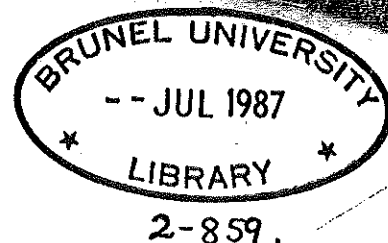


MY MEMOIRS
OF DR. BARNARDO'S HOME, BARKINGSIDE, ESSEX.

1904 to June 1911

By Nora Isabel Adnams, nee Brazier,



I was born in the parish of Hampstead, on May 14th 1901, being the seventh child of a seventh child. My Mother and Father were married at the age of twenty-

four and twenty-three, had nine children, One of which died at birth, ~~and one~~

In 1902 or 1903 we were all taken with diphtheria. During this time, died at the age of five years and one at the age of ten weeks, in 1902 or 1903.

another baby was born who died at 10 weeks. My 5 years old sister

At this time we were all taken with diphtheria, I, the baby, but the one born also died of diphtheria.

and died, except my eldest brother who was away with scarlet fever, so escaped

My eldest brother who was away with scarlet fever, so escaped it. My sister and brother (this brother lived only ten weeks) died within ten diphtheria but came home

weeks of each other, the sister of diphtheria. My eldest brother came home

unable to walk and my Mother used to take him to hospital every day for months for massage. He also had his eye scratched with a brooch my sister was wearing so he had to go backward and forward to hospital for eye treatment for three years, but he lost the sight of his right eye. This happened before I was born. His legs, I am pleased to say, gradually got stronger, and he was able to run about again. My sisters and brother went to Netherwood Street School, where at the age of three and a half years I insisted on going, although I was so small, (as a baby I was pushed around in a doll's pram), people used to think my Mother wicked to let me run about. I wore a red dress and pink pinafore, and was soon a familiar sight, running along with the others to school. Then came disaster, money never being very plentiful since my eldest sister arrived, when my Father broke his arm, then sprained his wrist, things were very black, which resulted one day, in there being only a part of a stale loaf of bread in the house to feed us and no money. My Father left us, with my Mother's consent, so we were taken to the workhouse, to await a place in a 'Home. (Unless we were deserted at least by one parent, I don't think we could have gone there), but my parents were desperate.

Well we were put into Dr. Barnardo's Home at Stepney, there to await our fate.

In the end, my eldest brother was put into a home at Dartford, Kent. He was quite happy and the boys there mixed freely with the village children and

attended the same school. Not so us four girls, oh no! We were placed in separate cottages in the village home at Barkingside, Essex, where we were as isolated from the world as if we were on a desert island. These things I now write about, were told me either by my eldest sister, or otherwise are my own memories, which in some cases vary from my sister, as of course, things strike different people in different ways. Remember, my sister was nearly twelve years of age, and of course remembered her home life. I had no such memories being just three and a half years of age, when I entered Dr. Barnado's Homes. Well, there we were, all in different cottages, when I became desparately ill and had to return to my Mother, as the doctor said it was the only thing that would save me, as I was fretting myself to death. I remained home for about three months, where I suppose I recovered enough to consider being removed again. They now decided the only thing to do, was to put the four of us into the same cottage, so for the next six and a half years I was in Daisy Cottage, Old Village. I had my tenth birthday there in May 1911, as we were taken home by our parents in June, but that is another story and the events which led up to it, are very interesting, but must wait until the end of my memoirs in the home. By the way, my youngest brother stayed with my Mother, who moved into a basement room with him, in Swinton Street, King's Cross, where I believed they stayed (my Father returning to her, once we were taken away) until just before they had us home in June 1911. One interesting piece, at least I thought at the time, was the matron at Stepney House, who after not seeing me from three and a half years to ten years old, remembered me and said, "Hullo, Nora, I hope you are not going to cry this time, but of course not, as you are a big girl now, and going home". Considering the number of children passing through her hands, I thought this most remarkable and worth mentioning, and it certainly pleased me at the time. Well, now for my recollections. I think my first memory was the summer I was four years of age. I recollect sitting on a little wooden stool, under

"Mothers" sitting room window, where she could keep an eye on me, playing with a minute doll and bed. The times I made and remade this little wire bed, which had a small mattress, two sheets and a flowered quilt, and a tiny china doll, one could buy the lot for a few coppers. Here I had to sit and play until the other girls came home from school, when I was allowed to get up and play with them until tea-time. My next memory, which is to this day a dead secret between my sisters and myself, it was kept secret at the time, because we knew - had it become known that we had complained to Dr. Barnardo himself, swift punishment would follow and we soon learned to keep out of as much trouble as possible. Well, one afternoon, whilst walking around with my sisters, we spied Dr. Barnardo visiting some cottages, so my sisters got into a conflagration, with the result, I was pushed or persuaded to run up to him and tell him we were unhappy. It was more effective than any of us had anticipated. I ran up to Dr. Barnardo, clung round his legs, burst out crying, "Dr. 'Nardie', Dr. 'Nardie' take me home, oh take me home". He picked me up in his arms and soothed me, then said "Why, my little one, aren't you happy here?" By this time, we were all thoroughly frightened, and I just cried again. He told my eldest sister to take me "home" and he would look into things. Unfortunately, he was taken ill that night, and never recovered. His death in 1905 was indeed a great loss. A statue is erected just inside the gates of the home of him with the children around him. One girl was named Flossie Jenkins, she was in my class at school but oh! how I hated her for being chosen as one of the children. We usually enjoyed our Christmas, but unfortunately, just when things seemed to be going well something always happened to me. On Christmas morning we used to line up in the playroom, from the youngest by the door, ME, to the eldest at the far end, sixteen of us. Then about ten o'clock Father Christmas (Mr. Godfrey, the Govenor) would arrive with his sack, carried by one of the gardeners. We were then given a toy out of the sack, a doll, or tea-set, or a game, some sweets, an apple and an orange. We would then wish Father Christmas

