do a day's harvesting. In the next field—Mr. Edward Michell's of Boswinger—the corn is being carried by his sons and their helpers, while he stands at the top of the lane to warn cars not to come down the winding, steep way when the wagons are mounting. I regret the absence of horses in the wagons; but Jane is glad that they need no longer strain themselves in the heat and be stung by the flies. At Cotna in the old days she said her mother hated most to see the horses draw the threshing-machine. 'Is Darling between the shafts?' she would say. 'Shut up the door, my dear, so that I can't see.'

The hum of the machines in the fields joins with the hum of insects. Grasshoppers whirr; great prosperous handsome drones buzz; worker-bees look too busy and meagre to enjoy themselves. They have achieved a utility cut. Our work in the tents is little and that little is enjoyable. We pick sticks to light the fire and fry the mackerel and red mullet which we get from the Fishermen's Co-operative shop in Gorran Haven. All is spruce in the Fishermen's Co-operative. But Jack Patton doesn't think much of us for

being so helpless as to buy fish. He could show us how to set a spilter so that we should never be without a bass at Hemmick. But we are no fishermen; a few mackerel when we went out in a boat from Mevagissey is all we have caught. They were coloured like an early morning sky—pink, and pearl, and bluish under their dark top-markings as they lay in the basket. In the sea they were slim lords of themselves and life, with the water fitting round them everywhere. As they slid through the lanes, water closed behind them as air closes behind us—strange phantoms of the water as we are strange phantoms of the air.

‘People change; but the place don’t change much,’ Mr. Uglow said, when we met him going up through the park to see his sheep, just as he had been to see them thirty years before. We met Mr. Allen, too, carpenter at the castle for double that number of years; Mr. Allen is getting on for ninety if not quite ninety. He was walking home to Tregavarras from work. It will take him ten years he told us to get the castle into order after the various things it went through during the war, including twenty or thirty evacuee boys. ‘And Mrs. Williams was sorry to see ’em go,’ says he. We looked down at the castle from the top of the park. ‘People change; but the place don’t change.’ Was that it? Was that why we felt instantly at home in the two parishes? ‘They can’t be in their camp yet,’ says Lowry Richards, church warden in his father’s place, ‘they haven’t been to church. They would have been to church; they’re a couple of Gorran girls.’ We walk to Caerhays Barton and, as of old, I go with Mr. Kneebone, from field to field, counting up the livestock, making sure that all creatures are present before nightfall. Then we get back to the house, to Mrs. Kneebone who has done so many more kindnesses than the ordinary run of folks. She does them while protesting that she never never will. She is the main exemplar in my life of the son in the parable who said to his father, ‘I go not,’ but he went. Just the opposite from me. I am all too eager to say, ‘I go, Sir,’ but I go not. We walk to Gorran. Perhaps my brother Howard arrives and looks at the spot where he and Maurice spilt the tar. They had wheeled the tin of tar in the wheelbarrow all the way up from Gorran Haven. As they neared the home gate Howard, playing ‘Burn bumps’, pinched Maurice’s bottom, made him wince, and the tar was upset. My father sent them all the way back again to fetch some more.

We take other familiar walks. At Portholland Johnny Johns is in his shop; but the shelves are sadly depleted. ‘Woodbines, boy, Woodbines!’ he admonishes a would-be customer, ‘you’m living in a dream of the past, a dream of the past. Me and Howard Treneer, here,’ pointing to my brother who is sitting sideways on the counter, ‘me and Howard can mind when

Ogden's Guinea Gold was threepence a packet, threepence a packet.' He is as derisive as his father was at the idea of my keeping a shop. 'You'd never have the patience for it, my dear maid, never have the patience for it.' Perhaps we walk to Trevarrick and hear Elam (William) Grose recalling the days when, as a boy, he used to go rabbiting with my father who, if he missed the first shot might say, 'I shan't do anything today, Elam, my boy; I might as well be home in bed.' How well all we Treneers know those days which we inherit from our parent! From Trevarrick, perhaps, we walk back by way of Almshouse Hill to the Milfords and call to see Mrs. Grose and her daughter May. Mrs. Grose says, 'I enjoyed your book, Anne, my love; but arn't 'ee ever going to write a book with a bit of love in it? What I like is a little bit of love.' On our way down to Hemmick we may call to see Tom and Ida with whom we went to school. When it rained too heavily on our camp Tom came down through the soaking fields to persuade us to come up to the house. 'When you'm tired of it down here just say, "Well, we'm going home now, and come up Treveesson."' We have no house in Gorran or Caerhays; and yet we have, in the two parishes, that for lack of which so many millions are in sore distress—a natural home, our proper place.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Bosulow and Busulow are both mentioned in the original printed edition. These names are maintained in the ebook edition.

[The end of *Cornish Years* by Anne Treneer]