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The Twenty Three Years.

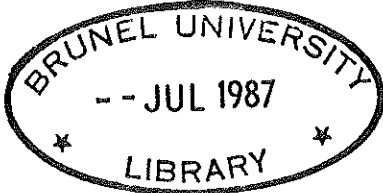
or

The Late Way Of Life-

And of Living.

By

"The Exile".



2-15

Dedicated To-

"All those people of the
of the working classes
who tried to find work
and make a living for
themselves, in "The Brave
New World" which was to
follow "The Last War to
and All Wars" 1914 to 1918.

In particular to those who
traveled the country in the
hope that they might "Put
Down Roots" in a steady job
somewhere in Britain".

Author J.H.Armitage. 1974.

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Introduction.

This is not intended to be an autobiography, but rather a documentary, a true record of the way of life, the standard of living, housing, and the working conditions of the working class folk (that is the greater majority of them), in the industrial districts of Britain at the beginning of the First World War. Also the conditions in the years following.

This is the way that I saw and experienced these things, first as a young child, then as a schoolboy, then as a "teenager". My own experiences were not unique, they were typical of many more at that time.

In parts it may seem to the reader to be "Not quite Nice" or even sordid, but how often is the true story about anything all "Sweetness and Light"? I have tried to avoid the error of telling my own story to the detriment of the word-picture of life for everyone else, but this is not as easy as it may seem.

For instance, if I were to concentrate on street scenes and the living and working conditions, with no reference to my own part in all this, the reader (quite rightly) might say "Yes but where does he fit into all this".

On the other hand, if I paint my own picture too vividly, the reader might well say "Why it's all about his own life at that time, and nothing about what life was like for other folk in those days". So I hope that my critics will see both sides of the picture, and forgive me if I digress a little from time-to-time.

There were struggles in plenty, and not a little hardship, but of glamour there is little, it was literally the survival of the fittest. This however does not mean that only those endowed with brute strength and super vitality could stay

the course, but rather those who could cultivate the knack of living and surviving on whatever came their way. This in itself was a problem with which the poorer people got but little help.

From time to time one hears people talking nostalgically about the comradeship and good neighbourliness of the working class people in the poorer districts. The plain truth was however, that people pulled together for the same reason that everybody pulls together in wartime.

In this case the common enemy was bad conditions and insecurity, plus the fact that poverty was just one weeks wage away for those who had a job to go to. For those who were unable to work for any reason at all, the outlook was bleak indeed.

So most of the workers helped each other, because they knew that it might be their own turn next to need help.

Sickness, injury, and disease were also fellow travelers with them, and a lifetime of this dour struggle left its mark on the people. If a working class man or woman reached the age of sixty they were considered to be old folk.

In fact many never did reach that age, they were worn out before then by the unequal struggle. Infant mortality was high, and many school age children died before they reached school leaving age ^{of} ~~at~~ thirteen.

It has been said that in those days people were divided into a three class society, but in reality it was a four class society, and the distinctions were very clear cut and plainly noticeable.

The top class were the landed proprietors, the owners of large estates by virtue of hereditary titles bestowed on

on their forefathers centuries before.

This class lived on the rents of the tenant farmers and others who held land on lease from them, and also the royalties paid to them for minerals worked under their land, or traveling over their land. They left all the business of the estate to an agent, and considered that even the greatest business tycoon was of a different order to themselves. So much so that they even arranged the marriages of their sons and daughters amongst their own class.

The big business men and millionaire industrialists, who although they were the most powerful producers of wealth, were considered to be another class and they never did achieve admission to the aristocracy who were the elite.

The middle class people as they were known, included all the professional, managerial, and salaried staffs. They also included the reasonably well placed business people, and they usually lived in a suburban area.

The division between that class and the rank and file of the general office workers, clerks, typists etc was well defined. The clerical worker, although he or she was in the "White Collar and Black Coat class, was always considered to be one step lower than the "Real Middle Class" people, and only a little better than the shop floor workers.

The Bosses themselves never had any contact with their workpeople. Like the other "Upper Class" people, they looked on their workpeople as being of a lower class of society, in fact a lower order of humanity.

This was the class system in the first twenty years of the century, but the break up of the large estates was beginning in 1914, and the class system was extinguished by the two World Wars bringing people together in a common cause as

never before.

However at the time of my childhood, the indoctrination of many generations had resulted in a widespread belief among the workers in general, that they were indeed of a lower order in every way. Indeed, among estate workers and tenant farmworkers in particular, it was accepted that to be allowed to work in a "Gentlemans House" was a honour and a priviledge.

This was called being "In Service", and rarely if ever did the "Master" or the "Mistress" speak personally to a servant of either sex. Usually they conveyed their wishes to the servant through an intermediary such as a butler or housekeeper.

Although the industrial worker was treated by the "Boss" as only another cog in his industrial machine, and therefore expendable at short notice without too much consideration (although there were some employers who did show some concern for their workers particularly young apprentices), at least they knew that when their days work ended they could go home and leave the workshop behind until the next day.

For those in service however, they "Lived In" at the house and literally worked a seven-day week from early morning until late at night. Usually a servant would be addressed by their surname only, except in the case of a cook, who would be addressed as "Cook".

My mother had been in service as "Cook Housekeeper" for a Leeds industrialist, and it was considered to be a very good place. My mother told me about it many times, and said that they were a very good family to work for. All the servants were addressed by their first names, although the usual household discipline was observed.

For instance she had complete charge of four maids who always had to speak of her, or to her as "Cook", but if their

employer spoke personally to my mother, he would address her as Rachel (her first name).

My mother had complete charge of "Buying In" that meant the ordering of all food and catering requirements for the household, and she dealt personally with the tradespeople who supplied them. For all this responsibility she received £1 per week plus full board and lodging in the House".

The maids each got ~~10~~ten shillings per week plus board and lodging. The master bought the servants uniforms, but did not provide any personal clothing or laundry. Each of them had one ~~1/2~~half day off per week, plus one Sunday afternoon per month to visit their own family or friends.

All staff had to be up and about by six a.m on Sunday to prepare vegetables etc for the mid-day meal, and after breakfast they went to church with the family. The advent of my brother (of whom I will speak later) made it necessary for my mother to leave that place, because such things were not allowed in "Service" in 1894.

The same conditions applied to any male members of staff at the homes of rich people. Whether one was a gardener, a coachman, footman, handyman or a stable boy the dividing line was clearly defined. On one level was the master, the mistress and the "Family". On the lower level were the servants, very much an upstairs and downstairs order where the "Master" spoke of or to a servant by surname only, and all the family did the same.

On the other hand, if private service was governed by a code of unwritten laws, the same did not apply to a boy entering into industry straight from school. For many years the school leaving age had stood at twelve, and a boy at ten years of age was allowed to work half-time. That was half a day at

school, and half a day at work in certain trades.

Until 1921 the leaving age had only risen to thirteen, and in fact although in that year the Act was passed raising it fourteen, it did not take effect until the following year, and "Half-Timers" as they were known were allowed until 1922.

The teenage school leaver of the 1970's can have but little idea of what it was like for the thirteen year old school leaver of more than half a century before. The accepted method (if it could be called a method) left much to be desired for the lad looking for work.

The transition from school desk to workbench was abrupt and left little doubt in a lad's mind what was expected of him. Very often he was taken, or sent to the same place where his father or some other member of his family worked, it being at that time the generally accepted principal that the son would follow the same trade as his father.

Obviously, this "Willy Nilly" method of selection (or lack of it) resulted in many misfits like square pegs in round holes.

Not the least effect of this "Like Father Like Son" method was that it gave bosses and foremen a psychological weapon to use on the new recruit. Very often every little fault would be passed on to the lad's father or relative causing trouble for him at home.

Or on the other hand the person in charge would (for example) say very often within the hearing of other workers and apprentices "You'll have to do it better than that before you're as good as your-----" whoever it might be who worked there.

That kind of treatment never did produce good results. It either made a lad truculent and defiant, or it gave him an inferiority complex. In all fairness however, not all bosses were like that, there were some who preferred to form their

own judgement from progress at work. In general working conditions were crude, and working methods were very much "Rule of Thumb".

The conditions attached to youth employment were biased on the side of the employer. If he were satisfied with the boy's work, he would ask the parents (usually at the end of the first year after leaving school) to have him bound apprentice to the trade.

If the parents were agreeable they signed a contract binding for seven years until the age of twenty-one. In the event of him leaving his job before that time, the parents forfeited a sum of money usually about twenty pounds. This was no small sum at a time when a man's wage was counted in shillings.

Also they had to provide him with the tools of his trade, and the apprentice only got a nominal wage of three or four shillings per week for the first two years, and it was only increased by a shilling or two afterwards. In most cases giving a lad a chance to learn a trade meant real hardship in a large family with only one or two wage earners.

On the bosses side, an employer could not sack an apprentice before the date on which the contract ended.

In spite of all this adversity, the people did manage to find a way of making their own pastimes, and taking advantage of any humorous situation that occurred in the daily routine drab though it might be. The people in general made their own lives and conditions provide the laughing stock, their philosophy being that what one has never had, one can never miss. The future had but little to offer, so make the most of the present, it could be worse!

It must seem incredible that there was a time in living memory, when there was no radio, no television, and the only places of entertainment were the picture houses with the

black and white silent films, or the stage shows at the live theatres and an occasional traveling circus. Add to these the Saturday afternoon football or cricket match and it is no wonder that the pubs and the churches were so prosperous.

At a time when (as far as the working class were concerned) there was no security and the future held no prospect other than old age and poverty, it is not surprising that the majority of people had an attitude of "when you have any money eat, drink, and forget to-morrow, you may be dead then".

Drink was cheap. The best beer was only two-pence per pint, and spirits sixpence ($2\frac{1}{2}p$) per measure, and it formed a convenient (if only temporary) escape from the cheerless, overcrowded home conditions in their squalid surroundings.

For the men it made a break before returning next morning to the monotonous, grimy working conditions. The women as usual looked after the home and the children, but it was a common sight to see women, and especially middle aged ones, going into the pub "Round the Corner" with a jug under their shawls to buy "Three Gills" ($1\frac{1}{2}$ pints), and have a half-pint standing at the bar before returning home.

In fact I have heard landlords of public houses say that they sold as much beer over the counter at the "Jug and Bottle entrance as was sold in the tap room!

As a general rule the law took a lenient view of a drunken man, so long as he did not cause too much disturbance, a drunken woman was a much bigger problem to a policeman.

indeed it was not unusual for the local "Bobby" to take a drunk home if he knew him, rather than charge him, because if he did that he also would have to go to court as well, and there no credit to the officer for arresting a drunk anyway.

Perhaps it may seem fantastic to-day, but fifty or sixty years ago a policeman (in town that is) covered his beat on foot. A country policeman covered his beat on a pedal bike.

Traffic duty meant a policeman stood in the middle of the road and controlled traffic by hand signals. Traffic lights were still several years away, and if a man rode a horse at a gallop along a public thoroughfare he could be charged with furious riding to the public danger!

There were no police women, and there was always a long waiting list of would be recruits to the police force. The same applied to the public transport services such as tram-car drivers and conductors etc. In fact at a time when employment of any kind was very much at the whim of the employer, any job which offered permanent employment also carried a waiting list.

The Armed Forces never had a shortage of recruits for the same reason. When trade was slack and work scarce a young eligible man would enlist, reasoning that "We might just as well "Join Up" if we get killed in action it's better to go to Hell on a full belly, than stay at home and starve to death"

As a Radio commentator remarked in a recent programme on 19th century housing "We had an Empire on which the sun never set, and we also had miles of town and city streets in which the sun never rose! The picture was the same in the first quarter of this century, and the inbred apathy of the "Lower Classes" did nothing to help.

Another feature of that bygone time was the "Characters", in every community there were members of both sexes, who for one reason or another, either physical, mental, occupational, or just plain eccentric, were well known by all the local people.

The giving of nicknames to people, especially those who were well known to their neighbours, was commonplace and once given they stuck. Most were good natured names but some uncomplimentary or even downright vulgar, more so if that person was known for some undesirable characteristic. For instance, a toady, a bully, a drunkard, or an habitual sponger.

Even policemen and ministers of religion often got a "handle". Add to these the shouts of newspaper sellers, hawkers, and other street traders and one can well understand that although life in general was grim and hard, it was never uneventful. There was always some topic of conversation and even touches of humour.

Of necessity folk in these "Rough" neighbourhoods had their own way of coping with almost any situation as it arose, if the police were called in, it would be because no other way of dealing with the matter could be found.

A policeman had a much greater latitude for using his own discretion in the case of drunks, youthful offenders, and people making a nuisance of themselves than he has to-day.

On the other hand he did not have the same traffic hazards as his present day counterpart, because the motor car was still a rarity. Nor were the districts to be policed so widely scattered as they are to-day. The very overcrowding and concentration of people in a small area, made it possible to walk to any part of his beat in a few minutes, which meant that the policeman was on equal terms with the offender.

There are times when it appears to me that I have lived in two different worlds, two different lives, because there is absolutely no similarity between the way of life and the conditions of living in the days of my youth and the present time.

Even the people are different in every way.

The last fifty years have swept away many of the evils of the so called "Good Old Days",and it is no longer necessary for aged people to end their lives in a "workhouse" and be classed as paupers by authority.

Although one must admit that the present day standard of living is far better than it was sixty years ago,and mechanical aids in industry and the home have together with improved safety regulations,have made working conditions better than at any time in the last two hundred years, there are many side effects on modern society that did not arise at the begining of this century.

Then the pace of life was more leisurely in keeping with the horse and cart. Manual labour was the accepted standard of handling in every industry,and therefor time and motion study was unknown in the workshop.

The quikkest transport was by rail,and airborne transport was an inventors dream,the aeroplane was only in the experimental stages.

Now instead of the worker being the master of the machine, the machine dictates the speed at which a person must work.

Whether this is good or bad the reader must judge for him or her self from the following pages.

II

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The Late Way of Life,

and Living.

Chapter.I.

In The Beginning.

This is the first chapter of a documentary recording what life was like in an industrial area of the North of England.

First as a child, then as a teenage youth, and then on reaching adulthood in the years at the beginning of the twentieth century. It may seem strange and incredible to the present generation, but it simply bears out that oft repeated saying that the truth is often much stranger than fiction.

On the 24th of September 1908 I was born at 34 Sussex Avenue, Thwaite Gate, Hunslet. My mother never remembered her own mother and father, because both had died while she was still an infant. After being passed from one to another of her aunts and uncles, and after three years half time education in the "Three R's" she left Hunslet Church School to work for an uncle as a domestic help aged eleven in 1881.

My father was the youngest child of a family of eleven children born to a Morley painter and decorator who ruled his household with despotic strictness. His wife, my grandmother, was a hardworking woman obedient to her husband. I never saw her because she died before I was born, so I never knew any of my grandparents.

I had a stepbrother fourteen years my senior, whose father had disappeared on his sons advent. In spite of all this which was the cause of frequent quarrels between my father and my mother, he always accepted my father as his own father and got on well with him. He later joined the Army as George Armitage in 1914.

My father was born in 1874, and worked half-days when he was ten years old as an errand boy. Later when he was twelve years old, he went to work full time at Bruntcliffe Victoria Colliery, at Morley.

At the time that I was born he worked at Walter Scott & Co. Ltd., Leeds Steel Works, which was at the end of Sussex Avenue.

Owing to the fact that scarcely a day passed there without a serious accident (some were fatal), it got the unenviable name of the "Hunslet Slaughter House".

Originally founded in 1871 by the Cooper family as the Aire-side Haematite Company, on the site of an old coal pit it flourished. When Mr. Scott took the works over in 1886, it was making steel rails and joists, from Bessemer Steel made in the original type bottom blown converters.

By the turn of the century it covered an area of twenty five acres, with four old fashioned blast furnaces, an extensive rolling mill, and a large trade in pig iron, tarred macadam, and crushed and graded iron slag for railroad ballasting and road making, and it had five miles of internal rail track with eight steam locomotives.

By 1897 production had almost doubled, but although Mr. Scott had added more plant and machinery to cope with the demand, the old plant still remained in use and carried on in the same way as before.

It was this circumstance that resulted in the disastrous explosion of 1913 when a boiler burst in the rolling mill.

Some people might argue that a child of five years old would not be able to remember some thing that happened so long ago, but I have a vivid memory of that night. It happened at supper time (12 o'clock midnight) on the 26th of August 1913.

Obviously I did not know what had happened. I only knew that I had suddenly been awakened by something, and people were running along the street and shouting. I got out of bed and looked out of the window with my mother. My father had been on the afternoon shift and was in bed at the time.

I got to know the details later. Three men were killed on the spot, six died in the horse drawn ambulances on the way to Leeds Infirmary, and a further six died later from their injuries. There were several more injured by steam, boiling water and red hot debris, who later recovered.

The works employed more than two thousand people, most of whom lived locally. It was surrounded on three sides by streets of back-to-back houses, and on the fourth side by the Midland Railway main line. It was these streets served by Bower Road and Grove Road, that gave the area its nickname of "Plevna".

Whoever had been responsible for naming a number of narrow, smoky, dusty houses flanked by a big industrial complex, after a battle in the Peninsular War must have had a whimsical sense of humour. As one of our neighbours once remarked. "It would have been better to call it Little Hell"

Certainly at night when the light from the furnaces, and the glare from molten metal, reflected from the drifting clouds of steam and smoke made the old gas lamps look like feeble candles, the whole district had an infernal appearance that I can still see in my mind's eye.

Most of the folk who lived there tried to keep the outside of their houses reasonably clean, but it was a losing battle against the grey slag dust from the slag crushing and tarmac plant at the other side of the Steel Works wall, even the roofs of the houses were grey with it. Some people gave up the hopeless struggle and didn't try!

This was the steam engine age and Hunslet had it's unlovely share of smoking chimneys. Coal was cheap and plentiful and mills, factories, forges etc all used coal and coke.

Every house whether large or small, burned coal in open grates for heating, cooking, baking (most people baked their own bread), and smoke control was something unheard of then.

Everything was dirty with soot and grime, dust extraction plant in factories was not widely used, even safety precautions in workplaces were very primitive. In all these things Leeds Steel Works was among the worst offenders.

Several years later, a while after the 1914 war I stood near the top gates of Middleton Park. As I stood there looking down on Hunslet, with it's tall chimneys sticking up like black fingers through the smoke pall I realised what my father meant when he cursed, "This hell hole that we have to live in".

The house in Sussex Avenue where I first saw the light of day, was by the standards of pre 1914 a good house. Had it not been for a chain of events over which I had no control at the time (I was not quite six years old when the First World War was declared) it might have been my home for many more years.

Built at the turn of this century, it was one of a row of back-to-back terrace houses. It had an attic, two bedrooms, a living room and scullery, and underneath it was a cellar with a coal grate down which a coal dealer poured coal from a skip in which it was weighed fifty-six pounds at a time, at the cart in which it was brought to the door.

All goods sold at the door were on a strictly cash basis. The order of the day was "No money no coal" etc etc. That is unless one were well in favour with that trader.

We shared an outside flush toilet down the street with two other families, and each family in turn cleaned the closet once a week. The rent for that house was 7 shillings(35p)per week, this was considered a fair rent in 1914, but one must remember that an unskilled workers wage was 18shillings(90p) per week.

As I mentioned previously my father worked at the steel works, and like most men with hot, dusty jobs he liked beer ad lib. This and the circumstance regarding my brother George were the cause of frequent violent quarrels between my two parents.