"A Happy Christmas" and sing a carol and off he would go with his goods, which were on a cart in the road, to the next cottage and so on. We would then go to Church, and arrive home for our dinner. It could not have been anything very spectacular, for I remember nothing at all about our Christmas food. Then we would open our own little parcels our parents or friends had managed to send to us, then have games etc. Altogether quite an enjoyable time was had except for this one Christmas I particularly remember. I had been sent a white pinafore by my own Mother, and was happily thinking of asking if I could wear it then, when "Mother" said, "Oh! Nora, you can let 'so and so' wear your new pinafore as she has not a clean one." You can imagine my consternation, she could willingly have had my clean pinny I already had on, but the one my own Mother had sent me. Never! So of course I said, "No. No. I won't let her have it." Then a tussle of wills began. "Mother" said, "You naughty, disagreeable girl, of course you will let her wear it." "I won't, I won't," I cried. The more she tried to make me give it up, the more I clung to it, tears streaming down my face. She was determined I would, and snatched it from me, whereupon I became like a wild tiger. I kicked her and scratched her, punched and hit her, screaming all the time, "I won't, I won't, my Mother sent it to me," but it was no good, I lost. She picked me up like a sack of coals under her arm, and marched me upstairs to bed, with a whipping beforehand. No tea - no games, and in disgrace. I was a very poor forlorn little soul that day. Could not the woman realize. 'My own dear Mother' had given it to me. I just could not let any-one else wear it, but no, they had no imagination, everything had to be what they said. How I hated her that day. Of course, we always had to say we were sorry after any punishment. I really was a stubborn child, I could never see why I should apologise, and would not for ages, until of course more punishment followed. The wise ones said "Sorry" at once, and all was over, it took me a long while to realize this, and even then, would not say so if I was not, just to escape punishment.

One punishment often inflicted on us younger ones (by the way, for a year or two I was the youngest in our cottage) on Saturday mornings during winter months, was this. After breakfast was cleared away it was announced that, us young ones (four or five of us) owing to some misdeed, real or otherwise, were to sit still on our chairs for two hours. This was real agony, for two solid hours we had to sit there without moving, even to brush a fly off our nose, if one did move, some tell-tale told "Mother", whereupon another half hour was added, and if one argued about it (as I often did) another half hour was added on to that. There we would sit, chairs close to walls, our eyes watching the clock go round, oh! so slowly. We then were allowed to move for dinner, then, if fine, were sent out. Often, the two or three young ones in our cottage, seemed to be the only ones sent out, on those bitterly cold winter days. We were expected to play games to keep us warm, but when one is ill-nourished, miserable and cold, one does not feel like playing. Many the time we pulled buttons off our stays, so our knickers would not stop up, then we would go into the kitchen, and get one of the big girls to sew them on, and so we would get a warm for a few minutes. After doing this, for several weeks, our ruse was rumbled and we were threatened with a whipping if we pulled any more buttons off. Of course we enjoyed our play many times, when it was icy, we used to make a slide in our playing grounds, and one after the other we would go - sliding away, often falling on our bottoms, tumbling over each other. This was when children from other cottages were out playing, then we did have fun. Another very wicked misdeed of mine, I really cannot remember what led up to it, but I picked every geranium I could find, from under the school windows, and was happily going home with this enormous bunch of flowers, when I stopped, sick with fright. What could I do? I could not take them home, what explanation could I give for having them? Suddenly, a very bright idea came to me. Put them on Dr. Barnado's grave. "Good," I thought. So off I went and put them on his grave. (We often put jam-jars of buttercups and daisies there). I never

thought of the commotion I would cause by this deed. When someone suddenly discovered the grave smothered with bright red geraniums, there was a rumpus. Where had those flowers come from? Who had put them there? Every cottage Mother was informed, and of course in the meantime the flowers from beneath the schoolroom windows were missed, and two and two were put together. Who was this wicked child, that had picked all the flowers? ME, one of the youngest. Didn't I get a whipping! Rather, but not quite so severe, as I had picked them (so they thought, and of course I did not undeceive them) for Dr. Barnardo's grave, but I must never, never do such a thing again. Oh! Dear, I was always in trouble of some sort.

I feel I am not writing this in any sort of order. I have not yet described the village home. Well, the village consists of, the old village, the new village and the new extension. Our cottage, well all the cottages in old village had - four bedrooms, with four beds in each, "Mother's bedroom", bathroom and clothes closets, upstairs; each room running out of long passage, two each side. The bedrooms had four iron beds, wooden washstand built from wall, two washbasins and jugs, no lino, no carpets, just bare boards, which the eldest of the school children had to scrub every morning, in cold water. My sister Ellen being one of these. We rose at 6.30, stripped to waist and washed in cold water, cleaned our teeth then young ones would go downstairs there to do various jobs before breakfast. The older ones made beds, washed basins, filled jugs and scrubbed floors and passage and bathroom, all in cold water. My job, as far back as I can remember was - clean door handles and hangers for our coats in playrooms also the brass latches on windows, the brass top of fireguards and pick the door mats (All pieces of cotten or fluff etc. that had collected on the door mats). The eldest girl lit kitchen fire and dining room fire, cooked breakfast, which consisted of - burned porridge, bread and margarine, which was so rancid (as it mostly was in those days) and of course the girls had so much to do , could not spare time to keep stirring

porridge, so of course it was mostly burned. Anyhow, this we had to eat, just a little sugar on porridge, no milk, vile, one's tummy just revolted, can one wonder I suffer with my tummy now, as I had never had decent food. For dinner, Stew, (supposed to be) we called it cabbage water, or a piece of beef, boiled potatoes, greens. I have often thought since I have grown up, it was not actually the food was so bad, but the cooking of it. Fancy leaving children of thirteen years of age, with an aged kitchen stove, to prepare and cook for sixteen people without much supervision. The Mothers were supposed to see to it, but left much to the girls who were old enough. Tea consisted of bread and margarine again, and cocoa to drink. Once, the margarine was so rancid, we used to scrape it off, all round our plates, and eat dry bread. Then an order came from "Mother" no one was allowed to scrape their bread, they were to eat it all, as it was. You can guess how we felt over this order, us one or two with delicate tummies just could not eat it so went without. We often went without our food, as punishment, or were given dry bread, often one of the girls would smuggle a crust up to one, and one would lay in the dark and eat it. I have gone wandering again, without describing living rooms. Well, downstairs, was "Mother's" sitting room under the bathroom, dining room and playroom, kitchen and scullery under the bedrooms, larder under "Mother's" bedroom. In "Mother's" room was a couch, an armchair, table and one or two small chairs, pictures on wall and a mirror. Playroom leading from this had - a large plain wooden table in the middle, with about sixteen wooden chairs round the walls, bare boards and an old cupboard without doors, pigeon holes, we called it where we all had one partition to keep our few belongings. Then there was a chifffonier, which belonged to "Mother" and was always kept locked. An old rocking horse, a doll's pram and cradle, etc. completed the room, with guard around fire, Dining room had two wooden tables put together, another in a recess, sixteen chairs placed around walls. Kitchen had a big dresser, a table and chair, scullery - sink for washing-up, lined with shelves for all our enamel cups,

plates, basins etc. also "Mother's" lavatory, which she also kept locked. Us sixteen children used the garden lavatory, you can guess the commotion, and also the constipation caused over it but we were dosed regularly Friday nights, and that was that. I well remember one day, I just felt I could not stomach cabbage soup, and left it, only to be told to "eat it up at once." This I would not neither could I. So on went my hat and coat (it being winter time) a chair was put in the garden for me to sit on. An enamel basin of this stew was put into my hands, a pail on one side of me, and there I was made to sit, until at least I had put every spoonful into mouth, if only to vomit it up at the side of me. I had obeyed "Mother" by eating it, never mind what happened over it afterwards. She had gained her way. We 'Braziers' were well known for our spirit, which hard though they tried, they could not break. Also we always stuck up for any child we thought was being put on. Many the punishment we had, for just sticking up for someone who had not the spirit to stick up for themselves. My close friend was Cecelia Bullock, she was more or less my age, and we were inseparable whenever possible. Monday morning she and I used to have to go to the laundry house, and bring back the soda and soap for the week. It was about ten minutes walk, where we were given a 7lb. jam jar of soda and two big bars of yellow soap and a bag of soft soap each. These we had to carry back home, before school. As after all, we were only seven or eight years old, this was quite an effort, they became very heavy after a while. Well, we both used to make such fun out of everything, and one day, as we were giggling away, my jar slipped, and I dropped it and it broke. Our giggles soon turned to tears, we knew we would be severely punished. We tearfully went home to break the news, as we expected, we were made to go back and clear it up, fetch some more, and told we should have a whipping when we arrived back from school, which we did. These whippings were really a nightmare. We were made to go up to a bedroom, undo our knickers, pull up our dress and petticoats, and lay across a bed, and await "Mother", who usually arrived with two girls to hold our hands

and legs, then smacked us with the hairbrush. One could not struggle, one was held too tightly. Oh! the indignity of those whippings, I still blush with shame when I think of it. Why should some people have it in their power to inflict such horrors on another person? The time we were shut in a cupboard, made to stand in corners, with our hands on our heads, and one night, I remember for a punishment, I was locked in the bathroom, then forgotten until the early hours of the morning. By then, I was fast asleep on the laundry bag, a great big bag it was, I had punched it in the middle, made myself comfortable, then partly covered myself to keep warm with the other half. When "Mother" did remember me, she was full of remorse, of course, and tucked me up in bed, but those sort of things rankled so and made one oh so bitter. Now I can often laugh over some of the things, it was mostly a battle of wits, who could get the best of it, often us children won, after all, most of the mother's were simply sex-starved old maids, wanting to be loved and to love, the same as us poor kids. We were always eager and willing to love and have a fuss made of us, often we were made quite a fuss of. We always had to kiss "Mother" good-night, when we were in a bad temper, of course we would not, then there was trouble again. The last "Mother" we had, Miss Raggatt, had lots of pimples, and although on the whole, she was not a bad sort, we did not enjoy having to kiss her, it was a joke amongst us, to see if we could kiss between her pimples. One day, she said to one of the girls, "Oh! - get me the rag-bag, will you?" "Yes Mother," the girl promptly replied, "open your mouth." A very daring and silly joke, of course, but she was so taken aback, nothing was done about it, and caused us lots of amusement, between ourselves, ever after, we called her "Old rag-bag." Another daring deed of mine, and one which thoroughly frightened me. You see, there are so many things one is deprived of, being brought up en-mass. I at eight years old, had never held a box of matches in my hand, so this day as I came downstairs early in the morning, glancing in the kitchen, I saw a box of matches on the dresser. Without thinking of what I would do with

the box, I took it and put it in my pocket. No one saw me. Well, we were all standing by our chairs at breakfast time, the others had just started Grace, Barely had they sang "Be present at our table," when I pulled out the box and struck a match. The shock to ME was electrifying. I screamed and dropped the lighted match on the floor and threw the box after it. Never had I seen such a thing, I did not know what happened, anyhow, the commotion I caused!!!