My recollections of course jumbled like a bad dream, but at five years of age one tends to remember the outstanding things and the good things, and forget the ordinary unspectacular kind of things.

What I do remember vividly are the nights, mostly Friday and Saturday nights, when beer and bad tempers resulted in things being thrown about, and George and myself being outside in the street until it was safe to go back in home again when all was quiet ^{once more.} ~~again~~

As incomes went at that time we had quite a good income. My father had a guinea(21.5) a week for a 5 day week on the Bess-mer plant on shifts, plus half-a-crown(25p) every third week for Saturday morning working. Add to this Georges few shillings as an apprentice painter, and we had a good living.

In spite of his drinking habits father had his good points, when he received his wages he first gave my mother her house-keeping money, he made a point of paying cash for all he got, and he would never tolerate a debt.

These things done, whatever he had left in cash was his own.

Our neighbours were in general a fairly tolerant and friendly lot, reasonably peacefull with each other, and not quite as rough as the nearby "Plevna" folk. Even so, they had their limits of tolerance, and so it was that we "got The Message" backed by notice to quit from the agent because of complaints from people who lived near us.

So out we went, yet typically nobody held it against us afterwards, the trouble was over, the hatchet was buried and never dug up again!

Our furniture and other effects were moved to our new home by the coal man who supplied our coal. This was the usual method for all short distance removals, the coal man using the coal man using the same horse and wagon (swept out of course) that he used for his coal round during the day.

Because it took place at night this kind of removal was generally known as a "Moonlight Flit", and it might be worthwhile mentioning at this point that some of the biggest removal and haulage contractors built up their businesses from no greater beginning than this!

Our next home (it was to be my home for the next twenty-two years) was about the same distance from the Grove Road end of "Plevna", as we had been from the Bower Road end of it before.

It was a much rougher place to live in, it was in fact a real slum, without any relieving feature at all.

At this point I will interrupt my description of our new home and surroundings, with a description of one feature of our everyday life that has now gone for ever. That feature was the street traders, or "Hawkers" as they were known to everybody.

Their mode of transport might be a pony and cart, a hand-cart, a flat wagon pulled by a horse, or even a two wheeled barrow (often a home-made one).

From these hawkers one could buy anything from coal to confectionery, fish to firewood, literally almost anything that one might need in a house. They went slowly along the streets shouting their wares as they went, and if you wanted to buy from them you just went up to the cart.

The hawker would then weigh or measure the required amount of whatever one was buying. In this way it was possible to buy the whole of one's requirements except fresh meat at the door, with only a weekly visit to the grocer's shop, or the butchers as required.

The street cries of the hawkers together with the drab, dingy streets they hawked in, are now a thing of the past, and with their passing some of the colour has gone from the lives of townsfolk.

One could almost tell the time of day (or night as the case might be) by the different shouts, because in most cases they hawked in a certain district at a certain time on certain days.

For instance a greengrocer usually went his round before ~~at~~ mid-day, especially if he had rabbits or fresh fish on his cart. A milkman came round early in the morning, and as there was no bottled milk in 1914, he carried his milk in cans from which he measured the required amount into one's jug or basin, and one paid at the doorstep.

A coal dealer simply shouted "Any-y-y Coal" stopping at his usual customers' doors. The firewood man shouted "Chips 'n Fire Wood", and one man who came round once a fortnight with a flat horse-drawn wagon, sold household pottery and kitchen ware, and his shout was "pots 'n' Bowls".

Fifty or sixty years ago the modern detergents and powders were not available, and another man with a flat wagon came

round the streets shouting as came along "Weshin' Soap, soda, Parozone (this is still in use nowadays), weshin' licker (washing liquor), soft soap" and always finished his recital with a shout of "Ar-r-rmonia (ammonia)". Yet another man with the same kind of cart likewise came once a week with a shout of "Regs-bones".

He took rags bones bottles and jam jars, giving in exchange for cooking salt, scouring stone for stone window sills and doorsteps to make them look clean and neat, or sometimes he gave small items of pottery. He also bought rabbit skins.

At Saturday afternoon a man came round pedaling a tricycle on which was a large box-like arrangement with a lid, and as he pedaled he shouted "Shortcakes, seed cakes, currant cakes, jam tarts and nice little ha'penny buns".

The muffin man came carrying a big basket on his head and shouting "Mou-fins, crum-pits, pike-lits". Later in the evening came the tripe man. He had a two wheeled cart with a roof on in which a paraffin lamp hung swinging about as the pony walked along. He sold cow heel and tripe and rang a bell shouting "Tri-i-ipe an' Cow 'eel".

The fried fish man came at supper time shouting "Fer-ide Fish", as also did the pie and pea man with his cry of "Pies'n Peas all 'ot".

Another character with a pony and a two-wheeled flat cart, never came before supper time hawking fruit and vegetables.

He answered to the name of "Jerry" but we all called him the "Midnight Hawker". More often than not, the cheap fruit and vegetables he sold were bought as the market was closing, and he got the lot almost given away. Next morning seen in daylight, the "Cheap" fruit and veg etc consisted of as much

waste as there was eatable food.

In spite of this and the well chosen things that he was called by irate housewives, he always came round again and again. One reason for this was the fact that it was well known that if one was short of cash, the ubiquitous Jerry would oblige until pay day! /

There was also a "Tinker" who sold and mended articles of tin-plate and other sheet metal on the spot. He shouted "Pan lids 'n Kettle Lids". Another loud cry of "Knives and Sithers ter Grind" heralded a man who trundled a portable grindstone around, which he worked with a treadle. He did a good trade with butchers, fishmongers, and other shopkeepers who used knives and scissors, besides housewives.

Two people who were favourites with the children were an old man and his wife who came round the streets on Saturday morning pushing a big old fashioned perambulator. They shouted "Toffee or 'Umbugs", and sold pennyworths and half-penny worths of home made sweets wrapped in a bit of newspaper.

Another character who was a childrens favourite was the "Tingalary Man". He pulled his barrel organ on two wheels from street to street. He didn't shout, but just stopped in the street and started to turn the handle of his organ. He was always accompanied by any children who were not at school and who would ask their parents for "A Penny for the Tingalairy Man" often children followed him from street to street like a modern Pied Piper.

Returning now to a description of our new home. It was a real slum dwelling, it could scarcely be called a house, yet incredible as it may seem, although it was condemned in 1914 it was not demolished until 1939.

In conversation with other people I have often said that I was brought up in a house with the front door in the back yard, and no window in the kitchen! This was basically true because the house (so called) had been made (it would be wrong to say built) by utilising the space left between the gable ends of two rows of houses built at right angles, and the back of another house in the next street. (See sketches attached)

This left only the fourth wall to be the outside wall, with what was supposed to be the front door and the front window in the back yard!

In the front yard, that is the yard opening onto the main through street Wilson Street, a corner of one of the houses had been moved back to allow a doorway to be made. This was supposed to be the back door, and it had two glass panels in it with a fanlight over it. As it would have been impossible to put a window through the two adjoining houses there was no window in the kitchen!

The bedroom over the kitchen likewise had only one small window in the corner. Underneath the kitchen floor was a cellar cold, dark, and damp as a burial vault, with two coal grates but no window.

The only water supply was a cold water tap on the kitchen wall over an old stone sink supported on two brick pillars.

Hot water for washing up etc, was obtained by filling an iron tank built into the fireplace on the opposite side to the oven and kept hot by the heat from the fire. Larger quantities of hot water for bathing, washing clothes etc, were obtained by lighting a fire under the wash boiler (or "Set Pot" as they were called locally. In either case water had to be carried from the tap to the boiler, and then from the boiler back to the sink (or the wash tub) as required.

A large iron kettle was always standing on the rib of the firegrate full of water for tea making and culinary use as required. The set-pot was built into a small recess formed by the space between the fireplace and a big cupboard which reached from floor to ceiling.

This cupboard, the set-pot, and the fireplace took up all the back wall of the kitchen. The fireplace and the oven were the only cooking facilities that we had, because neither gas or electricity were laid on to our house!

For lighting we used a paraffin lamp downstairs, and for going up stairs or into the cellar we used a candle. Several other houses in that area of Hunslet had to use oil lamps for the same reason, but candles were in general use in most houses at that time, even those that had a gas supply.

The front room, i.e., the one facing the back yard, had a big window and a door set in the outside wall, and the bedroom over it also had a good sized window. However as in both these rooms the windows faced due North East, very little sunlight ever shone through them.

The dividing wall between the front room and the kitchen was broken by the door connecting the two rooms. On one side of this door was the cellar door, and on the other side was a small window 24 inches high by 18 inches wide, this was to allow some light to come through from the front room!

The kitchen sink was the only washing facility in the house, and a large tin bowl always stood on it under the tap.

Also as the sink itself was only 3 or four feet away from the outside door it was rather draughty for anyone getting washed there in windy weather. That is unless one locked the door and stuffed the space underneath it with an old coat or something.

This was not unusual, as most houses in that area had their sinks and water taps in the same place near the door.

Having a bath required much more preparation. First one had to carry six buckets of water from the tap to the "set-pot" and light a fire underneath it, then when the water was hot one put the wash-tub in front of the fire and put cold water into it first, and then ladled hot water from the set-pot (wash boiler) into it until it was hot enough to stand in.

The accepted rule in most families was that when you had got sufficient boiling water out, you then put back as much water as you had used, for whoever was next for a bath. In this way the water ^{was} ready for topping up the tub again.

While anyone was having a bath the household activities went on just as usual, the other members of the family carried on with whatever they had to do.

If possible when a female member of the family had a bath, it was usually timed for when the men were not in the house, but men got bathed whenever necessary and no-one raised an eyebrow. The majority of working class people were fairly broadminded, and inhibitions were not thick on the ground.

Indeed, those terrace houses which had baths fitted had them either in the scullery adjoining the living room, or in the kitchen under the window with a wooden lid over it for use as a table to work on. When one wanted a bath, one simply removed the lid and drew the blind or a curtain.

One of my cousins who lived not far away in that type of house was a collier, and I often ~~got bathed~~ saw him get bathed in the kitchen when I was visiting them. I thought that this was real luxury compared with our house. They also had their own outside toilet in their own back yard.

At that time there were no pit-head shower baths, so colliers like anyone else who had a dirty job, came home in their working clothes and changed them after washing in the house.

Most of the houses in that part of Hunslet had stone flagged floors downstairs like ours had, but the newer type of terrace houses had wooden floors downstairs as well as upstairs, and proper baths fitted with hot water on tap from a fireback boiler. They also had gas laid on for lighting both upstairs and downstairs, albeit they still had outside toilets.

Most of them had flush toilets, but ^{most} of them had to share with another two houses to one closet, inside toilets were a luxury at that time, nowadays they are required by law!

Most of these closets were situated next to a midden where all household refuse was dumped for collection by Council refuse collectors at intervals of three or four weeks.

Our own sanitary arrangements were as crude as the property itself, primitive to say the least. We shared with two other families in what was called a "Trough Closet", it was one degree better than the earlier dry closets. In fact the "Dry" or "Earth" closets were in use still in rural areas and some outlying town areas for many years after 1914.

There were two conveniences on each side of a narrow passage the floor of which was the wooden lid of the midden, in this case a pit about four feet deep. In between the two closets on each of the passage was an iron door which was kept locked. The iron troughs ran through this middle compartment from one closet to the next on each side of the passage.

This long trough was half full of water into which the offerings dropped. Once a week the Council lavatory man came. He carried with him a can of tar oil disinfectant, a hook, a lantern, and a long brush.

Unlocking the iron door he stepped inside the chamber. With his hook he pulled up a plug in the bottom of the trough. This allowed the weeks collection to flow down into the sewer after first stirring it with the brush. Then going to the other side of the passage, he repeated the process there. Then replacing both plugs he turned on the taps in both, and he then took a short clay pipe from his waistcoat pocket and lighting it he smoked as the tanks filled up.

When there was enough water in both tanks he turned off the taps, and replacing his pipe in his pocket he added a little disinfectant to the water. After stirring it again with his long brush, and then locking the iron doors he would pick up his brush, can, lamp, and hook and march gravely on his sanitary way, majestic and unapproachable!

The oldest of those houses were built of stone and were said to have been built about 1800, they had stone roofs, no dustbins and in fact many streets of houses built many years later did not have bins either. All household refuse and garbage including kitchen and other waste went into the midden or ashpit which I described on the previous page.

These middens were emptied by contract usually about once a month, and as this was the days of the horse and cart the contractor was often a farmer or a market gardener. He would cart it onto his own land, where a man would pick out any tin cans or bottles, and any scrap metal for sale or disposal. The remaining refuse was then ploughed into the land for manure, or to lighten heavy clay soil.

More often was this so on the outskirts of a town, or in a rural area. In large towns and cities the refuse was burned at a destructor, or tipped into disused quarries etc to be covered over with soil for agricultural or horticultural use.

The method of emptying the pit was for two men to come and pull off the wooden lid. One man then got into the pit to shovel out the four weeks accumulation of rotting rubbish and ashes, while the other man went on to another midden.

Then a third man came with a horse and cart, and together the two men shovelled the heap into the cart, after which they pulled the lid back over the pit and went on their odouriferous way. Needless to say that every door and window was kept shut until the job was finished and the cart had gone away!

Drainage was equally crude, one large gulley grate in the middle of each yard had to cope with all the surface water, plus the buckets of dirty water and slops etc, from every house in the yard. Often the top of the grate bore mute evidence that the contents of the usefull receptacle had been emptied there as well!

After doing the weeks washing, the washtub was usually emptied out of the door to run down to the gutter. The stone step was then swilled with a lading can full of clean water to rinse the soapsuds away.

A single gaslamp high up on the wall of a house was the only lighting in each of the yards. This lamp was lit by a lamplighter who came on a bicycle with a long pole on which was a shielded light. Next morning he came to turn out the light at daybreak. He performed this service all the year round in all sorts of w~~h~~weather.

These street lamps(which are now museum exhibits)were cleaned by another man who carried a short ladder, and also a bucket and a cloth to wash the lamps with.

In these conditions it is not surprising that rats in the middens were a common occurance, everyone had mice and cockroaches in their cellars, and in summer flies were everywhere.

Chapter.2.

The Three Years.

There is no reason to suppose that my own schooldays were any different to those of any other boy in those days. So there is no need to dwell on the merits or de-merits of the educational system of that time. It was doing it's best to keep pace with the requirements of the early 20th century, in schools built to comply with the Education Act of 1870. They were totally inadequate even by the standards of 1900.

The school which I attended was no exception to that rule.

It was a catholic church school built in 1873, and badly overcrowded in 1914. Into a space roughly 200 yards long by 100 yards in width, had been crammed Saint Joseph's Church, the Convent, the Boys School, the Girls School, and two playgrounds.

This school had to accommodate 300 pupils in the boys section, between the ages of five and ~~thirteen~~ ^{thirteen}. In all ten teachers including two nuns in the Infants school, had to cope with classes of thirty or more children.

The curriculum was equally sketchy. The "Three R's" plus basic English, a grounding in English History, a smattering of Poetry and Drawing, general knowledge. Add to that list Geography and religious instruction, and it gives some idea of what the teachers lot was like, because the same teacher had to take his or her class in all the subjects for that age group!

The pitch-pine desks were like the buildings a legacy from the 19th century. They had a flat wooden seat joined to the long desk by the cast iron frame that supported both. Originally made to seat three boys, they now had to accommodate five pupils to each desk.

Each desk had three inkwells (the ballpoint pen was not in-

vented until 30 years later), this meant that each inkwell was shared by two boys. Inevitably there were ink blots on our books. The desks were so close together, that the front of one desk formed a backrest for the desk in front of it.

As for the playground, the most that one could say would be to describe it as an open space covered with loose stones in dry weather, and puddles in wet weather, which all age groups had to share.

After school, when we had had our tea, my mother would take me for a walk. Often it would be to one of her relatives.

My Aunt Polly was the nearest, only a few minutes walk away from our house. I liked going there, her husband my uncle Jack was a quiet man who worked at Nicholson's Chemical Works.

He got an Irish Terrier pup and called it "Jack". However four months later when it was used to its name and answered to Jack, they found out that it was in fact a bitch! Later when Jack had six pups the joke lasted for weeks.

They had two sons and two daughters. The two sons were both in the Army. Jack was the eldest son and Herbert was about five years younger than Jack. Susan was the youngest of the two girls, she was my favourite cousin, and she worked at Ingham's Nail mill at the other side of the street.

The other daughter Lena, the eldest one, lived there too but she was married and had a young baby (my half-cousin Mary).

Lena did work at home for Lubelski's clothing factory in Hilledge Road not far away, she didn't talk to me much, she was always too busy treadling away like mad on her sewing machine. Her husband was a collier, he worked down Water Haigh pit at Woodlesford. Because Arthur was a collier he was allowed Concessionary Coal at the rate of a ton a month. A collier did not pay for this coal, it was unscreened and he simply paid for the transport to his home.

Actually the amount was "One load per month", a load in this case being 24 hundredweights (the amount that a horse pulled in a two wheeled cart). This allowance was called "Colliers Coal" and was a concession allowed to the colliers in the Yorkshire Coalfield by the pit owners. It was "Unscreened" coal, that is unsorted, ungraded, and just as it came out of the pit before grading.

I had another aunt and uncle who lived opposite Jack Lane Council School. My Aunt Anne was older than my mother. My uncle George worked at Wards Glass Bottle Works in the yard behind their house, so they had no back door or back windows!

Uncle George died in 1914, but they had a son my cousin Charlie. He was seventeen and a pony driver down Middleton New Broom pit. He used to tell me that when he was older and he was working at the coal face he would have me tramming for him. Of course he was pulling my leg, like when he told me that it was riding the pit ponies that had made him bow-legged like a cowboy.

Another of my mother's brothers lived near the Midland Railway Bridge on Wakefield Road in one of a row of old brick-built cottages called Upper Goslem.

These cottages did not have plastered ceilings. The floor joists and boards of the bedroom floor were the living room ceiling. They had no cellars either. The coalhouse was on the road side at the far end of the garden from the house, and next to it was dry closet.

The term dry was used because this type had no water supply and was not connected to a sewer, otherwise it was wet alright. They had a large tank made of sheet iron into which the collection dropped. It had a handle at each end, and at intervals of several days certainly not every week, two men came to empty them.

Pulling out the tank they emptied the contents into a big almost semi-circular tank on wheels pulled by a big farm horse.

People called this odourous and unlovely vehicle "The Royal Mail". Certainly no-one ever tried to "Hold Up" those mails, they always got a wide berth from everyone else.

This smelly tankfull was usually emptied down a disused quarry, or a Council tip sufficiently far away from any houses or a public thoroughfare. The tank had a loose hinged lid at the back, and by turning a handle which operated a cog and ratchet arrangement, slowly tipped the tank over allowing the contents to pour out down the tip.

Although these cottages were only a short distance outside the Hunslet boundary, they were in the Rothwell Urban District Councils area, a predominantly mining and agricultural area. Most of the older cottages belonging to the collieries and other private owners had the same sanitation system, or lack of one.

Yet by a sharp contrast many houses in that area had proper dustbins for household refuse, but no piped hot water!

Uncle Tom worked at Bell Hill (Rothwell Haigh) pit, about half a mile further up Wakefield Road. His job was delivering the Colliers Coal from that pit, and consequently he was well known locally with his horse and cart.