Upstairs I was sent, and a good whipping was given me, but I did not care that day. I had struck a match, that was sufficient excitement, although very frightening. I had never been in a shop, or spent money, had tea with anyone, been in another house, spoken to a boy or man, other than officials. oh! and lots of other things, one just takes for granted when one is brought up in one's own home. Now for an amusing incident. When we went off to school, mornings and afternoons, we would line up in front of the cottage, in two's. "Mother" would then say, "Good morning, girls," We would answer, with a curtsy, "Good morning, Mother," and off to school we would go, about a quarter of an hour's walk. We did not have to keep together, but went off with our own special friend. Cecelia and I together of course. Well, when we came home, mostly in one's or two's, we would stop at the sitting room window, curtsy after a fashion and say, "Good afternoon, Mother," and off round the garden to the back door. Well, this afternoon I have in mind, I came home on my own, curtsied as usual, and shouted "Good afternoon, Mother." No answer. "Good afternoon, Mother," I shouted again, still no response. So I swept an elaborate curtsy, and shouted, "Oh! well, Good afternoon sitting room," and fled. "Mother" was there all the time, my curtsies were evidently very amusing, and she was just seeing how many times I would do it, without being answered. She was very amused over my reaction, and everyone was told about Nora saying, "Good afternoon" to the sitting room. quite a joke all round. I had scored that time. We had two hospitals in the village, one for every day cases, and one fever hospital, also the doctor's surgery where we would take our notes from "Mother" to say what was wrong with us. I hated going to the Doctor. One always saw

such sights. There would be one girl having her nose syringed, another her ears, another ring-worms dressed and so on. Well, this one day I had to go, I saw Doctor who said, "Wait in the passage." Anyhow, twelve o'clock came and a nurse came out and said, "All who are not very bad, go home now and come again tomorrow." I thought they had forgotten me, so trotted off home. When I arrived home "Mother" said, "What did Doctor say, Nora?" "Oh! he told me to go home." I said. "Alright, sit down to dinner then." I was just putting a mouthful of dinner into my mouth, when an ambulance drew up outside. What a commotion. "Where is the little girl we told to wait on one side?" said the nurse. "Mother" pointed to me, then nurse said, "Well, off to hospital with her, she has Scarlet Fever." So off I went in the ambulance to the fever hospital which was the end cottage in our row. I was there six weeks, and had a wonderful time. The nurses were so kind to us. One day whilst there, we had a terrible thunder-storm. Our own particular nurse was out on her day off. By the way, there were two of us, in the one bedroom. We just could not sleep, we were so worried over her, if she would get back safely. We said our prayers vowing if only she would come safely home, we would never be naughty again. You see, we were given doses of Gregory Powder, and always made some excuse not to drink it at once, where upon, as soon as nurse had left the room, we would open the windows and throw it out, unfortunately there were laurel bushes below and after once or twice it was found out and we had been in serious trouble. Anyhow, all ended well, nurse arrived back about midnight, having been held up by the storm, I'm afraid our good behaviour vow did not last long. Another time I was taken to hospital. It was on a Sunday. We had just finished dinner, were still in the dining room, when a row started. I went to chase one of the girls who was tormenting me, when another one put her foot out, and I fell, striking my head against the table leg. I never got up. I was OUT. They fetched "Mother" and between them got me up into bed, where I was so violently sick, they sent for an ambulance to take me to hospital. (We were never kept in the cottage, any

illness we were taken away at once.) Oh! how I remember with yes, pride, glancing in the wash basins as I was carried out, wrapped in blankets, here was something to brag about, I has been sick one and a half basinfuls. I was the envy of the other girls, it seems laughable now, doesn't it? But these things were really important to us, we had little else to brag about. Well, I did not wake again until Tuesday (I had concussion). By Thursday, I was told to go home. Now this is perfectly true I can still see myself. It was thick snow outside, but, I just dressed myself, got my hat, coat and boots from the corridor and without a word, off I went. How I got back to the cottage, I just don't know. I was so weak and giddy, I had to keep sitting on the low rails around the paths. Eventually, I did arrive. All "Mother" said was, "Oh! Hullo Nora, you're back then. If I had known, I would have sent someone to fetch you." That was that. That's all the fuss I had made of me. I just took my usual place amongst the other girls again, my illness was over and forgotten. Then there was the day we mesmerised one of the girls. We often played this game when out, and had much fun over it. Well, this day, I believe it was Hilda Ruffles' turn to be mesmerised. After one of us passing our hands several times in front of her face, we considered she was off. Of course, we all knew it was just fun, and used to see who could do the most silliest things whilst under the "fluence", Well, off she went, with about six of us following some way behind. She went round the village to the rubbish dump, picked up a bottle, dark blue one (heaven knows what it had held). It was broken, and she jabbed her arm with it, pure accident, then the brown liquid left in the bottle, trickled down her arm. (We found out afterwards it was iodine). She screamed and screamed, "Murder, murder, I've been poisoned." What with blood streaming from her arm, and her screams, we were in á state. The "Mothers" from several cottages around came out, to see what the trouble was. When they saw poor Hilda , one of them took her in and bandaged her arm, then of course got the truth out of us as to what the trouble was over. We were then all marched home to our own

cottage and "Mother" told about the disgraceful incident. We were all sent to bed, without any tea, but we had been really thrilled over it, and had thought it was worth the punishment. I suppose this next memory I want to tell you, must be around Christmas time. I know it was when the big girls, I should imagine the twelve to fourteen year olds, used to go to the Albert Hall to sing with the choirs. Us young ones used to enjoy this evening on our own. We were allowed to stay up late, until the big ones came home (about nine o'clock) to hear all about it, also of course to see what they had brought home for us. They had tea given to them, and they all saved a bun for us younger ones, who had to stay at home. These we were allowed to eat, along with a cup of cocoa each before going off to bed. One of the happy memories I have. Also Empire Day, we always celebrated and May Day. These days, we all used to march round the old village, nice clean dresses on, white if we had them, waving our Union Jacks, then danced on the green around the maypole, had races, and generally enjoyed ourselves. These were the times I was happy. Another day stands out in my mind, was when King Edward died. Either it was a Saturday, or we had a day off from school because of it, but I remember the church bell tolling, and how sad we were, also another good resolution was made - to be good - which no doubt, I did not keep for long. Also when Queen Mary and King George went on one of their tours after the coronation, us children lined the streets and waved our flags, great fun. We also used to have picnics in Epping Forest, I know we used to walk there, but how far, I don't know. Well, I did not walk, the village possessed some half dozen or so old mailcarts (baby carriages). These we used to borrow, two "Mothers" and two lots of children would to at a time, take our dinners and an urn and kettle, make a fire and boil water for tea. I don't know, but all the summers seemed to be fine and hot, we never seemed as if we had to take coats, but I know we did enjoy these outings, two or three of us in the prams along with the mugs etc. We used to pass an asylum, but again, where, I don't know, but I know we would run past, the older ones with the prams

and the walkers, running behind. How the two "Mothers" would laugh. We would arrive back at bed-time, tired and happy, after such freedom for a day. Another time I remember well, was when Ethel Drake ran away. She had not been at the home for long and must have been about twelve to thirteen years of age. Well one morning, it was discovered she was missing, her bed had been used. Of course it was reported to the Govenor, who I suppose told the police, anyhow she had only a few hours of freedom because during the afternoon she was found and brought back. I well remember seeing her walk up the road, by the side of her, the Govenor, with his right arm rigid at his side. The CANE was up his sleeve and poor Ethel had six strokes, locked in bedroom during the day, and dry bread and water for a week, and her clothes taken away. Us others of course thought it very brave of her, but how on earth she had climbed the fence, in the early hours of the morning, I just don't know. You can see this fence from the main road. It goes all round the village. Sunday mornings, we all went to church except one girl, who stayed behind to get the dinner. Now this is where sister Elsie and I differ. I maintain we had only boiled rice for Sunday dinner, she says "No! It was stew." We came to the conclusion, we were both right, that it was stew in the winter and rice in the summer. After church (where after I had put my hat elastic under my nose several times and so let my hat pop off, dropped my hymn book and generally made a nuisance of myself, I would drop asleep on "Mother's" arm (Oh! those sermons) we would go for a walk until dinner time. The walk I really enjoyed was to go up by Barkingside station, on the left was corn-fields, we would go round the edge of these fields, then round the road and so home. I loved this walk when the corn was ripening. If too cold or wet underfoot, we would go all along the road. If I was walking with sister Elsie I would shut my eyes and pretend to be blind, after making her promise to tell me when we got close to a lamp-post. Well, this one Sunday, she did not tell me quickly enough, and I bumped into the post. You should have seen my bump on my head, I got a blinding headache, also a good telling off, as

of course I was questioned as to how I came to walk into the lamp-post. Then again, I would not walk on lines in pavement, so sometimes I was taking little steps, sometimes big ones, unfortunately this resulted in upsetting anyone walking in front of me. Often "Mother" would send message along the line, "Tell Nora to come and walk with me," where I would have to walk along holding her hand. No fun then. We were allowed to talk when out for a walk once we were away from main roads, but must be silent when near the 'Home', we walked in two's and often our partner was chosen for us by "Mother", we were not allowed to choose our own, too much fun that way, so I got into the way of making my fun myself. All sorts of antics I would get up to, and would often have the others in fits of laughter, until told to behave myself. Now, one most unpleasant thing we all had to do was cleaning each other's heads. Poor Lily Fraser - the black girl - with her mop of black curls. Often there were three or four of us younger ones, cleaning her head, we would divide her hair into four parts, and have to de-louse her. Oh! the sickening feeling in my tummy afterwards, but there was no getting out of it, we would perhaps spend an hour on her, then have to wash it for her. All this and I was only ten years of age, when I left there as I said before, but we were never idle. We would also have mending to do, especially darning stockings. A favorite thing "Mother" would do, if one was in her bad books was, after you had darned them, she would say it was not good enough and cut the darn away and make us do it again, and of course a much bigger hole. I remember one day, sitting in the dining room for one hour before school to finish my darning to her satisfaction. No wonder at eleven years of age, when in London, I was the best darning out of six hundred girls, I had had good practice. Our school hours were the happiest time, the teachers were very nice to us, unless of course we played them up. I remember when in the infant's class, sitting on the floor, one duster round my waist and one round my neck, a box of steel knitting by my side and a piece of emery paper, I cleaned all these before we could knit. "A great honour." Another time (still in the

infants) somehow or other, I had a dirty pinafore on in the afternoon, although I had a clean one in the morning. I was asked why I had changed my pinny for a dirty one. I would not tell them it was a punishment, for something I had done at 'Home'. In spite of everything, I believe every girl was loyal to her own 'cottage' and would not tell tales about what happened there. Well, I was put into the cloakroom as a punishment. After having a little weep, I looked around for something to do. First I took every hat and coat from off the pegs, and threw them on the floor, then a pile of our slates took my eye, so I threw them all down, breaking several. At this, the teacher came in and put me behind the piano, which was corner-wise, and told me, "Now behave yourself." I soon had all the children laughing, as the back of the piano being very dirty and dusty, I soon got to work. I blacked my face and my hands, and made horrible faces at them, where-upon teacher made me come out and thoroughly exasperated, made me go and have a jolly good wash, comb my hair and altogether made me look cleaner than when I had arrived in school. She was so nice over it, "Now go home, Nora, and be a good girl," and off I went after such an afternoon.