They had a son who was a deaf mute, yet he could read and write, but although he was nearly thirty he could not get a job to earn his living. Surely a sharp contrast to the present day when social and Government bodies do try to help handicapped people to find work.

The district of Hunslet close to where Uncle Tom and Aunt Jinny lived was called "Klondyke" by the local folk, because although a lot of colliers lived in Hunslet at that time

more colliers lived in each street of the "Klondyke" than in any other comparable street in Hunslet.

All these aunts and uncles were much older than my mother, so it is not surprising that they have long since gone on the journey of no return. Even the pits and other places where they worked have ceased to exist also, their way of life and the places where they lived belong to another age.

After school, if there was any shopping to do (which there usually was) mother and I had our tea and then went shopping on Waterloo Road or Hunslet Lane. This was always interesting to me because the shops used to set out their windows to display the goods that they sold.

Everything displayed was ticketed with the price for all to see. It was the day of personal service by the shopkeeper and his assistants. The day of the self-service and supermarket store was still many years away in the future and totally unheard of then.

A shop assistant had to know the price of each item as it was asked for over the counter. Then he or she would reckon up the total, take payment from the customer, and give change from a cash drawer under the counter, or the till.

I think that it will be best to explain the currency system in use then almost sixty years before decimal currency was introduced.

Our currency then was based on the gold standard, and reckoned in Pounds, Shillings, and Pence, and represented by the symbols £-S^d-D. In 1914 we had no paper money in circulation and the pound was represented by the gold Sovereign, the gold Half-Sovereign worth ten shillings, and the Crown worth five shillings.

A Half Crown was worth two shillings and Six Pence, a Flo-
rin or Two Shilling Piece, a shilling worth 12 pence or one
twentieth of a pound, a Sixpence worth half a shilling, a
Three Penny piece (or Bit) worth half a sixpence, a Penny worth
one 240th of a pound. There was also Half Penny, and a Farth-
ing or Quarter-penny.

As I said previously, the sovereign and the half sovereign
were gold coins, the crown, half-crown, two shilling piece, shil-
ling, sixpence, threepenny piece, were all silver coins. The
sixpence and the threepenny piece were very small and easi-
ly lost (the threepenny bit was only half an inch in diameter).

The penny, half penny, and farthing were copper coins, and it
is perhaps worth mentioning the meaning of the "D" symbol in
the pre-decimal currency. The "D" represented the Roman Den-
arius and was about the oldest of the British coins. After
decimalisation both the shilling and the pence symbol were
not used when the decimal point replaced them.

The pound symbol "£" is still with us, but the pence symbol
is now "p".

Truly is it said that "The Old Order Changeth", and cert-
ainly to those who are not of my own generation or the suc-
ceeding one, the preceding chapters and the succeeding ones
must seem like an account of life in another world, and so
to proceed. The shops, all of them with the exception perhaps
of clothiers and drapers, were open from 8 a.m until 8 or 9
o'clock at night.

Often ten o'clock on Thursday night, and always 10 or 11
on Friday and Saturday nights. In fact if a shop door was
still open at midnight the shopkeeper would not refuse cash
trade or to take an order to be delivered next day, in fact

competition in all the retail trades was keen, and the general motto was "If I don't sell it somebody else will, so I'll sell it myself"!

It was not unusual to see a street trader trundling his barrow, or driving his pony and two wheeled flat cart back home at week ends at midnight. A newsagent would open his shop at six or seven o'clock in the morning. The tea and coffee shops would be open also at that time, so that the carters and wagon drivers could call in for a pint potfull of hot tea and a bacon sandwich, or a slice of bread and dripping.

They were on all the main roads near to a large works, a goods depot, a tramcar terminus, a coalyard or some similar situation. If the coffee shop were in town it was most likely to be in a converted house or shop, if out of town it would be a wooden hut with a round cast iron stove in the middle of the floor. In either case they were well patronised not only by drivers but also workmen going to or coming back from work.

In either case, as many carts carrying coal or coke called there, a customer often brought a piece of coal, coke, or wood and put it on the fire when calling for refreshment.

Fortunately for people like my mother who only had a very small income, food was still relatively cheap. The allowance from the Army for my mother and myself was only a few shillings per week in respect of my father and my brother George.

Out of those few shillings we paid three and sixpence rent, coal was a shilling a hundredweight, and paraffin for the lamp was threepence per quart. So it is obvious that strict economy was necessary, and mother taught me how to get the most out of anything we got.

As she had been a cook housekeeper in private service before she was married, she taught me how to shop and cook in a way that has stood me in good stead ever since.

At that time a shopping bag (known as a carpet bag) was made by folding a piece of stair carpet double, sewing up both sides and sewing on two handles at the top. Such a bag could be filled with vegetables at a street hawkers cart for a shilling. There would be sufficient potatoes, onions, carrots and a swede or a cabbage to last the two of us a week.

The price one shilling (5p) may seem incredibly cheap by today's standards, but one must remember that in 1914 an unskilled labourer worked a fifty hour week for 18 shillings (90p).

A sheep's head could be bought from a butcher on Tuesday or Wednesday for three pence (1½p), he skinned it, took out the eyes, and split it. When it was boiled the tongue and the meat carefully picked from the jaws and the cheeks, together with some boiled potatoes made a meal for that day.

When the stock in the pan was cold it was skimmed to remove the fat which was saved for cooking. Then a couple of good handfuls of mixed pearl barley, split peas, and lentils were added to the stock together with some diced carrots and swede, and an onion.

When the soup was ready dumplings were added and cooked in it, and this made another hot dinner for us, any soup left over we had for supper with bread sops in it.

Thursday was baking night, but sometimes mother would bake another quarter of a stone of flour on Tuesday night as well.

Like most women at that time my mother baked all our bread and pastry. With that three-and-a-half pounds of flour she would make two large loaves, and while the loaves were

rising on the warm hearth the remaining dough in the bowl was rolled out in a large flat cake which was baked at the bottom of the hot oven. When it came out after being turned over once, the loaves were put in and the oven was allowed to cool a little.

The ability to bake good bread was considered to be an essential part of good housekeeping, and if one bought bread from a shop instead of baking it at home, people assumed that the housewife not able to cope properly! Even my Mother would say that "Bought" bread was not as good as your own home made bread.

While the big round cake was still hot we would take half of it and tear it open and spread treacle on it, and eat it for supper while the loaves were baking.

The treacle was bought at the corner shop, which was at the corner of the front yard. One took an empty jar for two pence worth of treacle and simply said "Two pence worth of treacle please". The shopkeeper then placed the empty jar on the scale and weighed it, then taking the jar in one hand and going to the tank which held the treacle, held the jar under the tap and turned on the tap with the other hand allowing the thick brown treacle to flow into your jar.

From early morning until bedtime the corner shop was open, the odd items like a box of matches, half a pint of vinegar (in your own bottle), or half a pound of sugar or a quarter of a pound of bacon. That last item cost two pence half penny, and I can never remember anyone going in for a two pound bag of sugar or a whole jar of jam or of pickles.

These were sold loose from large jars which held seven pounds, and were measured out with a big spoon in pennyworths.

Children went in for a half penny worth of sweets, and I feel

Sometimes amongst all these would be four or five Dutch Edam cheeses like so many round, red, bowling woods. About the only dry goods prepacked were tea, coffee, cocoa, cornflour, and of course cleaning materials, soap powder, scouring powder and the like. Very often tea, coffee, and cocoa were weighed as required.

Flour, oatmeal, rice, sugar, peas, beans, lentils etc all came in sacks and were weighed out on the premises. In the same way lard, margarine, and butter came in boxes and tubs and were weighed in the shop for the customer at the counter.

In most grocers shops Monday and Tuesday were set aside for weighing out flour etc when counter trade was slack. In a big shop with a good local trade, 25 to 30 sacks of flour (both white and brown flour) each holding 10 or 12 stones, would be weighed out into 14lb, 7lb, and 3½lb bags for sale in that week.

A stone of flour (14lbs) at that time would cost (depending on the grade) a shilling to 1 shilling and 3 pence per stone (6½p).

Many large families used two or three stones of flour each week, and the errand boy was kept busy taking orders out on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday until late at night.

The customers order would be packed into a wooden box, and according to weight, the lad would take two or three orders at once, if they were all going to the same area.

This was done by placing them on a pair of "wheels", or as it was often called, a "sack cart". It consisted of a flat bottom with a back and two shafts. ~~///~~ ~~///~~ ~~///~~

After covering them with a clean flour sack or a sugar sack he would then stand between the shafts and either push or pull the wheels to their destination. On arriving at the customers house he had to check each item against the list inside the box.

For a lad to get a job at any retail shop then, he had to

be able to write clearly, spell properly, and reckon up in cash figures. He would also be expected to understand weights and measures (avordupois).

The aroma in a grocers shop at that time was a mixture of odours. Many grocers ground coffee fresh on the premises, and the mingled smells of coffee, cheese, smoked bacon, dried fruit, and spices such as nutmeg, cloves, cinnamon etc, made a combination never smelt in a present day supermarket where everything is sold prepacked and sealed by machinery with a price ticket on it.

At the beginning of this century every grocer had at least one "Shop Cat" which could often be seen snoozing on a sack of oatmeal, rice, sugar or any comfortable spot. Hygiene took a second ^{to} place ^{to} business progress.

Butchers shops had the floors thickly sprinkled with sawdust to soak up the blood and grease from carcass meat hanging up on hooks round the shop. This applied even where a shop belonged to one of the meat companies who imported and sold frozen meat. It was imported from the Argentine and North America, and also large quantities of frozen mutton and lamb were imported from Australia and New Zealand.

At every large railroad depot "Icehouses" owned by the cold storage companies, stored meat, fish, and other perishable foodstuffs brought in by rail. They also supplied many tons of ice for sale. This was because at that time and indeed for many years afterwards, only butchers had a "Cold Room" or in the smaller shops an "Ice Chest".

The domestic "Fridges" so common to-day were unheard of then, so to keep things cool one had to buy ice.

There were many "One Man" butchery businesses where the

butcher bought the cattle or sheep and killed them in his own slaughter house, bought them and had them killed etc at the local abattoir, or bought meat ready dressed at the local meat market. Sheep and cattle were usually driven through the town streets on foot by "Drovers", who were often self employed casual workers who contracted for a price per head of cattle to the slaughter house.

Although home killed meat was the dearest to buy, all meat was reasonably cheap. The best rump and sirloin of beef could be bought for a shilling a pound, and leg of mutton and loin chops could be bought at tenpence a pound.

These however were luxuries which people like my mother could not afford to buy. Neck and breast of mutton, and the skirt and brisket of beef (imported) could be bought for as little as threepence or fourpence a pound, and offal that is liver, heart, bullocks kidneys etc, were also cheap and plentiful, and every butcher had a large dishfull of stewing meat cut up into small pieces in the bottom of the window.

The butcher himself when in his shop often wore the traditional blue-and-white striped apron and straw hat, but in many others, usually company owned shops, they wore long white aprons and coats. In all butchers shops sausages were made ad-lib and were hung down in long chains in the window.

The pork butchers shops were always well stocked, and like the other butchers all "Making Up" i.e pie making, brawn, potted meat, polony, "Ducks" (the local name for faggots) was done on the premises. Often this work was done in the back kitchen or the cellar if proprietor lived on the premises.

The majority of butchers had a boy to take orders out and

deliver them. The smaller shops would have a boy about eleven years old who called at the back door about 7 a.m and collected his basket of orders. Then he had to go home after delivering them, have breakfast and then off to school.

At night after school he went to the shop again to take any other orders, or help with any odd jobs. The "Butcher Boy" as he was called would be paid about half a crown, and he kept any odd pennies given him by customers.

Most butchers would give their errand boy a parcel of oddments like a handful of pie meat, a few left over sausages, bits of offal and scrag end of mutton. This was usually on Friday or Saturday night when closing at ten o'clock.

When a boy left school, if he went to work for a butcher (or a grocer) his working day would start when the shop opened in the morning, and it would finish when it closed for the night.

A confectioners shop was a mouth watering sight. Then everything a confectioner sold was really "Home Made" on the premises, and the smell of baking filled the whole shop and drifted outside everytime the door opened. As a special treat my mother would buy me a jam tart, or a scotch cake on the weekly shopping night.

A "scotch cake" was flat, round and about five inches wide, a quarter of an inch thick, and it was made of oatmeal. It was crumbly and sprinkled with brown sugar.

A currant bun, a jam tart, a scotch cake, or a scone were all the same price, one penny. Some bakers would bake a customers own bread if she kneaded it ready and took it to the back door early in the morning before the shop opened.

A small charge was made for that service.

All the one-man family bakers had coal or coke fired ovens. The oven was built into the bakehouse behind the shop, and the big cast iron oven encased in brickwork was not allowed to go cold until Saturday, when the fire was allowed to die out until Sunday night.

The bakers working day began at 4 A.M, his first job was to take out the ashes from the ash pit, at the same time opening the damper to draw up the fire. After putting more fuel on the fire, he would wash his hands, and then proceed to knead a batch of bread (about two or three stones of flour) in a wooden trough.

Then he would have breakfast while his dough was rising in the trough. There was a crude form of baking machine on the market, but only the large bakeries had them, the small bakers worked entirely by hand. It required careful planning so that as one lot came out, the next was ready to go into the oven. It was hard work done by hand from batches of bread and teacakes to cakes and pastry, but the product had a quality which is unknown on the supermarket shelves of to-day where everything is hygienic and very much of a muchness, but I suppose that's progress!

One thing that has changed but little in the last fifty or so years is the greengrocer, and one could add the fishmonger. Both of them deal in food that is largely naturally produced, and almost anyone would agree that freshly cooked vegetables and fruit are much better flavoured than the (so called) convenience foods. The same could be said about fish, because when cut and carved into various shapes and sizes and deep frozen, it bears little resemblance to the fish that one bought from the fishmongers slab and prepared by hand at home.

The greatest change that has taken place in all the food trades is in hygiene. Certainly no present day food inspector would allow the display and handling conditions that were prevalent in the retail food trades until quite recent years. Many shops had to rely on boiling water in kettles or pans on either an open fire or a gas ring or cooker for cleaning and scrubbing out. All slabs and tables were scrubbed by hand with soap and scrubbing brush. If the shop floor were of concrete or tiles the suds were thrown on the floor and swept out through the open door, and across the causeway to the gutter.

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Chapter.3.

The Three Years Continuing.

In the home conditions were little better for the housewife. The first job on entering the kitchen in the morning was to light a coal fire in the grate. If one had a gas ring(or stove)the kettle would boil while one was lighting the fire with paper and wood, but we had no gas supply, so we had to wait until the fire burned up to boil the kettle.

Then after breakfast was over and any children off to school, the days chores began. If it was a washing day a fire had to be lit under the wash boiler, again using coal.

This boiler had various names in different areas, but as I said in a previous chapter, in Hunslet we called it a "set-pot" because it was cast iron cauldron set in brickwork and therefor not movable.

While mother waited for the water to boil there were beds to make, and the washing had to be sorted out, also the tub (which also did duty as a bath) had to be positioned in front of the wringing machine.

This was a great heavy old fashioned contraption with a cast iron frame and wooden rollers. The rollers had pressure applied by a thick steel leaf spring held down and controlled by a screw at the top. An arrangement of cogs gave a gear ratio of about four to one, and the rollers were operated by turning a cast iron wheel two feet in diameter. The complete machine was about five feet high, and weighed about three hundredweights.

The whole thing moved about on four inch cast iron wheels, and as the wet clothes passed through the "Mangle" as it was called, they dropped into a large whicker basket ballanced on a wooden shelf behind the machine.

However before the clothes reached the wringing machine came the real drudgery of washday. After soaking in hot water to which had been added soda, and possibly a little ammonia, or a concoction called "washing liquor", a "scrubbing Board" was stood in the tub and each article was rubbed with strong soap, then rubbed up and down the board which was covered with corrugated metal sheeting.

Any very stubborn or greasy marks would need the use of a scrubbing brush as well. Then to complete the washing process, a large wooden "Peggy-Stick", "Dolly Stick", or "Posser" as they were variously called, was used to literally beat the the clothes up-and-down in the hot suds. All white clothes, that is cotton and linen clothes, were boiled in the "Get-Pot" in clean water.

All this seems incredible in the 1970's, when electric washing machines, and electric spin or tumble dryers, together with hot and cold running water on tap, are standard everyday kitchen equipment.

After all that hot, hard work, the greatest problem of all was how to dry the clothes.

When one lived in a yard or a narrow street where six or seven houses shared a few square yards of ground and air space, hanging washing outdoors presented many problems.

Not the least of these was the polluted, sooty atmosphere, even when the weather was dry, and more so if it was breezy, soot and dust settled on the clean clothes. So in the interests of discretion, more often than not the white things were festooned across kitchen ceilings indoors.

Most people did try to keep the home clean, but a window curtain was grey instead of white in less than a fortnight.

As I said previously, there was no smoke control then, and in foggy weather instead of the fog being white or grey it was black and smelt of soot and sulphur.

Of course washing clothes by hand took hours of hard work, but besides this meals had to be prepared, crockery and pans washed up, beds made and slops emptied etc, in fact all the normal household chores as well.

as everything had to be done by hand with none of the modern labour saving devices or detergents to help, the universal cleaners were soap, water, and "Elbow Grease". The housewives day started early in the morning and finished late at night.

Another thing which added to the household workload was the fact that the modern floorcoverings which we now take for granted were not even invented then. A wooden floor would be covered with linoleum, or a cheap substitute called "Oilcloth", which was a sort of hessian painted to imitate linoleum.

A staircase might have a stair carpet if it was a wooden one and the family could afford one, while the kitchen floor would be covered with cheap oilcloth. A stone floor like ours would be either mopped or scrubbed, and a few bits of carpet placed in doorways, or in front of the sink or the table, and a home made hearth rug in front of the fire.

These rugs were made at home by the members of the family, usually on winter evenings in bad weather. A piece of strong hessian, or "Harding" as it was called locally, was stretched over a wooden frame made with four pieces of wood. Any clean old cloth such as old coats or cloth skirts, or any odd bits of cloth, (the thicker the better) were cut or torn into strips about an inch wide, these strips were then cut diagonally into four inch lengths with a point at each end.

The rug makers each had a "pricker" made by sharpening a round piece of hard wood to a point at one end. The cloth strips were called "Lists", and one held the pricker in the right hand and made a hole in the harding. Then with the left hand the point of a list was pushed up through the hole, another hole was made beside it and the other end pushed through and pulled even.

This process was repeated backwards and forwards across the rug harding. The usual procedure was to make a pile of lists in any spare time available, and then spend an evening pricking on the rug. It took several evenings and a lot of cloth rags to make a large rug, and needless to say that the tearing or "Riving" as it was called, of the cloth made a lot of dust and fluff wherever it was done.

The finished rug was thick and warm, but very heavy, and shaking it was very hard work out in the yard or street. Obviously one did not do that when washing was hanging out to dry!

A law admittedly seldom invoked and more than a century old was in force at that time, by which anyone could be fined for beating or shaking a rug or carpet outdoors before 8.30 A.M.? In fact this, along with some other obsolete and out-dated laws, was ^{NOT} recinded until the 1950's!

In that first year of The Great War the necessities of life were still cheap and plentiful, the only thing in short supply was money. the steady calling up of all fit men between the ages of 18 and 38 meant that there were more jobs for all other people able to work.