Then there was the girl, Mary Allen, I don't know what cottage she was in, but I remember her best in the playground at school. She was much older than I, and had a wooden leg, or sometimes a crutch, which really fascinated me. She was always laughing, nothing seemed to put her out. The antics she got up to, on the swings or roundabout and the ladder. She would go head over heels, show her stump of leg, done-up in an old black stocking. Then there was the girl whose face was so disfigured by fire. I forget her name, although she was in my class. Rumour had it her Mother had pushed her on to the fire. The skin was all taut and stretched, her eyes red and lips scorched, but she was such a nice girl. Then there were the twins, who only had one finger on each hand and one toe on each foot, but the beautiful writing and needlework they did, put many a child to shame. There was also the girl who, others said, had water on the brain, anyhow, she had a huge head, and used to wear a big hat covered with

artificial flowers. Sister Annie used to walk her out, with another girl who was blind, but could crochet and knit beautifully. I can still see the three of them taking a walk round the village. Sister Annie, once she left school, was put to work in the cook-house for the laundry people. Oh! the look on the faces of those poor little girls who worked in the laundry. The heat of the steam from coppers, the ironing, but most of all the strictness. They stood there hours and hours, washing, ironing and without speaking. Many fainted, but were soon back in their places again. Absolutely soul-destroying. One of the penalties, my dear children, of being one of the poor of this world. Never, never, believe it when people tell you money does not count. Believe me, as one who has suffered from lack of it, it is THE THING in this world. It commands most things. You have only to see how different a person with money is treated, to how one without it is treated. Why will people with money think poor people have not any feelings. Often they have more than the rich, and in my opinion are far more scrupulous. So you, my dear children, if at any time it lays in your power to help a child in need, do so, for your poor old Mum's sake. But never spend every penny you earn, money commands respect, more so now than ever, so hang on to a part of it always, but at the same time be generous to the less fortunate, but please don't be patronising. Well I did not mean to preach, but I feel very strongly, as you know, over the pompousness of the rich. Strip them of their wealth, and how would they stand. Many would make a pathetic sight. Well, enough - .

Then there was the day, now this I cannot remember what month it was, but it happened once a year. We would, (all the whole village) assemble in the school hall, decked out in our Sunday best, the children would sit in the gallery, all the "Mothers" would be there too and the Govenors and what nots. A table was put in the hall covered with papers of some sort and a pile of silver. This again I do not just remember, if it was 1/- for each years work, or just 1/- whatever the length of time, but this I do know, after several speeches on how

grateful we should be etc. etc., one of the officials would give out the money to the girls. ONE years hard labour for 1/-, think of it! It was their reward for a year's work and grind. Oh! that laundry house, how that does stand out in my mind. Poor little devils. Thank Heaven I was away from there before I reached the ripe age of fourteen years. I remember several of them fainting, as they stood there in a line to receive their reward, and the curtsy they had to make. The hypocrisy of it, they all considered themselves Christians. I blush with shame now, when I think of it. I wonder how they would like their children to be so treated.

I must write about "Founder's Day" which was held every year. This again, I am not quite sure when it was held, it all is so long ago now. I think it was in June, as it was in the summer, I know. Well, on this day, the "Home" was open to visitors from about two o'clock. The commotion before hand, the scrubbing and the cleaning, the best quilts to be put on beds (and taken off directly the visitors had gone). The visitors were given a ticket to have tea in a certain cottage, charge 1/6d. for funds. Well, of course, we had to lay tea, thin bread and butter and jam and cakes, which really made our mouths water, we never had such things for tea. When we thought the coast was clear, we would climb up at the dining room window, and count how many cakes were left, to see if we would get one, when the visitors had gone. We would wish hard that they would not eat all the cakes, there usually were enough left for one each, also tea to drink. We used to have cups and saucers for visitors, but as soon as they had gone, our enamel mugs would come out for us children. How I hate the sight of enamel cups, plates etc., absolutely nauseating, that is why I do like a dainty cup and saucer now. We thoroughly enjoyed "Founder's Day", we were left to our own resources and spent much of the time contemplating what sort of a tea we would get, once visitors left, about five-thirty to six o'clock. Also of course, there was the excitement of seeing people around the place. Every month, on Wednesday evening, "Mother" and the older girls would go to Church, to a meeting called Christian Endeavour, whatever that may be. How

us younger ones looked forward to it. Of course we were put to bed before they went off, we would pretend we were asleep, but the high jinks as soon as they had gone. Did we have fun! One "Mother" looked after about ten cottages for the evening. Which meant they would pay one visit to each cottage, between seven o'clock and nine-thirty when the others would return from Church. We would keep a sharp look-out for the visiting "Mother", but often got caught, which added to the excitement. We would have a game, jumping from one bed to the next, one after the other, then one would climb on to the mantle-piece then on to the wash-stand, and jump. We would go in each others rooms which of course was strictly forbidden, and altogether have a wonderful time. If caught out of bed, and reported to "Mother", punishment would follow, but we did not care, we had had fun. There were the long summer days during the holidays, when we went into the meadow to play, making butter-cup and daisy chains, and baskets of grasses. We were so easily pleased, no ice-cream to be offered us, or a drink of lemonade or a sweet, just nothing, we would arrive back home for our five o'clock tea of bread and margarine. We played TOPS, with a round stone and a twig tied with an old boot lace, our HOOPS were more often than not tied up with string, we played "Mothers and Fathers" by drawing houses on the paths with chalk, and hop-sotch, with a stone, gob-stones with stones picked from the road. Our dolls were battered and broken, doll's prams without rubber on the wheels, no elaborate toys for us, but we had a lot of fun, old pieces of string tied together for skipping rope. Sunday mornings, we all went to Church, as I have said before, if wet in the afternoon and we had to stay in, we would have word-making, letters cut out in cardboard, but we would have to see how many TEXTS we could remember and make up, or we would have to learn Psalm, Psalm 119 had to be learned by heart, or a passage from the Bible, and the text for the next day was always learned overnight, and Heaven help the child that had not learned what she was given. There were the days one was picked out to make TOAST for "Mother", one had to hold it just so, and keep

it moving, so it would be an even brown, but NO TOAST for us, oh! no!, bread and marg. The holiday "Mother" Miss Wolfe, had short hair, a real mop of it. She would fetch her dinner from the kitchen, have to walk through our dining room, through playroom into "Mother's" sitting-room, where each "Mother" fed on her own. She used to keep us in fits of laughter. You see, naturally, as she passed us in the dining room, we would look at her meal, to see what she had, so one day she put the dish on her head to walk through. Next day, as she passed by, we all stood up, and craned our necks to see, in her hurry, the dish wobbled and slipped, over her went her dinner, was she mad! We thought it served her jolly well right. Why should they eat differently to us? We are all human, we could be doing with it, more so than she. There was the time, I had a little tin musical box from my own Mother for a present, naturally I played and played it, in the end I had it taken away. Without any warning it was put on the fire with my Christmas cards. Did I carry on? Of all the mean, horrible things to do to a child. I worshipped my own Mother, and then to have the few treasures she had sent me destroyed, I cried for days, but it could not bring my treasures back. Poor sister Elsie, there was a day when she was in trouble, so for punishment she had the whole lot of boots to clean on her own. Usually two of them did it between them, but would she let "Mother" see she minded, not her, she sang away at the top of her voice, sixteen pairs of them and she was about ten years old. Then sister Ellen, I well remember one day, "Mother" had been to town (Ilford) she took one of the girls with her. Well, this day, she brought back a few cherries, and divided them out amongst us, but left Ellen out, as she was in disgrace. Not to be outdone, she went into the pantry, and got a huge spanish onion, washed and peeled it, then came into the playroom where we were, and sat down and ate it with apparent relish. "Mother" just had to laugh, and her punishment was over, but she just would not accept a cherry from anyone. We were independant little devils, but heaven knows what over. Well, I could go on and on like this, but must soon close. It takes up too much of my time, also I find

I am living in the past too much and it is not good, but one more incident before I write about what led up to us going home. I was in the infants school still, when somehow, my new winter dress was a stiff black thing, with silky thread running through it. I hated it, never being very handsome, I looked awful in this horrible dress, so set about wondering what I could do about it. I could not tear it, it was far too tough. In the end I had a brainwave. I would sit in school with my hands beneath my pinny and gradually I picked all the silk threads out. Of course it left a big threadbare patch in the middle, but I did not care. I knew once it was found out, it would be discarded. Sure enough one Friday night, whilst we were sewing clean tuckers in our frocks, ready for Monday morning, "Mother" discovered it. I got a good whipping over it, but I also got another frock (not black) so I did not mind. The first "Mother" we had was a Mrs. Ellis. She was very very good to us. She bought enough red material for sixteen children to have winter coats made. When we came home after six years wear of them, they were still in use for Sunday wear. The big ones wore red tam-o-shanters with them and the three youngest wore red felt hats like a Turks fez with a black tassel. We also wore a white fur round our necks tied with a ribbon. A funny thing, but instead of hanging on to a good woman, as soon as they found her making us happy, they got rid of her. She went and the next "Mother" was a Miss Gilbert, she was quite nice at times, but they were so unpredictable, one never knew where one was with them. Miss Wolfe was funny at times, and often threatened all sorts of horrible punishments. Miss Raggett was spiteful, once or twice she made a girl lie naked under a bed for most of one night. Once she threatened me with this torture, but I was so delicate looking she must have thought better of it. I also remember Miss Gilbert waking me up many a time, because my clothes were not folded right. She would wake me up, haul me out of bed and make me fold them all again. They had to be folded, each garment, cotton chemise, cotton drawers, three petticoats and stockings and buttoned into our stays, and put under the bed, so cold to be put on in the

morning, and remember, I was only six or seven years old when she was there. The last "Mother" was Miss Raggatt. I thought we got on quite well, but she was mean and petty as you will understand soon. By now, we were getting thoroughly fed up with being there, and could see no prospects of our parents having us home. They were still trying to get a home together for us, but six children wanted some keeping, no grants or children's allowance in those days. There was a building in the Home, where the Governors and Committee met, more like the Town Hall else where. Well, here, any child who wanted to go abroad would go and see them and talk things over. My three sisters had coaxed and bullied me into agreeing with them, that we all wanted to go to Canada. After all, I see I have missed out the most important thing that led up to our interview with the Governors etc. It was this, and a more spiteful and mean woman than Miss Raggatt was on this day, I cannot imagine. Every now and then, someone from the outside world would wish to adopt a child. How one was chosen I don't know. Anyhow, this one day, Cecelia and I were told that on the morrow, a lady would be coming to see us two. What do you think? Miss Raggatt nagged me so much that morning, that I was in absolute tears and looked so miserable. Then just before the person was due to arrive said, "Now Nora, wash your face and comb your hair or no one will want you". Of course, I had cried so much, that when she did arrive and we were sent for, I was in no mood to be put on show, and just stood there sulky. The outcome of this was that although the "Lady" wanted to adopt me, my attitude put her off, and Cecelia was chosen instead. Now as far as I remember, this was not an adoption into the family, but meant they provided decent clothes for you, remembered your birthdays, also Christmas etc. I know Cecelia was now dressed in lovely dresses, and decent boots etc. also had boxes of sweets sent her and regular visits from "My Lady". Well, what am I trying to explain is, this was Miss Raggatt's way of at last finding a way to try to break our spirit. She had deliberately put me into a sulky temper so that I should not be chosen. This she told us herself, she was