Even so the plight of old people and others unfit to work was really grim. In 1912 a form unemployment benefit, and health insurance had been introduced, but it only applied to any able bodied men who had 2 years contributions credited to them.

It did not apply to agricultural and horticultural workers, domestic servants, and others not listed under the scheme.

These only paid the Health Insurance scheme contribution, and this only provided a very limited medical benefit. A doctor received a few shillings a year for each patient on his list (or "Panel" as it was called then). A panel patient only received the barest medical treatment under the scheme, with the cheapest medicines available.

Such a patient did not qualify for any surgical or specialist treatment under the scheme, nor did he receive an Old Age Pension if he had not paid Unemployment Insurance contributions while he was working.

Of course being a child then I didn't understand all this. I only knew that old people were very poor, and wore old, and often ragged clothes. I also knew that they picked up bits of coal, coke, or wood because they couldn't afford to buy coal to make a fire with.

The Old Age pension was ten shillings (50p) a week, and even in 1914 it didn't provide food and clothing and pay the rent as well for a person too old to work. If the old person's own family were not able to help, or take them into their own home, then the only alternative was to apply for "Outdoor Relief".

This was administered by the Relieving Officer for the district, whose responsibility it was to dole out two or three shillings to people in need of assistance. To qualify for this "Dole" one must be destitute to the extent of having neither money, nor anything that could be sold for money.

This meant in effect all furniture except, a bed with mattress and blankets, a table, and a chair, and often the "Rel

ief"was not in cash but was a note to a shopkeeper to supply certain groceries to the value of two or three shillings.

If for any reason the old people were no longer able to keep their home(if they had one)going any longer,then the final stage was to apply for admission to the Workhouse.

This was an institution founded in early Victorian times with the intention of implementing a law of that period which stated that no citizen of the United Kingdom must be allowed to die for lack of food and shelter.

This law stated that it was the responsibility of the Parish or the District Council to provide an institution where the destitute poor of every parish in Great Britain,could obtain food and shelter from the District,or the Parish Council.

This was called the "Poor Law",and the cost of upkeep was paid by a "Poor Rate"levied by the Council. There was no Government grant aid to support the Workhouse or the Poor relief.

The running of the Workhouse and the administration of "Out-door Relief was supervised by a Board of Guardians elected by the local council. In most cases the boards members were local business men,so it was in their own interest to keep the expences down to avoid increasing the Poor Rate. So for that reason the food,clothing,and the staff were often the bare minimum laid down by the act of parliament,and this in itself was meagre enough by any standard.

It was in fact this relic of Victorian benevolence that gave the real degrading meaning to the word "Pauper".

Having applied to the Board of Guardians for admission to the Poor Law Institution and been accepted,on admission one became(according to sex)a male or a female pauper,and was

put into either the male or the female section. In the case of a married couple they were separated. Any clothing that they were wearing on admission was taken from them, and they both wore the same drab, grey institute clothing from then on.

In the words of the wedding ceremony it say's "whom God hath joined together, let no man put assunder", but the Board of Guardians did just that. Surely it was the most shamefull segregation imposed on two people whose only crime was to be old and no longer able to work!//

If an inmate was capable of any work, a man would be given jobs like chopping firewood, gardening, or doing odd jobs about the block, A woman would help in the laundry, the kitchen, or any other light work. In either case often in the company of able bodied people who were mentaly retarded or physically handicaped.

Also everyone was supervised by a "taskmaster" who was a member of the staff whose job it was to supervise the work.

It can scarcely be surprising that the family, their sons and daughters and personal friends would go to great personal inconvenience to keep their parents out of "The Grubber" as it was nicknamed locally, even to the extent of taking them into their own, often badly overcrowded homes.

Strange as it may seem to the present generation of people, it was not until 1930, that the Poor Law Guardians were abolished and the Public Assistance Committees formed. True, this brought another abomination, namely the Means Test, yet even that was better than the hopeless degradation of the old Poor Law Workhouses, and the Relieving Officer, together with it's bullying humbledom and hypocrisy. It was not until the present National Insurance scheme came into force in 1948

that the stigma of "pauperism" was finally swept away, and now everyone has a right to a pension on retirement. Later I will return to some more aspects of the degrading Poor Law institutions, but for now I will return to the daily life of working class people during the First World War.

We didn't do much going out at night mother and I, unless we went to see relations who lived nearby. Shopping, except for small items bought each day as required, was done on the two main shopping days Friday and Saturday. The part I liked best was the Friday and Saturday night shopping.

To go along Waterloo Road and Hunslet Lane after eight o'clock was an experience that one cannot relive to-day except in memory.

From the corner of Jack Lane to the end of Glasshouse Street, was an almost unbroken succession of shops representing every retail trade that anyone could think of at that time.

There were even pawnbrokers. This later establishment (now a thing of the past) was at that time a flourishing trade, with the centuries old sign of the "Three Brass Balls" hanging over the door for all to see.

In an area forming an obtuse angle from Hunslet Parish Church to the junction of Church Street and Low Road, and from there to the junction of South Accomodation Road with Hunslet Lane, then from there back to the parish church via Waterloo Road, an area in which the greatest distance between any two points was half a mile, there were seven pawn shops. Or to use the local term "Pop Shops".

It was a fairly lucrative trade for "Uncle" as the pawnbroker was known to all and sundry. Because as he took any inanimate or none perishable article in pledge (if it had a sa-

leable value) in pledge, and also he was invariably a dealer in new and second hand jewelery, clothing clocks, watches, household goods and ornaments.

The terms of a pawbrokers licence were strict but framed to protect both himself and the client. He must not advance more than one third of the cash value of any article taken into pledge, and he must keep a proper record of all such transactions, to be available at any time for police scrutiny in tracing stolen property.

On the left hand side of Waterloo Road was the Stillhouse Yard. Every Friday night an open air market in second hand goods and oddments was held. Trading did not start until six P.M because the yard was in use during the daytime.

In the yard was a sheet metal workers workshop, and a tripe dressers works belonging to Tolson's, a firm who had quite a large trade in Hunslet and East Leeds. In the yard also were stables and lock-up cart sheds etc, and on the bottom side of the yard were the back doors of seven shops in Waterloo Road.

As one entered the yard, at the right hand side was the old National Irish Club the scene of many rowdy scenes at weekends and holidays (not an unusual event at many local pubs at that time). The clubroom was up stairs over a cycle and gramophone dealers shop, and it was not unusual for an unsteady member to miss the top step and come to the bottom in a big hurry next to a stable muckheap!

I still have a clear mental picture of the Friday night market in Stillhouse Yard. The dealers both men and women laid out their wares on movable wooden stalls lit by flaring naphtha lamps hung over them on hooks. These lamps always fascinated me because they never seemed to stop hissing.

As was the custom then, the stall holders shouted their wares to attract customers, and one could buy anything from a pair of womens high legged lace up, or button up boots, to a second hand hearthrug or a door mat. One man used to go round the cloth mills buying up discarded cloth wrappers or any other pieces of "Harding" as this woven jute material was called.

He did a good trade on Friday nights selling them for making rugs or for making cleaning aprons. The majority of working class women only wore a cotton pinafore at meal times, or at week ends.

The butchers shops and wet fish shops had sash windows, the bottom half of the window could be pushed up inside the top half leaving the window bottom open. This was done on Friday and Saturday nights, in all except the most severe weather. Even in wet weather the sun blind could be pulled out and shoppers sheltered under it to look at the display of meat or fish on show.

It also gave the shopkeeper, particularly a butcher, an opportunity to shout to the people. The lively banter between the trader and the prospective customers suited the trader because it caused other shoppers to pause to listen to the crosstalk. It was entertaining to everyone and good for business as well.

As the night grew later he might, and often did, reduce the prices of certain joints, and as closing time approached he would put, for example a piece of beast (bullocks) heart, a big handfull of stewing meat cut up into bits, a couple of small mutton chops, and half a dozen sausages onto a sheet of paper, and shout "ere yer are then, give us a tanner (sixpence (2½p))

fer that little lot!

The greengrocers often put out a display of vegetables and fruit in front of their shop on a long wooden shelf supported by boxes. Another item of the greengrocers stock in trade at that time was frozen rabbits. These were imported gutted, but not skinned, and packed tightly into wooden crates,

They were brought by rail from the docks to the nearest "Ice House" (cold storage depot) so that on arrival at the shop, they were frozen into a solid slab. This meant that before they could be sold, the whole slab had to thaw out for several hours, then the rabbits were separated and hung head downwards but unskinned, ^{they} were hung on hooks outside over the shop window on Friday and Saturday, then they were taken down and skinned as required for the customers.

At that time every shop had a canvas sunblind which rolled up over the window. To pull it down or push it back up again, one used a long pole with a crook at the end. This same pole was used for hanging other things up outside such as rabbits, undressed pou^ltry etc.

The wet fish shops also sold rabbits and poultry besides fish, and a fishmonger usually salted and dried Herrings. After soaking them whole in salt for twenty four hours, they were dried by pushing a long stick through the gills, and hanging them about twenty on each stick on the hooks over the shop window. These dried salt herrings were called "Bloaters" and could be bought for a penny each, a large one would cost three half pence (about $\frac{1}{2}p$).

Herring were very cheap and plentiful then, and were a popular food with most people. Large quantities of herrings went to "Smoke Houses" where they salted and smoked for sale.

as Red Herrings when smoked whole, or as Kippers when split open and gutted before smoking.

A greengrocer would often make up a parcel on Saturday nights. These parcels were made up of potatoes, carrots, a small swede, and a large onion, all these were put together in the big scale pan used for weighing potatoes. They were then tipped into your shopping bag together with a rabbit (skinned ready for use) for one shilling! A good sized frozen rabbit could be bought for a shilling (5p), and a small one for a few pence only.

The best time to get a "Wrap Up" at a grocers shop was at the beginning of the week, preferably in the morning. Because of the fact that there were no cold storage facilities or refrigerated counters in shops then as there are now in the 1970's, the cut surfaces of corned beef, bacon, cheese, and the like dried when left uncut overnight.

These first slices were set aside, the bigger the shop and greater the sales, the more of these odd slices and bits there were, and a couple of pence would buy a good paperfull. Another thing was that a grocers work at that time included the ability to bone and roll bacon, and consequently the bacon hocks and spare-ribs could be bought cheaply. The spare-ribs when boiled provided a meal with the meat picked from the ribs.

The salty stock when strained to remove any small chips of bone, then cooled and the fat skimmed off, formed the base for a panfull of hot soup when beans, or mixed split peas, barley, and lentils were boiled in it.

Saturday night when the shop was closing for the weekend, was a good time to get spareribs, hocks, and small bacon ends.

One feature of life in the Hunslet of 1914 was the number of public houses. I have heard it said that, before the First World War there were a hundred pubs in Hunslet. I never tried to count them all, but it is quite possible that there were that number, because on many of the main thoroughfares it was literally possible to throw a stone from the door of one pub to the doorway of the next one.

The sight of drunken men staggering about in the street was quite common, especially at night and at week ends. This is hardly surprising when all licensed houses were open from 6 A.M until 12 o'clock midnight. The best beer was only two pence (less than 1p) a pint, and spirits were sixpence (2½p) a measure.

At that time the Salvation Army was really fighting drink and degradation in the slum areas. The churches and chapels and the Temperance Society preached about the evils of drink, but the Salvation Army pitched outside the pubs on Friday and Saturday nights, summer and winter, in the foulest of weather. The women members in their uniforms of black and red facings with bonnets of black with a red ribbon round, went inside the pubs selling the "War Cry" and talking to the customers at the bar.

They were a pretty tough lot that frequented the Hunslet pubs then, but they never interfered with the Salvation Army ladies. If anyone had been foolish enough to try such a thing rough justice would have followed in no uncertain way!

Thoughtful street-corner boys and hooligans never interfered with a Salvation Army meeting. What other organisation would take their musical instruments, sing hymns, and hold a meeting by the light of street gas lamps and a lantern on a pole, between a public house, a public urinal, and a fried fish shop! Not once but every Friday night on Penny Hill in Hun-

slet, even in the middle of winter.

Sometimes roaming children would try to be a nuisance by shouting rude and silly remarks, but these would soon be dealt with by some of the bystanders, and when the parents of these street urchins got to know about it (everybody local knew each other) they would get another telling off, and a boxed ear besides.

Although the Saturday night noises, singing drunks and rowdyism in general, with domestic rows and often street fights carried on until midnight, the Sunday mornings by contrast were usually quiet enough. Although very few of our neighbours could be called religious, most of them kept Sunday as reasonably quiet as one could expect.

Children were not allowed to play noisy games in the street and most went to church or chapel at least once on Sunday. Many of the grown up's also attended church at some time of the day or evening. Of course some men worked at jobs which needed them to work on Sunday, such as horsemen, boilermakers, and furnacemen, otherwise Sunday was a quiet day.

Street trading was not allowed on Sunday except for milkmen ^{and} newspaper men, and they didn't shout on Sunday.

Of course there was much work for the housewife to do preparing dinner on Sunday, this was the high light of the week when everyone sat down together at mid-day meal.

As a general rule it consisted of Yorkshire Pudding with gravy, followed by a joint of meat (funds permitting) potatoes, and whatever vegetables were in season. It was all cooked on the open fire and in the oven, and all prepared by hand on the spot. The convenience foods in tin cans were still many years away, and the skill of home cooking ruled the table.

Chapter.4.

1915

War Comes Home

Some people reading this might ask themselves "Why did the author split one long chapter into two parts?" Well the answer is because the war struck it's worst blow at us in the early summer of 1915.

My brother George had joined the Army in January of that year. In the first days of June we received notification that he had been killed in action at Galipoli.

For several weeks previously we had received no letters from him. Obviously for security reasons he could not tell us (even if he knew) when he was embarking, or where he was going. Now we knew why.

I shall always remember the morning that the long buff coloured envelope came by the early post. Mother sat down and opened it then her face seemed to freeze like a mask. I remember asking her what the letter was about, after a while she said in a strange quiet voice-"George is dead, he's been killed".

She said nothing else for what seemed like hours, she just sat there at the end of the long white deal table staring straight in front of her. The table was scrubbed white and it was bare, (like the rest of our neighbours the big white table cloth was only used on Sundays and special occasions).

At last she got up and we had a meal. I don't remember a lot about what happened in the next few weeks, of course I was too young to understand the workings of officialdom.

All that I remember is that for a few weeks Mother went to one after another of her own relatives for help until her money for the loss of George came through.

My fathers family all lived too far away to help,so until officialdom made up it's mind,we scraped through on my fathers seven shillings a week allowance(35p)and the little money she managed to raise by hook or crook.

At last she was awarded a pension of five shillings(25p) for the loss of her son for life,plus the back payments due from the time he was killed(the service allowance ceased from that date in May).

The first thing that she did with the money was to pay back the folk who had helped us,but from then on she shunned all her near relatives except one sister-my Aunt Polly who lived near us. Still the experiences of those few weeks coupled with the shock of her sons death,changed my mother completely. She seemed to hold a grudge,have a "Chip On Her shoulder",and even shunned our neighbours treating everyone with suspicion and distrust.

As for myself,I was not allowed out of hersight,for the next two years I was almost a prisoner at home,it was a relief to go to school and mix with other boys.

I suppose some people might say that perhaps it was a good thing that she did keep a very tight rein on me. Because it was possible that I could have been like many more children at that time who were left for relatives or friends to mind(often until late at night)while their mothers went out to work all day,and then put their own personal pleasures first,the home taking second place.

Although just as any other healthy seven year old would have done I felt her possessiveness both stifling and traumatic,yet I could not say that I was neglected in the physical sense. She did her best with very limited means.

Mother was active,and what I lacked in liberty she made

up for by taking me with her wherever she went, and if the weather was fine we walked miles together, away from the closed-in streets where we lived.

As I mentioned previously my mother was a good cook who wasted nothing, and the things that I learned as a child have stood me in good stead many times since. It is written that "out of evil cometh much good" and the shortages and restrictions of those War years, taught me more about getting the most out of anything before discarding it, than a whole lifetime of all round sufficiency could ever have done.

Even when we went for a walk we always carried a shopping bag, and we never came home empty handed. As coal was transported in bulk in horse drawn carts in bulk, and every body used coal, it was inevitable that some bits spilled off the load and dropped onto the road.

These bits of coal and coke, together with any bits of wood we picked up, so that when we arrived back home the bag contained a good shovel full of coal and coke. The chips and bits of wood when dried out were used to kindle the coal and coke.

Of course there were no motor wagons, buses, coaches and fast traffic like there is to-day. Steam wagons carried the heaviest loads, and the few motor lorries were slow and noisy, and motor cars were sufficiently rare for people to stop and look when one approached, so it was not very dangerous to walk across a road. Instead of the all pervading smells of petrol, diesel, and hot oil, the main roads then smelt of dust and horses.

All those bits and pieces helped to save money. Even the stick or the piece of wood that I carried myself meant that we didn't have to buy firewood.

We had to buy one hundredweight of coal every week, because even with only one fireplace in use, as it was our only means of cooking it used a couple of hundredweights a week.

I suppose that many people would say that as I was the only child, it would be better for me than if I had been one of a larger family. In fact I did hear people say to mother "He's only a kid, he'll soon get over it and forget about his brother as he gets older".

Sometimes they would say "Well it's a good job you've only one, and not three or four young 'uns", but it was not that easy for me to get over it.

More especially was this so because mother had developed a habit of talking to herself when she was alone and I was (or she thought that I was/asleep) or other wise out of earshot.

If there had been another child, or someone else that I could have talked to, it would have been a great comfort to me, but all that I could do was to listen and say nothing!

However with the limited means at her disposal, she made sure that I went to school clean and tidy after a warm ~~meal~~ meal of oatmeal porage with a big spoonfull of treacle on it, or a sandwich of bacon and bread bread dipped in the hot fat.

When I came back home at dinner time (12 o'clock) we would share a meal of packet soup made with hot water, or an (al-edged) meat cube, with bread sops in it. Then when I came back home at night we had a hot cooked meal of potatoes and vegetables, with whatever meat or anything else available on such a limited budget.

Nothing useable was ever wasted, and even bare bones after all the goodness had been boiled out of them, were saved for

the rag man who gave us a large lump of cooking salt. I never remember us buying any salt, but we always had a big earthenware jar full on hand. That kind of salt came in big blocks which were bought from the drysalter's warehouse by the rag and bone men (and other traders) who sawed them into pieces about 1 lb in weight. When we went to his cart with our few rags and bones he gave us one of these lumps in exchange.

Any stale bread was saved to make a bread pudding after soaking it in hot water, then you could add sugar and milk, and a handful of dried fruit. Alternatively you could use boiled onion and herbs to make a seasoned pudding. This was good with thick brown gravy, and stewed liver or heart for dinner.

Somehow we always contrived to keep jars full of small haricot beans, dried peas, split peas, and barley in the big corner cupboard, along with flour, oatmeal, and rice. If we had but few luxuries, we did have sufficient to eat.

One trait of my mother's was that she never forgot anyone who ever did her a good turn, and for that reason we bought groceries from the same grocer until he sold the business in 1920. We bought meat from the same butcher for several years after the war finished, and she bought coal from the same coalman until she was rehoused and the old slum property demolished in 1939.

As the months went by it became clear to everybody that this was a war which would not be over soon, and that every one would have to accept restrictions in everything, particularly in food and clothing.

This was the first time in living memory that a war had interfered with our shipping, and cut our food supply from abroad.