triumphant over it and of course we could do just nothing, nothing at all. She thought she had us beaten but she had not reckoned with the Brazier spirit. This made no difference to my friendship with Cecelia, we were as friendly as ever, but we were getting very dissatisfied. Well, the long and short of it was - one day we had an appointment with the Governor etc. All the four of us, were told to report after school, sister Annie of course had left school, and was as I said before, cook in the laundry house, well, she got time off to go as well. They questioned each one of us in turn, as to why we wanted to go to Canada, had anyone persuaded us to say we would like to go? We were examined by Doctor, had our teeth seen to, and told pending permission from our own Mother, we would be off to Canada, farmed out with a family. Of course, we none of us really wanted to go, myself least of all and I howled lustily all the way home. Well, we did not get that permission, my Parents would not allow us to go. When we asked her why, Mum said, "They had heard such tales of families taking young girls from homes and making proper little slaves of them, and no wages and they could never get home again, that they had decided as soon as they could get a larger place to live in they would have us home again with them, even though there would still be many things we would have to do without." We were delighted, you may be sure, but months went by and nothing happened about it, until one day, as each one of us arrived home from school, we were greeted by one or the other with, "Mother wants you in her sitting room, at once." Off each one trotted and when we had all arrived in sitting room, "Mother" dropped a bomb shell. "You are going home tomorrow, so as soon as tea is over, we will get your clothes ready for you." No more than that. You can guess the excitement it caused. Of course, I had not the foggiest idea what to expect, as remember, I was only three and a half years old when I went into the home and knew none other, so it was with mixed feelings that I prepared for "Home". Remember, I had never been in another house, or spoken to anyone outside the home, beside my Mother and young brother. I had never been out on my own, or been into a shop to buy

anything or with anyone, or been on a bus or tram. Well, after tea, the clothes were all got out, our Sunday dresses had to be put on, to see if they were alright. Of course, Miss Raggatt found fault with mine, said it was not clean enough and no time to have it washed. Now I liked this frock and tried hard to get her to let me wear it, after all, what did a dirty mark or two matter at a time like that, but NO, she made me have my week day frock, which was black-skirted with a grey and black yoke and cuffs and of course the inevitable lace tucker. It looked alright but I wanted the BLUE, but NO, she would not let me have it, in spite of tears. Well our clean change of clothes were done up in separate parcels of brown paper and string, one each, and put in the playroom, shoes cleaned and our clean clothes put out, our hair washed and a bath given and off to bed, where we could not sleep for excitement. We were up at our usual time of 6.30am, next morning, but for once did not have any WORK to do. When we assembled for prayers, "Mother" said, "Now, Nora, you shall choose the hymn as it is your last morning." Without any hesitation, I said, "Alright, we will have 'Till we meet again' which I sung gustily and whispered to Cecelia, "Hope we never do." Of course, I did not realize what the hymn meant, all I was thinking and hoping, I would not have to meet her again. You know, in spite of June, it was a terrible morning, the rain poured down, but off we went, after our "Good-byes" with "Mother" to Stepney House, there to await our own Mother to collect us. I remember vividly going down the side turning to the entrance, a train was just going over the bridge, it frightened me out of my wits, it was still pouring of rain, I was yards behind the others, then I dropped my paper parcel on the wet pavement, of course had to stop and pick it up. Miss Raggatt was shouting, "Do hurry, Nora, don't get lagging behind." But no one attempted to help me, then they all disappeared into the doorway and I was alone. I cried and cried and hurried as fast as I could, feeling sick and miserable. We had gone there by train, underground perhaps, I cannot remember, anyhow, it was all so bewildering. Well, at last I reached the door,

to follow the others up flights of stone stairs, into a dreary drab looking room, where the matron arrived, the one who had recognised me after almost six and a half years. After what seemed an awful long wait, Mum arrived, with my young brother and my aunt. We said our goodbyes etc. to Miss Raggatt and Matron and then we were off, to the first real home at ten years of age, I had had for six and a half years. That journey though, I shall never forget it. The trams, oh! how sick we all were, but the conductor did not seem to mind. We went in two trams, and I suppose must have arrived home in time for dinner. My first thought as we went into our OWN door was how small and how crowded, when we were all once inside, but it was HOME and that was everything. There were pictures on the walls, ornaments on the mantelpiece, I thought it was wonderful. WE WERE HOME. Now we had to settle down to a vastly different life. For the first time in my life I had money problems to be explained to me and just how much money ran one's life. We learned quickly, having already gone without so much all my life, I understood, even though home, life would be no picnic, but there was LOVE there, which made up for much. Well after a day or two to settle down a bit, Mum took us to school. She told the Governess, of course, where we had spent our lives, but we had been made to promise we would never talk about it at school or even at home, it was absolutely forbidden to mention "The Home". We were taken into our respective classes and introduced to the teacher, who of course wanted our Name and Address, also what school we had previously attended. Now what could I do? I was in a quandary. In the end, I bent towards teacher at her desk, and whispered in her ear. "Dr. Barnardo's Homes, but don't get telling anyone, we don't want everyone to know." The look of astonishment on her face was really funny. She had never been told what to do or not to do before, by one of her girls, but she was very good over it and said, "Of course not."

My new life had begun and I can tell you it wanted getting used to. The talk was so different to what I had been used to. As far as I was concerned, the only naughty words I knew were LIAR and FEEBLE. Both these words, we were allowed

to use at the Home as freely as we liked, but as soon as my school-mates heard me call someone feeble minded or a liar, they indeed thought I was a weird child, which I suppose I was.

I had to get used to having a Father and an older brother, he was fifteen, who were perfect strangers to me. My younger brother, aged seven, I had only seen for about one hour every two or three months, also of course My Mother I hardly knew. Sister Annie was out in service, so we did not see much of her. Anyhow, I suppose we gradually settled down, after having been laughed at because if anyone wanted me to play with them or go for a walk, or even go into their house I would say, "I must ask my parent's permission first," which must have struck people as very old-fashioned and made my Mum furious with me.

Well, Husband of mine and you, my children, this is the end of six and a half years of your old "Mum's" memoirs in Dr. Barnardo's Homes.. I would just like to add, how thrilled, pleased and delighted I was to visit "Baby Castle", Dr. Barnardo's Home at Hawkhurst. I always said I was born fifty years too soon, now I know. Good for the kids - anyhow, Bless 'em.

Agatha, Lucy and Cecelia Bullock went home before a year had gone, after we went home.