So it was that in 1916 an attempt at food control was made by the government. It was really a system of distribution, so that

whatever supplies of any commodity were available, would be apportioned to those centres of population where they were most needed. Imported meat together with sugar and grain were the most strictly controlled.

I suppose the ministry that had this unenviable task of seeing that each retailer got his fair share at the markets, according to the number of customers he had each week, did their best. The trouble was that no one had had to handle such a situation before, and there were so many loop holes that the unscrupulous shopkeeper could wangle something "On the Side" for some folk who were prepared to pay a little extra for the privilege.

Obviously there were severe penalties for anyone caught "Profiteering", but as always it was a case of "First Catch Your Goose, and Then Cook It".

At the time I didn't understand all this, but with hindsight I realised in later years just how makeshift the system was.

For instance, liver, hearts, kidneys, heads, trotters, and tails together with sausages, were classed as offal. This offal because of its cheapness had always been the stand-by of the lower income group, but now with cuts in the amount of carcass meat available in the shops, those who were getting the now high wages in industry could afford the increased prices.

The people at the lower end of the income scale, just had to make do the best way possible. The fair minded butcher let all their customers have (as far as possible) a fair share of these cheaper items.

As with the butchers, so with the grocers. All imported food was allocated to the wholesaler, and in turn to the retailers.

Again the fair minded grocer let his regular customers have a fair share of things in short supply, but it was almost two years later before a proper rationing system came into being.

When we were not out on shopping expeditions, and the weather was good enough for it, mother would take me out for the day if it was a school holiday. We carried a shopping bag with a couple of slices of bread and dripping each (or bread and margarine), and a bottle of cold tea, or home made ginger beer.

We set out straight after mid-day meal, and we would go as far as Rothwell, Middleton, or Churwell. Not on main roads all the time, but along field paths and bye ways wherever possible. She didn't walk fast, but she could keep going a long time, and we covered miles in an afternoon. In this way I gained a knowledge of the country lanes and footpaths that seems like part of another age altogether.

I can well remember the first time we went up the Old Run from Hunslet Carr Moor Side and as far as the Spring Wood at Nova Scotia.

I had never been further than the footpath that crossed the footbridge over ^{the} Great Northern Railway line near Parkside. This was known as the "Cuckoo Steps" locally, but this day we kept straight on up The Old Run.

We passed the Broom No. 2. pit yard and the New Pit, and past the foot of the Big Tip. It towered up higher than the New Pit chimney at the opposite side of the Run. It was burning and to my schoolboy eyes it seemed like a huge volcano with flames and smoke coming out of the sides.

At the other side of the road, the Old Belle Isle cottages were lower than the road, and the rails of the colliery rail-road were level with the chimneys of the houses. Ahead and to the right of us were the Broom No. 1. pit, the Fireclay Works, and the Brick Works together with the network of rails which served them.

As we walked on, straight ahead was the Middleton Coke and Bye-Products plant. In the background were the Coke Ovens with their two towering red brick chimneys, and in the foreground seeming to stare at us was a red brick wall with "Middleton Motor Spirit. 1914." on it in white glazed brick letters.

I was then almost eight years old and I could read reasonably well, although I didn't understand the meaning of a lot of words. My mother helped me in that respect, and also helped me to write at night, which was normal at that time.

Nowadays in the 70's, people tend to think that children were backward fifty or sixty years ago, but in fact although there were many ragged and neglected children in the poorer parts of large towns and cities, there were not many illiterates among the younger generations. Spelling was the all important thing in all schools then.

On we went, over the rails on which the wagons of shale and other "pit Muck" were shunted up the Big Tip, and on past the Coke Ovens with their clouds of steam, smoke, and acrid fumes then we turned back. Turning right at the crossing we went over Windy Hill, past Windy Hill Farm and down the road past Middleton Grange and East Grange Farm, then down the hill to Hunslet Carr, and past the Steel Works via Balm Road and Church Street back home again.

It seemed to me as if we had discovered part of another world, a kind of a Dantes Inferno, something like a part of the Steel Works and Plevna without the streets, transplanted into the country near Middleton Wood. More so because in 1917 there were no Corporation housing estates at Belle Isle or Middleton.

At that time these things didn't strike me as being odd.

but at the present time it seems fantastic that dwellings and works of all kinds were mixed so hopelessly together at that time, although in fairness, the properties in most cases had been built many years before the First World War.

Yet within a few minutes walk from such a mixture of industrial squalour, country life went on as it had done for more than a century!

The reason of course was that transport(except for goods) was very primitive, and only on main roads at that.

I think the first time that we ever went anywhere by train was when we went to visit one of my Aunts at Batley. We went by tramcar from Leeds Corn Exchange to the Half Way House at Morley, and then walked down Scotchman Lane and Bankfoot to Batley. Then at night we returned to Leeds by train.

That was in 1916, and the trainfare for both of us was one shilling and threepence. We got the Balm Road tram home from Leeds for threepence, and even with the tramfare in the morning from Hunslet to the Corn Exchange, and the tramfare from Leeds to Morley(Halfway House) the whole days traveling had cost us less than half-a-crown(12½p)!

~~///~~ So life carried on for both of us until November 1917 when father was discharged as being unfit for further active service, and also because his job at the Steel Works was of National importance.

It also marked the beginning of a new life for me, because he took charge of me and I no longer had to be constantly in view of my mother at all times.

His rule was strict but fair. If other boys came for me to go out I could go if there was no reason to stay indoors, but nine o'clock was bedtime, so I must be indoors again at eight.

I had to do any errands locally for my mother or him, and help with jobs in the house. In return he was always generous if I went anywhere with him, and I could always go walking with him.

His walking was very different to that of my mother. He was six feet tall, while I was only about four feet, and when he was just strolling comfortably I was nearly trotting to keep up with him. All the same I liked those journeys because he would always tell me what things were, and explain things to me that I could not understand.

Like my mother he believed in the value of basic knowledge and on my part it was like a whole new world opening up for me now.

for me

As we now had more money, we now got a better share of the goods available in the shops, so many of our worries were now things of the past, and at last we could buy clothes.

Not that I had ever gone to school badly dressed. By dint of much make-do-and-mend I had always gone to school tidy thanks to my mother.

As we could now afford to buy things this meant more shopping expeditions, not only locally but up into Leeds as well where a much bigger variety of goods were on sale. Mother's eye for a bargain meant that we never came back empty handed, and I carried my own shopping bag as well.

For those who were working, and that meant anyone capable of working, wages (judged by previous standards) were abnormally high, and like any other time when abundant money chases few goods, trade was brisk for those things that could be bought.

In the Market the stallholders shouted their wares, and the shoppers wisecracked back at them. In this way shopping was

a way of combining necessity with entertainment. Shopkeepers also lost no opportunity of attracting the attention of anyone who stopped to look in the window.

Now however the food position was really desperate, the warehouses were almost empty, because foodstuffs were being used much faster than they could be replaced from overseas.

In early 1918 a thing unheard of before in Britain was started, namely food rationing to the public. It wasn't a comprehensive and well planned operation like the the food and essential goods rationing in the Second World War, when everything was planned and the ration books of coupons were printed ready before war was declared in 1939.

Owing to lack^{of} previous experience in that field, people were not registered with one grocer or butcher, but were able to go to any shop that had the commodity required. It led to the forming of a habit that has been with us ever since, that is forming a queue to be served wherever one was buying (or hoping to buy) something.

Another kind of shop made its first appearance in England in living memory, this was horsemeat for human consumption.

At first most people were shocked by it, but in 1918 they did quite a steady trade, particularly with eating houses and works canteens. In general it was just the way that things always are in times of shortage, if something is in short supply, substitutes are found for it. Like all other imitations, they left much to be desired.

One in particular which I remember was an egg substitute. It was a yellow powder that did not even taste like egg, and the general verdict was, "Well, it's eatable, but that's all".

Add to this the fact that "War Grade" Flour was almost grey

in colour instead of white, and anyone reading this can understand that any cakes and puddings made with these ingredients plus "Compound" lard were "well, eatable but that's all".

Very often the larger stores and shops made conditions of sale such as that one must buy margarine or something else before being allowed to buy a small quantity of butter or tea, because these like dried fruit and sugar were rationed and very much "Under The Counter".

Let me add here that the margarine that was on sale at that time was nothing like the margarine of the 1970's. It was yellow, oily, and didn't have a pleasant taste at all.

Coffee and cocoa, and sweetened condensed milk were not rationed (if available), and I must also add that although all forms of meat (other than horseflesh) were strictly rationed, fish was not rationed, but again choice of variety was governed by availability.

As I have said, my newly acquired liberty opened up a new life for me. Now after school (if I was not required to go on an errand) I was at liberty to go out after tea, provided I returned by eight o'clock in dark weather, or nine o'clock in light weather.

As there were no playing fields nearby, and only the street to play in, active games were limited in extent. Still we managed to adapt any open ground such as the space where old buildings had been demolished, but if all else failed any street where there was not much traffic could be a football pitch.

A real ball was a luxury, so we improvised. A tight bundle of rag or paper would do as a substitute but it didn't last long tied together with string. The best of all was a pigs

bladder, and as you obtained a bladder from a slaughter house it paid off to be on good terms with the slaughterer.

Most of the one man family butchers killed their own meat in their own or another butchers slaughter yard, so if you knew that "So-and-So" was killing a pig, you went and asked for the bladder on the killing day.

Having got your bladder it needed inflating, and this could only be done while it was still soft and pliable, even still warm. As even a bicycle pump (let alone a football pump) was unobtainable, the blowing had to be done by "Mouthpower".

This required a boy who had plenty of wind and who wasn't squeamish, to hold the greasy pipe between his lips and blow, while another member of the team stood by with a piece of strong string ready to tie off the pipe when the blower had stopped blowing.

If nothing else was available, a large empty tin can could be used. This of course had one obvious disadvantage, that was noise. The row caused by half-a-dozen young lads kicking a can about a street paved with stone setts, or cobblestones can well be imagined.

Sooner or later a door would open and an irate voice would shout "Get to Hell out of here yer noisy young -----!" (or some other suitable words, depending on the shouter's vocabulary. Often this protest would cause somebody else to chip in, sometimes on the side of the "Noisy So-And-So's", more especially if the first shouter was not very well liked.

In such a case a row would develop and all the doors would open. It was very rare for that kind of "Pratch" to get out of hand, and even if a policeman did happen to be within earshot he would take no action, unless it showed signs of

becoming a "Free For All" in which case a sharp "Now then, just pack it in" was enough to restore order, (for the time being at any rate).

Of course the "Tin Can Dribblers" who were the cause of it, had silently dispersed and like the proverbial Arabs, "stolen away into the Night". Peace now restored, the doors closed and the "Copper, Nicker, Bluebottle, Rozzer, Peeler, Plattie, or whatever other nickname was applied to a policeman, went on his way with nothing to report.

Another popular street game was "Kick out Can", for this game the end of a closet passage, or a "Snicket" (a short passage connecting two streets) was necessary, and a suitable tin can. One lad was the "Goalie" and he had to stand in the end of the passage and stop the can going in. The other lads had to try to kick the can past him into the passage.

That game was tough on the lad in goal. Not only did he have to be quick on his feet to kick the can away, but the can often bounced up and hit him on the shins, even with thick stockings on the players received many battle scars.

Obviously that game ended the same way as every other tin can game did.

On dark evenings girls sometimes joined the boys in street games, but mostly they gathered round a street lamp playing a ball game or swinging from the arm of the gas lamp.

This they did with a long rope which they hung on the arm, but in most cases girls were not allowed to go far away at night, and small children didn't play out after dark.

Indeed some parents were slack on discipline, but usually the order was "stay near home, and you've got to come in as soon as I shout for yer".

Mischievous antics were common, but there was little wilful damage, and habitual delinquency and petty thieving were rare enough to be noticeable, and usually quickly traceable.

When the weather was suitable I and other boys would go to Pepper Road railway bridge to watch the shunting of wagons on the sidings. This bridge spanned the main Midland Railway line from London to the North through Leeds, and we got an added thrill when the signals went down on the "Up" or "Down" fast lines, and we listened for the roar of an express train as it literally "shot" through the main arch.

As we leaned over the stone parapet of the bridge we could see not only all the Balm Road sidings, but also the Leeds Steel works sidings as well. This provided another attraction for our agile minds that is denied to the young "Train Spotters" of the '70's.

This was what could be called "Name Spotting", and it also (albeit without us realising it) provided us with a spelling and reading lesson.

At that time nationalisation was only a distant possibility, and all the railway companies had their own distinct "Livery" that is their own colour scheme with their own crest and ~~the~~ initial letters, and every company was different.

Likewise all the collieries, steelworks, etc all had their own rolling stock for use on the railroads. As we watched the wagons and vans as they passed up and down through the arches of the bridge, we read the names on them.

The Steel Works traffic provided an added interest for us, when the firm was in full production trains of ironstone, coke, coal, limestone and other wagons, together with the necessary stores etc required were going in, and obviously trainloads of the firm's products were coming out as well, all round the twenty four hours of the day.

This firm (Walter Scotts Ltd) had eight saddle tank locomotives for works use, and to bring iron slag from the blast furnaces to the crushing plant at the other end of the works.

The bogies of steel/slag had to be shunted out from the Bessemer plant to go in the opposite direction to reach the Phosphate Works, again at the opposite side of the works. In either case the bogies had to travel the whole length of the sidings before going to their destination.

This later operation often afforded us another source of interest. At the downhill end of the bridge, and about a hundred yards back from the road, at the points where the Steelworks railroad joined the Midland Railway lines the railway company had an office where a checker was employed to check the traffic in and out of the works.

These checkers worked in three shifts round the clock, and they didn't mind us standing in front of the office to watch provided we didn't go down near the rails, and there were no more than three of us together.

Of Walter Scotts eight steam loco's only three had a short enough wheelbase to negotiate the sharp bend and narrow space at the Bessemer plant to bring out the bogies of steel slag.

Strictly speaking there were four small 0.4.0 loco's, but No. 1, the "Wasp" was permanently at the Phosphate plant, and never came into the Bessemer. The other three were No. 2, No. 6, and No. 7, and of these three No. 6 was the comedienne. She was built by Peckitt & Co at the Avonside Engine Co, at Bristol in the latter part of the 19th century, and someone must have had a wry sense of humour to give her the name of "Daisy Belle".

Her wheelbase was so short that she rocked like a boat, and invariably after pushing the two bogies of Basic slag out clear of the points, as she came back into the works "Daisy"

would "Jump" the points and come off the road

There she would sit hissing gently until the steam traveling crane came, and with a chain round her buffers, lift her back onto the rails again. Then with an effeminate "Pheep" of her whistle, "Daisy" with nothing to push would develop a side-to-side wiggle as she chuffed back round the corner and into the works again.

It was the ambition of all the boys who lived adjacent to the works and the railway, to ride on an engine. So when father took me into the works one Saturday morning, and I got a ride in the cab of No. 7 round the works and behind the four Bessemer Convertors back to the Pepper Road gates I was a hero to the other ten year old rebels.

I was looked on as a kind of juvenile "Casey Jones", after all was he not the hero of every schoolboy who ever dreamed of being an engine driver?

Not so long afterwards my father promoted me by allowing me to take him a meal at work when he was on two-to-ten (afternoon) shift. To do that I first had my own tea, and then I took his and went round to Pepper Road entrance and into the works, to where he worked on the Bessemer plant.

When I did this the other men in the gang would give me their bottles and cans to bring beer from the "Off Licensed" shop in Pepper Road. It was a job that I liked doing because they always gave me a few pence on Friday evening for doing that service for them.

The older lads who worked there went out at any time when the manager of their department wasn't watching.

Strictly speaking it was an offence under the Factories Act to bring or take any intoxicating liquor into any workshop, but a blind eye was turned as in many other cases.

To any pub or off licenced shop near to a glass works, a foundry, or any hot and dusty job, the trade brought in by the "Beer Lads" almost doubled the trade. The little street corner shops did well too, because the works canteen where food, tobacco, and cigarettes could be bought, only existed at a very few large and progressive firms.

Washing facilities in workshops were equally rare in 1918, and in fact another twenty years passed before any definite move was made to improve eating and washing conditions for shop floor workers.

Chapter.5.

.A Brief Recapping.

It would be wrong for me to move forward too quickly to leave 1918 behind, without mentioning a feature of life that was a part of it. this was the number of "Charactors".

It was the era of "Nicknames" and any one got a "Handle" for anything that made them different, or more noticeable than other people. There was no malice attached to it, very often the person thus nicknamed was well liked, and most folk thought that it gave them individuality.

One such character was our own local milkman. He was a very religious man and he got the sobriquet of "Little Jesus" because as he trudged patiently along with his two big cans, he sang hymns quietly to himself. Both he and his wife were both quiet and friendly and most folk liked them.

Of a different type, but equally well known was a butcher known as "Pa" Bykes because of his habit of addressing his customers as either "Ma" or "Pa" according to their sex. Yet another butcher got the sobriquet of "Old Snossidge" because he made the biggest sausages that I have ever seen. Only three of his sausages weighed a pound!

One butcher who managed a meat companies shop near the Swan Junction called all customers of either sex "My Dear", so it is obvious what his nickname was.

A man who travelled the local streets selling tripe from a pony and cart, was called "Tripey Lax", his surname being Lax. There was also a newspaper seller, a woman of "Uncertain" age with the uncomplimentary title of "Pee Lizzy" (many folk used the more vulgar term), because she would relieve herself at any place as she sold her papers, even in front of a shop!

Perhaps the hardest working woman of all the characters in Hunslet at that time was "Scouring Stone Liz". She was a tough weather beaten woman, who pulled a heavy two wheeled, home made box barrow two miles to Rothwell Haigh quarries, then back again to Hunslet to sell the soft brown stone in pieces to housewives for scouring their stone steps and window sills.

When she stopped to rest she would light her short clay pipe and smoke with her back to the wind. Women didn't come much tougher than Liz.

"pasty Joe" kept a coffee shop opposite Hunslet Lane Midland railway goods yard. One could buy a pint of tea and one of Joe's jam pasties for fourpence (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ p) together with his opinion on current events.

"Billy Traptoe" was a man whose legs had been twisted from birth, and he sold matches on Waterloo Road opposite the Garden Gate pub. If any of the lads teased him he was very short tempered, and he would strike out with his crutches with his back to the wall.

Another of the Hunslet characters was a labourer at the Steel Works. His job (among others) was that of looking after a huge tar tank. It was an old Lancashire boiler converted, and it stood on walls of brickwork and steel girders. The brick walls formed a cabin underneath it in which a fire of coke burned day and night to keep the tar at an even temperature for the plant using it.

Because of the warmth fleas etc abounded in the cabin, but the labourer whose job it was to keep the fire mended, could usually be found asleep in the "Tar Cabin", he had his meals inside the cabin too. When he was asked if the bugs didn't bite him, his reply was that he looked after them like a fat

her, keeping them warm and comfortable, and no respectable bug would ever bite it's own father.

Because of this he was called "Bug's Father" ever afterwards, he was a single man and I don't think anybody ever did know his proper name.

There would be no prize for guessing correctly the trade of "Fish Tommy". There were some "Way Out" characters who would frequent pubs doing extra-ordinary things for bets of a pint of beer. One of these was a man nicknamed "Big Barnum". His gimmick was to eat a raw, uncut herring for a pint. For a larger stake he would bite off the head of a live rat if one was brought to him.

Probably the best known of all the Hunslet characters was "Knacker Dick". He was the second or third of the Wilkinson family to carry on the trade of horse slaughterer or "Knacker" at Burton Road near Hunslet Moor. In fact when I was a schoolboy, that particular corner of the moor was dubbed "Oss Killer's Moor" locally because of it's association with him.

If a horse slipped and fell breaking a leg, or was so badly injured as to be despatched on the spot by a vet, then Knacker Dick would have remove the carcass to his yard for disposal.

For this purpose he had a specially constructed cart on two big wheels with a sloping back like a ramp which nearly touched the ground at the back. It was pulled by heavy draft horse, and the cart was backed up to the dead horse. Then a rope and chain was passed over the sloping cart and attached to the dead horse's hind feet. The draft horse was loosened out of the shafts, and the rope was made fast to the horse's gears, the horse then pulled the dead horse hind quarters first up the ramp and onto the knacker's cart.

As I went about the streets I saw many horses en route to the knackers yard, when I was a boy. I didn't like to see them head lolling on the sloping ramp with sacking wrapped around it, but like everyone else I knew that it was a part of the order of things.

The horses that were too old to work or unfit for work all came to the knacker eventually. The price that he paid for them was what he judged the carcass to be worth when slaughtered. He also had a warrant to use a humane killer if he decided that an animal could not be moved alive.

Knackery was a busy trade before the Second World War, and Wilkinsons employed paid assistants at their slaughter yard besides their own family, and their paddock was never empty.

Anyone who wanted to watch the slaughterers at work, had their macabre curiosity curtly discouraged by "Knacker Dick" his face set as grimly as an executioner's, no outsider was ever allowed inside the yard. How many years Wilkinsons were in that trade I don't know, but they were still in business in 1956. For the horse it was a sad end to a long and hard-working life, but merciful.

It is fitting at this point in my account of those days to mention the other parts that the horse and its needs played in the everyday life of fifty or sixty years ago. Besides being the general means of transport, horses needed food and ~~of~~ bedding, horse shoes soon wore out on the hard roads, and their feet needed skilled attention.

A shoeing smith was also a farrier who trimmed the hoof besides fitting shoes to it. In Hunslet alone there were five blacksmiths and farriers, four hay and corn merchants, four saddlers and harness makers, and an equal number of wheelwrights and smiths, and cart and wagon builders.

Horses pulled cabs for hire, wedding coaches, and coaches for funerals together with the hearse, so literally the horse served mankind from the cradle to the grave.

The railway companies kept their own horses for delivering goods to customers, and many of the larger firms kept horses for the same purpose. In this respect the brewers dray horses were a common sight in towns, and also the street traders horses had their own place among the four-legged population.

In fact their only rival was the steam wagon, and these like the steam traction engine, were mostly used for heavy haulage and long distance out of town haulage.

It is not surprising then that stables both large and small were to be found in almost any odd corners of streets and yards. For the same reason the commonest form of litter in the streets was horse droppings, and the smell of horses took the place of petrol and diesel fumes.

Stable manure was recognised article of trade, and it was a common sight to see boys, and men, with a two wheeled box barrow collecting droppings for gardens and allotments.

For that digression I ask the readers forgiveness, but I include it to give a picture of the every-day life of people in those days.

To return to the characters and well known personalities of the old Hunslet would not be right without mentioning a well known Hunslet worthy of that time, namely John Spurr.

He lived and carried on his profession as a "Vet" beside Hunslet Parish Church, in a cottage opposite the Penny Hill.

This was a large open area paved with stone setts. During the 19th century it had been used as an open Market place, and also as a local fairground, and it derived its name

from the practice of playing Pitch and Toss there in former times, of course at the time of which I am speaking this form was illegal and "Tossing Schools" had to hold out reach of the patrolling policeman.

In the centre of this open space was a public urinal, and in front of this useful edifice, in fine weather, a group of men would gather to discuss anything from sport to politics,

It was here that John Spurr used to hold his "surgery" in any spare time that he might have. Apart from his work as a "Oss Doctor", he was a Council member, and he would give advice on any matters arising there. He was also the organiser of "Wiffem Waffem" Band. This was a group of local chaps who dressed up in a weird assortment of comic costumes, and they paraded the local streets playing an assortment of "Instruments" as weird as the outfits they wore.

These varied from mouth organs, tin whistles, and "Kazoo's" to old gramophone trumpets, and sheet metal tubes, to dust-bin lids for drums and pan lids for cymbals. Spurr himself played a concertina. They collected from passers by and anyone else who came out to watch them, and all the proceeds went towards treats for poor children.

Needless to say that their repertoire was more discordant than melodious, but the end justified the means used. Spurr was at his most active in the late 1920's when unemployment was becoming really bad, and future prospects looked grim.

This gathering of men on Penny Hill was known as the "Gent's Comsitee" but less choosy people used the more vulgar term for it. It was here between the convenience and the "Spotted Dog" that the Salvation Army pitched on Friday nights and after Spurr died it was called by the locals "John Spurr's Monument".

Both the "Spotted Dog" and the convenience have now been demolished, and a modern supermarket stands on the site together with a modern hostel ~~by~~ the "Penny Hill" inn.

Still on the subject of public houses it is worth mentioning the landlord of the "Red House". He brewed his own beer and it was good beer, but his nickname was a real misnomer, it was "Jolly Tom" but he never smiled and he had no small talk at all.

"Owd Born Drunk" was a middle aged man who lived alone in an old cottage near Hunslet Parish Church. I never knew his full name, only that his first name was Dick, and the reason why he was called "Born Drunk" was because nobody could ever remember seeing him sober.

People said that he had relations who sent money every week to a neighbour who did some washing for him, went into his house, mopped the floor and took him a meal each day.

He used to go to a nearby pub with a big jug for six pennyworth of "Tap Droppings" (the drips which fell from the beer pumps and accumulated in the drip tray). He was not allowed into the bar because he smelled, so he was served at the back door. I never saw him after 1920 and I think he died in the workhouse, the cottage was demolished soon afterwards together with another two or three more.

Drunkenness was an accepted thing with many people, which is not surprising when licensed premises were opened from 6a.m until 12 midnight until 1921, when an Act of Parliament limited the opening hours to three at mid-day, and four-and-a-half hour in the evening from September of that year.

"Womens Lib" is not such a modern invention. A drunken row in the street or in the houses was not unusual after "Chuck

ing Out Time", but on the whole wives could give back as much as they took from a drunken husband. It was the children who saw and heard it all, and they got the raw deal because they could not retaliate.

This state of affairs often led to some comical situations, (particularly so for the neighbours) they usually heard, saw, or were told about it afterwards.

One such case was "Buck" a good natured, fat, amiable chap who lived near with his wife and eight children, two of whom had left school and were working. He was peaceable enough, but on Friday pay-night he always called at a pub before coming home with his wage.

On one such occasion when he had overstayed at the pub, on reaching home he took off his coat, sat down, and waited as usual. His wife said nothing, but placed a plate in front of him on which was half a new brick, a knife, and a slab of margarine. Her erring spouse astonished asked what it was for?

His wife said "Look, if you give me some wage I'll go buy you some grub, if not you can take that where you bought the beer and have it for your supper!"

Buck submitted and never again came home from work at 8.00 on Friday, but often after that episode his mates would ask him if he fancied a buttered brick for tea.

It was a regular occurrence for a man to emerge the morning-after-the-night-before, decorated with sticking plaster or black bruises as battle scars.

One warm pleasant Saturday afternoon, an irritable bad tempered neighbour sat on his doorstep grumbling because his dinner wasn't ready when he came home. His wife came to the door and emptied a basin of pudding batter over his head.

As it was a nice warm afternoon many of our neighbours were sitting on their door steps also, so they had a free entertainment at the grumblers expense.

Flying saucers were not heard of then, but we often saw flying bottles, plates, and dishes, and if the women folk didn't spare their menfolk, neither did they spare anyone else who transgressed.

One Saturday night Jerry the greengrocery hawker, came round selling a load of doubtful cauliflowers by the light of the street lamps. Next morning as he came down the street en route to his stable, the irate customers were waiting for him and he was met by a barrage of yellowing wizened cauliflowers.

At the same time as they pelted him with them, they also gave their opinion of both his honesty and his ancestry. That however didn't deter him from coming round as usual on Tuesday, after all who else would let them have their fruit and veg on "tick" (credit) until Friday? Life was rough, but never dull for very long.

Often the drunks provided a diversion in public, like one big well known local tippler good naturedly nicknamed "Ring o' Roses". One Saturday night, much to the amusement of the late shoppers, he walked unsteadily on his way home to "Plevna" holding a piece of cord on the other end of which was a large joint of meat.

As he walked he kept on saying as if talking to a dog; - "Come on Fido", this went on until he reached Hunslet Lane Police Station, where the duty sergeant led him, together with "Fido" into a cell to await collection.

On Monday morning he was fined five shillings for being drunk and incapable, but he had no idea of where the joint

of beef came from, or whether he had bought it or otherwise!

As none of the local butchers could either remember selling it, or even missing it from their shops, it always remained a mystery where "Fido" came from.

A drunken man even if he was nuisance could be dealt with, and even if he was belligerent, well the arm of the law could deal with that as well, but a drunken woman was a different problem altogether. There were no Police Women then and if (as often happened) the lady in question either refused or was unable to co-operate, then the only solution was a handcuff cart if no other conveyance was available.

Every police station had a handcuff cart, but a street hawkers barrow would do if it was nearby at the time. Needless to say the sight of a singing, shouting, drunken woman on a cart, kicking her legs in the air to the accompaniment of the ribald remarks of passers by, did nothing to uphold the dignity of the law.

From early morning until late at night the streets were never silent. Quite apart from all the other shouts and noises, the clatter of electric trams running on steel rails, and the horse drawn carts with iron tyred wheels rumbling along roads paved with stone or granite setts, the fact that the majority of manual workers in rough jobs, particularly colliers, all wore wooden clogs shod with iron as working footwear, it will not be difficult for the reader to imagine the noise.

There can be no point in dwelling on events that have now passed into history, and have accordingly been well documented.

1918 was the year of the Armistice. It was also the year of the great influenza outbreak which swept the country like a plague. In a congested area such as ours it spread rapidly.

To combat this all schools were closed for several weeks until the "Spanish Flu" epidemic was under control and waning.

I think that the majority of people in our area looked on the "Flu" as being just another health hazard like scarlet fever, chicken pox, measles, and diphtheria was not uncommon, and pneumonia was a regular occurrence in our overcrowded society.

As far as I was concerned, being "Off School" meant more freedom for me. Everyone was advised to avoid crowds, but my parent both said I could go out if I stayed in the fresh air didn't go into other peoples houses.

To do that was no hardship to me because although I got on well with the other lads, it was no hardship to me to be alone and I didn't get bored if I was out doors. In that way I walked miles and found places that I might never have seen if I had run with a gang of other lads.

Opposite the bottom of Church Street was Old Mill Lane, it lead to Hunslet Old Mill which was a ruin on the bank of the River Aire. The Aire & Calder Navigation was at that time a busy and prosperous waterway, and boats of all kinds were passing both up and downstream all day long.

I had been down there with my father along the bank as far as the steps at Suspension Bridge, and then along Clarence Road as far as Leeds Lock, then crossing Crown Point Bridge we had returned on the North side of the river to Suspension bridge again, over the bridge, down the steps and back home.

Now while father was at work I could explore the river bank further afield, and I had plenty of time.

I reasoned to myself that as many boats were horse hauled, if the horse and a man could go along the bank to Leeds, then so could I. So accordingly at the next opportunity I did just

that. Luck was on my side on that occasion. It was late afternoon and one of the A&CN tugs was just coming on it's way to Leeds. They ran a regular service of these towing vessels with steam engines that were capable of towing several boats at once.

As it's speed when towing six heavily laden boats was slow I had no difficulty in keeping up to it as I walked along the bank and watched it.

Two of the boats loaded with timber were left at Illingworth, Inghams timber yard and saw mill, the other four boats went into the lock with the tug. The heavy gates were hand operated and I helped the old man who was the lock-keepers assistant to close the near side gate, while the lock keeper closed the other one. Then I watched as the lock filled.

I went back home contented with my afternoon exploration, I had found a new walk, and also another source of interest, and every varied one. When father asked where I'd been and I told him, he nodded understandingly, but warned me to be careful and keep out of trouble.

There was a wide variety of vessels using the Navigation, from the Leeds & Liverpool Canal boats with a capacity of thirty or forty tons, to the Humber keels and sloops with sails and masts latched to allow them to go under bridges.

These together with the Hull based lighters were capable of carrying a hundred and more tons each. there was a regular service of steam tugs between Hull and Goole, and the Aire and Calder Navigations tugs from Goole to Leeds, and although the rate of transport along the canal was comparatively slow, it was so much cheaper than the railway that waterborn transport on the Navigation was a paying proposition.

So much was this so that the Navigation ran a fleet of ^{its} own boats carrying general cargo. Besides these there were others such as the flour milling firms, and others, who had big warehouses alongside the waterway, and they had their own boats bringing flour, grain, and other commodities from Hull and Goole to Leeds.

In addition to these, as coal was then the universal fuel, and Leeds was the distribution centre for a wide area, it is not surprising that the leading coal merchants had their own vessels and tugs specially designed to tow them from staithes on the Navigation, to their own wharves at Leeds.

From Hunslet to Victoria Bridge at Leeds there were wharves on each side of the river, and they were in regular use for discharging a variety of cargoes. At Elliotts Wharf at the bottom of Old Mill Lane, a steam crane was in almost daily use unloading bulk cargoes such as white sand for glass making, rock sulphur for chemicals, iron pyrites, rock phosphate, and copper ore.

At Goodman Street wharf there were two steam cranes one of which handled sand and sulphur, while the other unloaded industrial coal for the local mills and glass works.

At the Leeds side of Suspension Bridge Taylor Brothers Clarence Ironworks had two steam cranes in constant use unloading coal boats, and further along were moorings for six or seven boats to unload cargoes of deals (rough timber for the saw-mills).

On the other side of the river the picture was very much ~~the~~ the same, coal wharves, warehouses with hoists, and yards with cranes. One particular commodity for which storage facilities were available near Leeds Lock was ~~the~~ dyestuffs.

There were three old fashioned dyeworks near Crown Point Bridge which still dyed cloth with the traditional vegetable dyes, and these were unloaded nearby. They had names that were once well known, but now they are forgotten or unheard of.

For instance to name but six that come easy to memory, Logwood, Cudbear, Valony, Myrobalan, Orchila, and Indigo. In fact many of the surrounding streets were named after them.

Although at the time I obviously did not know it, yet I was seeing at first hand a chapter of industrial history, that was even then passing out of existence for ever.

Although fate and general circumstances together decreed that I should earn my living manually, yet I was privileged to see and experience a way of life now past, in an era completely unknown to the present generation. They can only read about it, while my generation actually lived it.

Sixty years ago the steam engine was the chief source of power, the prime mover. It was heavy and cumbersome, yet it was an essential part of everyday life.

Schoolboys grew up quickly then, we had to when we started full time working at thirteen years of age. Yet I cannot but think that the present day teenager is beset by pressures and stresses social, academic, and moral that my own generation never encountered or knew about.

It was typical of that period that nobody thought it unusual for a ten or eleven-year-old to stand and watch men at work in all sorts of places. If you didn't get in the way of the men, well nobody bothered if you just watched through an open door, and didn't go inside. The general attitude was "well he's got to do a job some day, so there's no harm in him seeing how it's done".

Where work was going on outdoors, it was not unusual for a workman to give some bits of information about the job. Of course if too many juvenile spectators accumulated, you were all told to " 'Op it". As one foreman of a road paving gang once said "If theres only one or two kids you can keep an eye on 'em, but if there's three or four there's no telling what they'll get up to!"

It was in this way that I made my first boatman friend, and got to know a lot more about inland waterway navigation, but I will leave that to be dealt with in another chapter.

I will however take this opportunity to mention another feature of those times that is now a thing of the past, namely gambling in the streets. In fine weather pitch and toss was played on almost any piece of spare ground. If the weather was bad, a "Tossing School" might be held in any cart shed or other empty building, if an open space was behind an advertising hoarding, so much the better.

In those days any form of ready money betting in public was unlawfull, even ready money betting with a bookmaker, so it was necessary to have a look out when a school was in progress. This is where the youth of the district came in, they could earn a few pence by "Dogging Out" for the gamblers.

From a vantage point convenient, a ten-year-old when not at school could spot an "Arm of The Law", even in plain clothes, a couple of hundred yards away. By the time the lawman got % to the street corner the "School" had dispersed, and the young urchin who had given the alarm would be mooching around looking the picture of boredom, hands in pockets, waiting to give the all clear to the gamblers, some of whom would be in neighbours houses.

One thing for which I am indebted to my father is that in spite of his beer drinking, he would neither gamble or back horses. His dictum was "If you "oss race, gamble, borrow money or go to pop shops (pawnbrokers shops), you'll never have money in yer pocket". I only once ever broke that rule years afterwards, and I learned my lesson the hard way.

The "Bookie" also did a good trade albeit unlawfully. By a strange clause in the gaming act, credit betting was lawful, but if a punter handed his stake over together with his bet, he was breaking the law! So a bookmakers sign read "So and So Commission Agent", because it was lawful to accept a credit bet (from a credit-worthy client) on a commission basis!

Every pub had someone who "Ran Bets" for a "Bookie", he took the bet written on a bit of paper together with the stake.

After the race he would bring back the winnings (if any). One curious twist to this was that many housewives were as much addicted to sly betting as their menfolk, and the street corner runner was kept busy taking their sixpenny and shilling (2½p and 5p) bets for them.

There was always a good amount of business for the bookie from the workshops and glassworks. The latter got their bets on via the lads from the glasshouses when they went out for beer and sandwiches etc.

Of course the bookmakers were watched and raided from time to time by the police, and if caught with betting slips they were fined, and so were any runners caught. As far as the lawmen were concerned it was just another routine job, nobody held a grudge afterwards, and nobody ever informed either.

Chapter.6.

Peace at Last - And After.

It was now 1919, and in April of that year, what everyone had waited for since November 1918 was finally agreed and signed, the Peace Treaty.

In 1918 people rejoiced at the Armistice, but now they really let themselves go! Following the official declaration of peace a days general holiday was declared. Children had a day off school, bonfires were made in the streets and dummies burned. Instead of Guy Fawkes it was Kaiser Bill (Wilhelm the Second) that was burned.

There were fireworks and such feasting as could be possible with food rationed, and beer a shilling (5p) a pint, because like everything else prices had been steadily rising. In fact I can plainly remember my father complaining bitterly that a "bit of decent bacon cost half-a-crown (12½p) a pound". He called it daylight robbery,

However not everyone was happy when the peace terms were published. Especially ex-service men like my father. I can remember quite clearly my father talking to another ex-soldier when I was out with him a few days later.

His comment was blunt and to the point. "Aye I know that they've signed a peace treaty, but nobody's satisfied, and as for it being the last war, well I'll give 'em twenty year before they're at one another's throats again like mad dogs".

He little knew how good a prophet time would prove him to be in that respect.

Another version of the same opinion that I was to hear in the years that followed was. "It's like it's always been, it takes two wars, the second one to finish the first one.

To an eleven-year-old like myself these prophesies of gloomy forboding meant little,so like all the other young hopefuls I just got on with the job of living and enjoying myself as best I could. Perhaps it is as well that in early youth we cannot imagine that everything wont be alright tomorrow,and all our troubles will be over.

Looking back over the years with the wisdom of hindsight,it seems incredible that most of the people in all walks of life believed that everyday life and all that went withit,would just revert back to the standards of 1914.

Or that the artificial prosperity created by four years of war could go on indefinitely. Or that our export trade would just return to us the the way that it had done in the past.

I think that it came as a real shock to most folk when in 1921,less than three years after Peace Day,a trade slump knocked the whole business world so hard that many large and prosperous concerns,would close their doors for ever,but that was the way it went.

So back to boyhood with all it's hopes and daydreams. I still went walking with Father,and he always explained anything that I did not understand(if of course he knew the answer),so in this way I gained quite a lot of general knowledge.

He always looked after me,and when he called at a pub for a pint or two,he would bring me a bottle of "pop"out to the door.

Furthermore when we were out,he often took me along paths and roads that,were not entirely rights of way except on business. In this way I saw many things at first hand,which I might never never have experienced otherwise.

For instance,when we went along the field paths across the Middleton Estate where the housing estate now stands,instead

of making a long detour round Town Street to the Old Run, we would go along the old colliery railroad (disused) behind the Town Street staithe, cross Town Street and down the Rope Hill.

It got it's name from the fact that the wagons of coal etc from the Broom pit yard, were pulled up the steep hill by a wire rope driven by a steam engine at Town Street. At the bottom we continued along the railroad past the coke and bye products plant (previously mentioned) down to the Belle Isle cottages, and back home via the Old Run.

In this way I have seen at close quarters, a coke-oven being "shoveled" as the process of pushing out the coke was called. This was done by opening a door at the back of the battery of coke-ovens, and also the front door at the front side.

Then the electrically operated ram pushed the coke out and onto the steel platform at the front for loading into wagons.

To me the sight of a fifteen ton slab of red hot coke, several feet high sliding slowly out onto the sloping plates, crumbling as it was met by two great jets of water, was awe inspiring and unforgettable as the column of black smoke turned into a huge cloud of steam.

On another occasion I went with him into Wards Glass Bottle Works in Jack Lane one Sunday morning. He went in to see the furnace man who was a friend of my fathers, and took him a quart bottle of beer. We went down the yard to the back of the furnace. It was the old type furnace or "Cone", and hand fired. Dick the furnace man was "Firing Up", this consisted of breaking up the fire by driving a long steel bar through the open door-hole of the furnace firebox into the solid mass of blazing coal inside it.

Then after breaking it up he pushed ^{it} over into the four cor-

ners of the firebox with a long iron rake and leveled the fire off. Then he got the long handled fire shovel proceeded to shovel three or four hundredweights of small coal into the fire, finally blocking up the doorhole with wet coal.

All three of us then went down into the "Ash Hole" as the place below ground behind the firebox was called because the ashpit where the ashes from the firegrate collected underneath the bars. It was a frosty morning, but the heat below ground level was stifling.

Of course that didn't bother Dick and my father, they proceeded to do justice to the beer. For my part I was fascinated watching the great red blobs of molten clinker, dropping down from the firegrate like blobs of red-hot toffee.

In the meantime Father had filled his pipe. Dick got a thin bar like a poker, and poked it at the grate bringing back a blob of red-hot clinker with which Dad lit his pipe, and Dick lit a cigarette. As a puff of smoke went into the air, the draught from the doorhole caught it, whisked it down and under the grate where it was sucked up into the fire.

I couldn't help thinking that it was like Aladdin and his lamp and the Genie disappearing in a puff of blue smoke.

All this to the accompaniment of the dull roar of air sucked through the fire by the draught from the wide furnace stack drawing it.

Memories of boyhood! Still fresh to-day after almost fifty five years, when the old glasshouse where it all happened is only a memory to some of my own generation.

One point that I would like to make before carrying on is that although I saw so much beer drinking going on around me, as well as at home (where I was often given a small glass of beer at meal times) I never developed into a drunkard.

Yet I have heard it stated that if a child sees drinking at home in the formative years, then that child will grow up to be a drunkard. However in my experience, this is not a certainty by any means, more a personal opinion.

In one case that I know of, a man who had a responsible position had a son and a daughter, both of whom developed a drink problem in their adult life. Yet the father and mother were both very temperate people, though not total abstainers.

One of my school friends whose elder brother was a very heavy drinker, and their father was a hopeless alcoholic, was a very good scholar. He won a scholarship, trained as a priest and has since moved higher in Holy Orders.

In yet another instance a man who had been brought up in a family where the father was very rarely sober, was the landlord of a public house for forty years and was also a strict teetotaler! As for myself beer has never ruled me. I have always been able to stop of my own free will.

In my opinion the main cause of the excessive drinking at the beginning of this century, was the squalid, overcrowded living conditions, and a total lack recreational facilities that were not on licenced premises of some kind.

The only exceptions were the social functions and "get togethers" run by religious organisations, and attended mainly by the women members of the congregations of the various churches and chapels. There were of course the picture houses with their black and white silent films, but as these were frowned on like the music halls were, by the churches and religious bodies, there was little choice.

It is therefore not surprising that children brought up in a way of life where drinking and small time gambling in var

ious forms were so commonplace in this kind of working class community, should regard these things as part of the normal process of "growing Up" and entering the adult world.

Hand-in-hand with all this went an attitude of "Well it won't be any better, not in our lifetime anyway!"

However childhood and schooldays went on just the same, and mine were no exception. I don't suppose that either any better or any worse than any other lad of my age. Caning was generally accepted punishment for any misdemeanor, with a boxed ear for carelessness or inattention. I think that I was caned as often as any of the others.

In an area the four sides of which formed almost a mile square, there were no less than eleven churches and chapels, plus the Salvation Army barracks and the Gospel Hall.

One could be excused for thinking that with so many places of worship the moral standard would be high, but this was far from being the case.

Indeed there were people with strong religious convictions, who did their best to live up to their beliefs. However they were noticeably less in numbers than a majority who attended places of worship in order to keep up an appearance of respectability.

This was particularly noticeable among business people both large and small. It was no secret that many businessmen found it a very convenient place to discuss trade out of hours.

While it was as always true that there were many "Publicans and Sinners", there were also many "Pharisees" and much hypocrisy. It was also noticeable that many of these types made a great show of giving substantial donations to the collection, so that other folk could see how well they supported

that particular church or chapel.

Another phenomenon of that time was an almost morbid pre-occupation with death. When anyone died all members of the deceased persons immediate family wore black clothes to the funeral and for many weeks after, and all close relatives wore arm-bands of black crepe.

As for the arrangements for the funeral itself, the undertaker (this was ^{the} term used then for what we now call the "Funeral Director") brought the coffin to the house of the dead person. At that time all dead people were buried from their own homes unless there was some special reason why it should not be so.

So the body was prepared and placed in the coffin, then it was placed on trestles in whatever room was available (often the living room if it was a back-to-back house). The lid was not fastened down until the time for the cortage to leave the house, so that all the family, friends, and relatives could see the deceased person for the last time.

It was customary for the children of relatives and friends to be taken along with their parents to this morbid viewing of the coffin and contents, and my mother never missed an opportunity to attend a funeral whenever possible.

Obviously I had to accompany her on every such occasion. All children were firmly instructed "Now no playing about, keep clean, keep quiet". In short it was a case of "Be seen, but not heard".

After the interment everyone returned to the house for tea and the usual inter-family "Raking Up" and not a little back-biting. Altogether a funeral was an ordeal that no youngster ever relished (myself included).

I can well remember my last juvenile attendance at this depressing ritual. The funeral was that of my Uncle Albert, one of

my father's brothers. It took place on a bitterly cold March afternoon with a biting East wind blowing sleet at us as we stood around the grave. The minister read out the service in a slow, sing-song, monotonous drone as cheerless as the weather, we were shivering and glad to get back to the coaches for shelter at last.

Whatever ones personal opinion of cremation might be, at the least it spares the mourners such an ordeal as that!

At that time every funeral cortege was horse-drawn, from the elaborate black hearse to the equally sombre mourning coaches, (a funeral with only one or two coaches, and only four or five wreathes on the coffin was considered to be "Only a Poor Funeral").

Nor did the outward signs of mourning and remembrance begin and end with the funeral. Each of the mourners received a "Funeral Card", black edged and black lettered from the undertaker (and charged for on the bill. also the bereaved received business cards from florists, monumental masons, garden shops etc.

The whole melancholy business was carried on at home home.

In most houses that could boast a front room or a parlour, the four walls would literally covered with large framed portraits of dead relatives and others who had "Passed Away". Also the appropriate "Funeral Card" would be in one corner of the frame under the glass.

Sometimes instead of cards, satin bookmarks would be given to the relatives. These had the same details on them as the cards had, and were usually put into either the family Bible or the family album. This latter volume contained only photographs of past generations of relatives long since departed.

Any visitors calling, particularly on Sunday afternoon, would

be duly shown round the family "Likenesses" with the relish of an attendant showing the works of art in a gallery to a captive audience.

The frames themselves were perfect examples of the picture framers craft with either ornate mouldings (often gilded) or severely plain and sepulchrally black, all hand made and highly polished or lacquered.

For that reason alone the "Front Room" with its horse hair seated sofa and straight-backed chairs, plus long lace curtains and the indispensable potted aspidistra in the window bottom was a prestige symbol to be envied. To be allowed to have tea in these sombre surroundings was a honour to be remembered. Shades of Queen Victoria!

So like the undertaker, the tailor, the florist, the monumental mason and the rest, the picture framer also benefited by the death of a fellow citizen.

The only people not to benefit financially were the bereaved family. In spite of life insurance, friendly society benefits, and funeral funds, they were often in debt for many months afterwards. It was a well known fact that very often, the black mourning clothes (especially mens suits) were in pawn at the "Pop Shop" before they were paid for through a clothing club on the "Weekly"!

So much for what Father called "Tickology", it was convenient to buy on the "Never", but the day of reckoning was never very far away for the customer.

In the case of a back-to-back house with no front room, the family album took the place of the pictures on the wall, and was duly displayed to anyone who came to tea on Sunday. As we did have a front room, well mother kept it in the time hon

oured way, pictures, ornaments, aspidistra, the lot.

Meanwhile life went on just the same. I was growing up and making my own pals. Needless to say I still had to do any odd jobs that I could do, such as going errands, bringing coal up from the cellar, chopping firewood etc. There wa such a variety of things to do that the only time when I was bored was when the weather was too bad for me to go out.

On dark nights Pepper Road bridge was the limit. I could go there watching trains and the shunting on the sidings, but whether I was with other lads or not the eight o'clock time limit must be observed.

However I now had another interest, namely the waterborn traffic on the river and canal. I was a good mixer, and I would make one in with other lads, in general I got on well with them, but I never wanted to be one of a gang just sticking to one area and never going anywhere else.

Most of the lads that I knew didn't go far out of the district in which they lived, but I knew that there was what amounted to another world outside the closed-in dingey streets, and I preferred to travel further, and see more of life.

It was on one of these excursions by the waterside that I made the acquaintance of a boatman (the term "Bargee" was unknown on the waterways), and started a friendship that lasted more than twenty years until he died at the age of eighty-three.

On that particular day I went in the opposite direction, instead of following the river bank to Leeds, I went along Low Road to Thwaite Gate, and then turned left down Thwaite Lane and onto the canal bank opposite Thwaite Mill.

At the bottom of Old Mill Lane the canal leaves the River Aire and does not re^jgain it again until it reaches Kippax.

Obviously the hauling bank (or as it is often called the "Tow Path") was not a public right of way, so as I didn't want to be in trouble I stood against the swing bridge watching a horse hauled sand boat passing through the bridgeway.

As I watched, a smallish middle aged man, a typical boatman in cord trousers and a blue Guernsey came along so I asked him if I could walk along the bank. He said yes, but as he was going to his boat which was moored at the Copper Works Wharf, so it would be alright if I went along with him.

He asked me where I lived and we talked until we reached his boat. It was an old coal boat loaded with 75 tons of "Smudge", which was a grade of small coal used for furnace and boiler firing.

At this point I will again digress to explain the old system of grading coal.

Before the pits were Nationalised, all coals were sold by a system of grading by size as well as by quality.

As it passed through the screens at the the pit head, the fine dust and any bits that escaped was called "Screenings".

Coal from a quarter of an inch in size to half an inch was "Smudge". From half to one inch was "Slack", and from one to two inches were "Single Nuts".

From two to three inches were "Double Nuts" and three to four inches were "Trebles". From four to six inches were "Seconds" or "Cubes", and from six inches upwards were "Best Cobbles".

The boat was in very poor condition, and the only reason why George (that was my new friend's name), had come down that day was to try the pump and see that the boat was alright.

We stayed for a couple of hours, and I found that George was quite a character. I told him that as it was the Easter Holi-

days I did not have to go to school the next day, so I would come down

to see him again the next day. He thought that it was a great achievement to be able to read and write at eleven years of age, and he told me about himself.

His father had been a boatman and George was born at Elscarr near Barnsley in 1858. He had been "Brought Up" on boats and never went to school at all. In my own turn I was amazed because I had never before known anyone who was illiterate.

He could tell the time and reckon money, but he had no knowledge of geography, or history, or any of the subjects that I learned at school. Yet he had worked on rivers and canals all over Yorkshire and Lancashire, and part of Lincolnshire!

One of his legs had been broken many years before, and it had set stiff so now he walked with a permanent limp as if he had a crutch, but he never used a walking stick even. He lived with his third wife in a little "One-Up and One Down" quite near the river off East Street in Leeds.

George was of course well known to all the other boatmen, and he taught me a lot about a boatman's work. What was more through knowing him the other boatmen got to know me, and I was accepted and trusted. Because of this I often got a ride on a boat from one lock to another, or from some point on the canal to the wharf to which the boat was going.

Obviously I couldn't be at Leeds Lock at 4.30 A.M. when the coal boats left Leeds for the pits, but when I did get the chance, usually on a Saturday morning I would go to Thwaite Gate, and then walk along the hauling bank to either Fish Pond or Woodlesford Lock.

Then with luck I would get a ride back to Leeds with one of the coal boats, of which there were quite a few in those days.

There were several firms who used the Aire & Calder Navigation to bring coal from the Castleford area to Leeds, and as far away as Skipton on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, which joins the River Aire at Leeds.

Considerable amounts of industrial coal went to Whitshall road power station, and also another power station at Crown point bridge which used to generate 400 volts direct current for Leeds City Tramways, also used a lot of industrial small coal as well. Of course these were both municipally owned.

The two largest firms of coal distributors in the Leeds area were Leeds Co-Operative Society and James Hargreaves. The Co-op only supplied their own members with domestic coal. They had a fleet of coal boats and a purpose built canal tug for towing their boats.

They never towed any boats other than their own, and they did not allow anyone except their own personnel to be on their boats at any time.

So it was impossible to "Thumb" a lift on a Co-op boat. The Co-op had two wharves, one on The Calls next to the power station just mentioned, and the other next to Victoria Bridge.

On the other hand Hargreaves's distributed house coal and also industrial coals. Much of the industrial coal was delivered direct to the customers wharves such as the Yorkshire Copper Works, and Taylor Brothers Clarence Forge. They had a wharf at Goodman Street, Hunslet and another at East Street, Leeds. They also had Kirk Ings Wharf on The Calls at Leeds.

Altogether Hargreaves's brought about 3,000 tons of coal per week into Leeds for distribution. The Co-op would bring about another 1,500 tons, and when the coal for the power stations, plus the amount taken up the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, and the

amount carried by smaller "One-Man" operators on the waterway to the area, one can form a good idea of the grand total per year between the pits and Leeds by boat.

Hargreaves's had three tugs and their men were allowed to use their own discretion about allowing any other person to travel on their boats, so I always looked out for their boats.

The boats that used the Leeds & Liverpool canal were much smaller only carrying about forty tons, and they were mostly horse hauled. Many of them were owned by the men who worked on them, and they were always decorated in bright colours, with flowers, leaves, and other motifs on the paintwork.

To return to my friend George. The man that he worked for owned only two boats, one of which he worked himself. This was called the "Alice", and was a good new boat capable of carrying between 80 and 90 tons of coal, and he had a contract to carry coal from Rothwell Haigh Staithe to the Aire & Calder Navigation's depot at Leeds.

The other one which George worked, the old "Douglas", was on a sub-contract to carry "maidge" coal to the Copper works for Hargreaves's. When that contract finished George's boss decided that the "Douglas" was too old to be worth spending any more money on, so she went to be broken up.

This meant that George was now out-of-work, but he found another job. This time it was a boat owned by a man who only had that one boat, and it was on contract to carry sand and gravel from the Rothwell Haigh staithe, to the Leeds City Tramways yard at Sovereign Street wharf between Leeds Bridge and Victoria Bridge.

I saw George more often now, and I often went on the boat with him. It was a larger boat than the "Douglas" and carried

116 tons. She was called "Self Help", and really this was a better job from Georges point of view, because he could bring the empty boat back from the Tramways wharf, and tie up for the night or the weekend, at a disused wharf on the East Street side of the river only ten minutes walk from his home.

It had another advantage. Like all boatmen he never missed an opportunity to get some coal for the stove in his boats cabin (not a difficult thing when open boats passed to-and-fro loaded with it). So by discretely taking a small bucketfull or a couple of lumps when near a coal boat, his coal locker was never empty.

So when he "Tied Up" at Neptune Street for the night he would take some coal home as well.

For myself I always carried a carpet bag rolled up in my pocket whenever I went down to the riverside. This was to carry home any firewood that I found floating within reach, and sometimes the odd piece of coal as well.

There were always pieces of broken boxes etc in the river, the thing one had to watch for ^{was} other floating things among the flotsam that could be unpleasant, because river pollution is by no means a modern evil.

The main difference between then and now is that then the pollution was of a cruder, more common kind, with much untreated sewage and disposable household refuse. In fact, at least one local journalist wrote in a daily paper of that time, that the the river at Leeds bridge was little more than an open sewer and a disgrace to the city!

A lot of liquid industrial effluent found it's way into the river such as the used contents of dye vats, spent tannery liquids, the greasy suds from cloth scouring. In fact all the wor-

ks and dwellings along the banks of the river found it a very cheap and convenient means of disposal for anything unwanted.

It was also a means of disposal for unwanted pets, such as dogs, cats, litters of pups and kittens. Some unemployed men and lads earned a little "Bacca Brass" by getting rid of them by drowning in the river. The usual payment for this service was sixpence (2½p).

So it was not wise to be inquisitive if one saw a floating sack, there were many dead rats among the flotsam as well. It is not surprising then that in warm weather, when (especially at weekends) when the water was almost stagnant, and black slimy blobs bubbled up from the bottom with an accompanying stench, that it got the nickname of the "River of Stinks".

Now-a-days the pollution is mostly chemical, and the effect is much more lethal and long lasting.

From a spot near Leeds Lock tail, the end window in the engine house at Atkinson's East Street Mill, was straight opposite at the other side of the river. Underneath that unusually long window I had noticed a big curved pipe sticking out of the wall.

Looking across the river I could see through the window the end of a long square beam. It moved slowly up and down like a giant see-saw in slow motion pushed and pulled by a long connecting rod. I had also noticed that when the beam came down to the bottom of the stroke, a great gush of water came out of the pipe into the river, but I could not see more.

However one Saturday morning as I waited beside the engine for George to come to his boat, the opportunity to satisfy my curiosity came. The side door was open because two men were cleaning the long windows, so now I could see the object of

my curiosity working at close quarters, it was a beam engine!

Like most schoolboys I had heard and read about how James Watt had invented this type of engine in the 18th century, but I had never seen one.

Although this one was of course a much improved and more up-to-date version than the original invention, the action and the working principal were the same.

This one had automatic valves and also pumped up water to cool the single big low pressure cylinder, and create a vacuum to suck the piston back down again at the end of the up stroke. Then it released the water to let it run down the pipe that I had seen outside, at the same time it opened the steam valve to force the piston back up again.

At the other end of the long cast iron beam there was another long connecting rod ^{which} turned the crankshaft. In the centre of the beam it was ballanced on two tall cast iron columns which acted as the fulcrum.

This greasy gangling monster turned a huge flywheel to which a big rope-pulley was attached to the same shaft. This slow and ponderous engine drove the whole mill on many yards of shafting, pulleys, and belts.

I hadn't been there more than a few minutes when the engine man came and pulled the doors shut, so I went to talk to ~~talk to~~ the two men who were cleaning the widows. I said that I was waiting for the boatman, and I asked about the engine saying that I had never seen one like it before.

They told me that it was more than a hundred years old and that the flywheel weighed twenty tons.

When I remarked that the engineman had closed the door



when he saw me watching his engine, they told me that he didn't open that door except when someone had work to do for him, and that although the engine would stop for the weekend at twelve o'clock, the engineman would stay until four o'clock when they had finished cleaning inside the windows.

This didn't surprise me much, because I knew that all mill engine houses were "Out of Bounds" to anyone except the engineman. There was always a notice on the door saying "No Admittance", and even the manager could not enter without asking permission from the engineman (or "Engine Tender" as he was officially called). In fact it was a kind of "Holy of Holies" at all mills.

When George came he brought a pair of sack/wheels with him and we took a bag of coal to his house. His wife was there and I noticed that she also had a lame leg.

Sometime later I remarked about this co-incidence, and he told me that this actually wife number three. His previous wives had also had lame legs, and when his second wife died he was still friendly with other women he would not form a permanent attachment until he found a woman with an unbendable leg like his own.

So he teamed up with her and she became wife number three the one that he then had. When I asked him why, ~~sh~~ I asked him why.

He said Well if I'd got a woman with two good legs she'd be better than me, wouldn't she! I couldn't have that could I, because I don't want a wife with an advantage over me do I?

The reply was typical of the man, but as I said George was a character in his own right, and I shall always remember him clumping along like five-foot-one Long John Silver (except that George had two legs, and didn't use a crutch).

Just for the record he could walk along a plank (canal boats don't have combings and deck sides) and never fall off!

They had a permanent lodger who made up the trio, and contributed his share to the housekeeping. He went by the nickname of "Nottingham Jack", a placid enough chap who fitted in with the general picture easily.

As I said previously most people if well known acquired a nickname. At school I was often called "Army", and later as a teenager I often got "Spider" because I had rather long arms and legs. My father, like myself, got on well with other folk and because of his smart erect carriage was called "Sergeant-Major".

In that respect boatmen were no different to any other class of worker when it came to being nicknamed. Some were descriptive while others were a bit obscure, few were polite and some were definitely vulgar, even unprintable.

A selection that occurs to me at random is as follows: "Fish an' Tattie Ike", "Lizzie Luv", "Rubber Guts", "Gadge", "Butch", "Day Dawn", "Tunk", "Piggy", "Flash Jack", "Hell Fire Jack", "Jazz Harry", "Weary", "Crammer", "Speedy", "Sebby Jack". As for my old friend, he was known as "Stallie" presumably because of his fondness for the opposite sex, a complete list would be endless.

III

XX

Chapter.7.

.The Slump.

Since the end of the Great War there had been warnings of a falling off of trade when the needs of the armed services and the War Departments were no longer top priority. In 1920 this began to be noticeable throughout industry.

When the War bonuses, Cost of Living bonuses etc, had been discontinued the result was smaller "Take Home" wages all round. Coupled with this came cuts in overtime and reductions in wage rates in an effort to attract more trade.

Another factor was that during the War women had been doing work normally done by men in factories and on public transport, quite apart from all those directly working on munitions. All of these were now redundant, and the family income was proportionately less.

One obvious consequence was that although there were more goods and food for sale, there was not so much money to buy these things with. It is not surprising then that throughout industry in general there were rumblings of discontent at the much reduced standard of living.

Speaking for myself, well at the ripe old age of twelve I did not understand the niceties of trade and finance, and I only knew that already some people were "Out-of-Work".

In October 1920 the coal miners came out on strike. Many people have said when speaking of the decade from 1920 to 1930, that the General Strike of 1926 was the beginning of the end, but in hindsight I think that although it only lasted for one month, the colliers strike of 1920 was the beginning, and 1926 was the end for everyone.

After that digression about the economic situation I will return to the river again, because there were some things that even in 1920 were out of date on a Navigation that was (and still is) a progressive waterway.

For instance, only about six of the lock keepers and bridge keepers between Leeds and Goole had a piped water supply to their houses. All drinking water had to be carried from the nearest tap, often a considerable distance.

Before Nationalisation came rainwater was extensively used for other household work and washing clothes, and sanitation was the country style earth closets.

As for the vessels using the Navigation, all except the local based coal boats carried their water supply in a tank or a barrel which stood on the cabin deck.

The local coal boats carried a days supply of water for drinking in large cans which were filled at Leeds Lock when setting out in the morning.

Perhaps the most incredible thing about these men who worked these river craft and canal boats, is that until the Education Act of 1870 whole families were born and brought up on the waterways. Their boats were their only homes, and all the family helped to work the boat and cargo.

They were paid a rate of so much per ton of cargo carried, by agreement with the boss. Except of course when the boat belonged to the boatman, in which case the boatman took the whole payment for the freight, and paid out all expenses himself.

They worked as many hours as they wished, often from early morning until late at night, spelling each other off for a meal. After 1870 obviously arrangements had to be made for

any school age children to attend a school, so a dwelling house as a fixed home was necessary, but the same working conditions continued.

In fact it was not until about 1939 that a fixed wage rate for a given number of working hours was adopted between the water transport firms and the unions. Of course this did not apply to a vessel worked by an owner master, yet I cannot remember any boatmen going on strike before the Second World War. All disputes were settled on a man-to-man basis, and all these men had one thing in common, an absolute dislike of being ruled by a clock. They lived a life apart from any other community.

This independent attitude and objection to working to fixed rules extended to many jobs connected with the boats that could be done piecework.

When a boat brought a cargo of sand, sulphur, copper ore, rock phosphate, pyrites etc from the ship at Hull or Goole in bulk, it needed to be shoveled into skips. The cost of this was not included in the freight rate, so it was paid for separately at the destination wharf.

At Hunslet there were two families who earned a living shoveling this kind of cargo. They bargained at the wharf for a few pence per ton. It was hard, dirty work especially sulphur which burned the skin, and few men would have done it. Yet these men did it because they were their own bosses, and it gave them independence.

Each boat carried a hundred tons and upwards, sometimes two hundred tons or more according to the size of the boat.

In the same way the "Deal Carriers" (the men who unloaded the timber boats from Hull at Leeds) did the work for a fixed

ed price per standard (approximately 2½ tons) shared between the gang of three men to a boat. Each man carried a number of pieces according to size and length, supervised by a "Tallyman" who marked them off on his tally sheet.

Each carrier had a leather pad strapped on his shoulder, and they arranged a "Run" of planks out of the boats hold, across the bank and into the sawmill yard to the point where they were building the stack.

This was a job that although it was never acknowledged to be skilled work, nevertheless required a considerable amount of skillful judgement on the part of the gang to decide how wide to make the base of the stack, how high it could safely go, and as it got higher arranging planks on tressles, without making the slope too steep for them to carry on.

These piecework gangs are now a thing of the past, the main reasons being the world wide shortage of timber, plus the fact that road haulage has advanced to such an extent that at the present day a Diesel engined wagon can leave Hull docks with a load of ten tons and upwards, and deliver that load in Hunslet or Leeds before evening.

However, this does not mean that the former Aire & Calder Navigation has lost trade as a viable means of transport, far from that the waterway since Nationalisation carries a greater tonnage of petroleum products alone to the terminal at Hunslet, than the total carried to both Leeds and Hunslet in the 1930's.

The main reason for the survival of this waterway when so many other canal systems have had to close down, is that at no time even in the driest weather, has a shortage of water prevented the free passage of traffic to Leeds and Wakefield

respectively from Goole.

A minimum draft of 7ft 6inches was and still is guaranteed over all the lock sills, with a beam of 18feet, and the shortest of the main locks between Goole and Leeds is more than 150ft in length. This makes it possible to use vessels of 250 to 350 tons cargo capacity.

As lock gates and sluices are mechanically operated now, this reduces the time wasted in "penning" (raising and lowering vessels from one level to another) by more than half the time taken before Nationalisation. For bulk carriers and tank barges these conditions are well suited to a quick turn-round at their destination.

Of course all progress inevitably causes many traditional and long established methods and customs to die out.

The wooden rivercraft and canal boats, painstakingly built from mostly British timber seasoned and bent to shape by craftsmen using the same kind of tools that their forefathers used, were in many cases the only homes of the men who worked them, living a nomad life.

These men, their boats and the men who built them, are now things of the past like their methods of propulsion, which were either sails and the wind or horse hauling, or even manual haulage at times.

Like the true Romany, the old breed of "Boatmen" were a dying race even in my youth. Like the real Gipsy, the true Romany, they lived their own life in their own way. Even the way that they dressed was typical of their way of life. A thick cloth double-breasted jacket, a thick woolen Jersey over a flannel shirt with a brightly coloured cotton or poplin neckerchief tied at the throat.

Corduroy trousers with drop-fronts, heavy leather boots, and either a cloth cap or a trilby hat completed his outfit. Fixed working hours did not exist for him. He started his day whenever he awoke, had a meal when an opportunity occurred, his finishing time was when the job in hand finished.

He earned enough for his needs, and never bothered counting the hours, but simply lived one day at a time.

An acquaintance of mine once said to me "Oh they're just a lot o' watter Gipsies". that may have been true, but their passing like that of the heavy boat-horses that hauled their boats, leaves a blank that has not been filled, but this is progress and we cannot stop it.

With the approach of 1921 came the realisation that in a few more months I would be leaving school to start work. In common with most schoolboys looking forward to leaving school it seemed a long time to me.

So I think that it will be a good idea to put on record a few things that must seem both bizarre and amazing to the present day reader of this work.

For instance the General Practitioner of that time did not receive a Capitation fee from the National Health Service to cover a whole family as he does at the present time.

A doctor only received a few shillings per year for each patient over sixteen years of age, who was in paid employment, and had two years contributions to the Health Insurance fund credited to him.

No self-employed persons qualified for this, nor did any children under sixteen years of age. So a doctor had to charge these persons as private patients.

Any persons who were handicapped, disabled, or permanently un-

employed could qualify, so these persons had to apply to the Poor Law (the Board of Guardians) for medical treatment.

In a working class district where money was scarce, this often meant that a doctor's bill had to be paid in weekly instalments.

Some doctors were keen for their money and insisted on being paid for each visit. Some however were more lenient, and of these latter Doctor Clough a Hunslet doctor is still remembered with affection.

He went on his round riding a rusty old bicycle, his black bag strapped on the carrier and his old black suit faded with age. He never refused to treat a patient, and never pressed a bill for payment.

"Give me sixpence a week, give me what you can afford" he would say. He lived and died a poor man, in fact his neighbours often gave him and his housekeeper a meal at mid-day.

Doctor Groves lived in a big old house in Church Street, and went on his round on a tricycle with a carrier at the back. He dressed in a black frock coat and a black trilby hat.

There was also Doctor Shaw who lived in Dewsbury Road and rode about in a pony and trap, looking very dignified and professional.

The fastest of the Hunslet doctors was Doc Rodgers. At that time a motor cycle was something of a rarity on the roads, and the type that Doctor Rodgers rode was a classic of its kind. An urgent call to his surgery at Thwaite Gate would bring the competent no-nonsense doctor on his Indian Scout in a few minutes dressed in waterproof leggings with cap and goggles.

Not surprisingly, as his home and surgery were so near to it,

calls to bad accidents at Leeds Steel Works in Pepper Road were frequent, and often required all his skill as a "physician and surgeon" as the brass plate on his door stated.

To return briefly to the motor cycle topic. Although there were other makes of machines on the market at the time, two of them stood out in a class of their own, the Indian Scout and the Harley-Davidson. Of course the Villiers, Norton, A.J.S, etc were about also, but the two first mentioned were easily the outstanding ones.

I am not well versed in cylinder capacity and horse-power, but I think they must have been about 500cc. In conversation with a motor cycle fan many years later I mentioned the Indian Scout to him. "That wasn't a motorbike! He exclaimed. "It was a lethal weapon!"

Another well known Hunslet character was Mr. Atkinson. His shop was opposite Hunslet Lane Police Station, near the Swan Junction. He described himself as a medical herbalist, and he had three diplomas to show his qualifications.

His shop had a large window inside which hung bunches of dried herbs and roots, together with bunches of tallow candles and garlick. The window bottom was partitioned off to hold boxes of various dried roots, barks, and even malt and hops.

There was no back to the window, so the presiding genius Atkinson himself, could be seen moving about inside the shop.

His dress was as mysterious as the contents of his shop. He always wore a long black coat like a warehouse coat buttoned up to the neck, black trousers and carpet slippers, and on his head he wore a black smoking cap like a pillbox with a tassel on top.

The inside of the shop was just as mysterious as the wind

ow display was. along the back wall behind the counter were two long shelves on which were rows of blue and white jars with lids, each one labeled with the name of the contents.

These were of course more herbal preparations, and underneath these shelves were two rows of drawers containing even more things in packets such as (among other things).

Black Peppercorns, White Peppercorns, Cayenne Pods, Cinnamon, Cloves, Coriander, Turmeric, Curry Powder, (about three different kinds of curry powder). I often went there for curry which my father liked, or spices which my mother used, or linseed and Black Spanish to boil for cough cure.

He lived on the premises using the two upstairs rooms as his living quarters. The back kitchen behind the shop was used as both his consulting room, and a place for preparing and mixing his herbal remedies using the old style pestle and mortar to pound things to powder.

Many children were somewhat frightened of Atkinson, but actually he was a very quiet, polite man always ready to give advice.

Shortly before his death Taylor's Cash Chemists bought his business, and closed the shop ready for alterations to suit their own trade and this resulted in a rather bizarre occurrence.

On the day of his funeral work was started on clearing out all the stock and other unwanted items. It was a bright spring afternoon in 1929, and as the cortege passed the shop, the pile of herbs etc was burning steadily on the spare ground behind the shop.

A blue cloud of aromatic smoke like incense blew across the road. So the hearse with the remains of Mr. Atkinson in his

coffin inside it was literally smoked as it took him to the cemetery on his last journey.

Many of the old home made remedies for various ills were in common use at that time. A common remedy for chest troubles was brown paper spread with warm tallow laid on the chest with another one on the back below the shoulder blades. These were held in position by a strip of flannel fastened with a safety-pin.

If the patient was in bed, a linseed poultice made with ground linseed mixed like a pudding with boiling water and spread on a cloth was placed on the back. For children going to school, and often grown-up's too, rubbing with Oil of Wintergreen or Camphorated Oil was usual. For Whooping Cough allowing the child to breath the fumes of boiling pitch (used by paviers to pour between the setts when paving a road) was considered very helpfull. For colds or any chest trouble, to breath the steam from a heap of stable manure was very beneficial.

For all chills or colds in the stomach my mother kept a bottle of a composition made by simmering Cinnamon, Cloves and Cayenne pods in water with a tablespoonfull of Black Treacle.

A tablespoonfull of this in a cup of warm water when going out or going to bed gave a feeling that a torchlight procession had just gone down ones throat.

For any cough she simmered half a pound of whole linseed with half an ounce of Black Spanish in two pints of water. I used to eat the cooked linseed as well.

For a common cold a large Spanish onion cooked whole after peeling and sticking cloves into it, in one and a quarter pints of milk. Then you ate the hot onion and drank the milk before going to bed at night.

I often had this and the Linseed and Spanish, and liked them in fact whenever she cooked a rabbit she always put an onion stuck with cloves in the pan with it.

For a sore throat three drops of Friars Balsom on a teaspoon-full of sugar, or three drops of Paraffin (lamp oil) allowed to dissolved slowly in the mouth was a common remedy.

There were also a lot of weird cures for all sorts of ailments. They had been handed down from previous generations and surprisingly a lot of people believed in the effectiveness of them.

For instance one would not catch a cold if a small piece of roast mouse was wrapped in a bit of muslin and hung round the neck on a piece of knitting wool, and worn day and night!

A piece of mouse cooked in pastry like a pasty would cure whooping cough if eaten by the child. Also a small raw potatoe carried in a mans trouser pocket would prevent him having any form of rheumatism.

This later belief has persisted among many old people even at the present day.

The building of new council houses and the demolition of slum property had been started in 1919 immediately after the war, but for some unexplained reason, a lot of really bad old property escaped demolition simply because it stood on private land.

So because the councils concerned did not have the necessary authority at that time to take over those properties, the occupants were not rehoused for many years afterwards.

I will just outline two such cases, but they were typical of many more as I found out in my later wanderings all over the country later.

A narrow strip of land separating the canal from the river extends from Knostrop Cut and to Fleet near Woodlesford,

In several places this strip is not many yards wide, and it is the part from Thwaite Mills to a point opposite the Copper Works wharf to which I shall refer now.

About 250 yards from Thwaite Mills there was a row of eight cottages called Dandy Row. These cottages housed the workpeople at Thwaite Mills. Although the proprietor of the mills kept them in good repair, they had neither gas, water, electricity, or sewage.

All drinking water had to be carted from an outside tap at Thwaite Farm, over the swing bridge and along the canal bank, in a barrel on wheels pulled by hand. Each house took turns in bringing water as required. This was no easy task in good weather let alone in winter!

Further down the canal bank opposite the Copper Works wharf, was Bank Houses. These were two very old stone houses. One was occupied by a widow and her son, her husband had been killed in the Great War and they lived on her pension. The other was occupied by a family the father of which was disabled and could not work. His wife two sons and a daughter made up that household such as it was.

At some time in the past some "wit" had christened Bank Houses "Teacake Farm" and the name had stuck among the boatmen at least.

Although they lived less than two hundred yards from the works at the opposite side of the canal they were well and truly isolated.

The Aire & Calder Navigation owned the land and allowed them all to live there rent free, but they did not maintain the property or provide any services. Like Dandy Row the only sanitation was a country style "Privvy" at the bottom of the garden

and again like Dandy Row they had to bring their drinking water from Thwaite Farm, in a barrel on wheels. In both cases the only drainage was an open ditch behind the houses running into the river. To bring water was a round journey of a mile there and back, and shopping from the nearest shops at either Stourton or Thwaite Gate meant a journey of almost two miles from "Teacake Farm".

However although they were literally "squatters" those six people had mastered the art of survival. For instance they had an ingenious way of solving the fuel problem.

The Rothwell Haigh coal staithe on the opposite side of the canal had a "Flat" as they were called (most of the staithe had one) it was like a flat bottomed box about ten feet long by ^{five} ~~four~~ feet wide and a foot deep, like a raft with sides on.

It was kept moored at the staithe, and its purpose was for the men to bring empty boats across from the opposite side to load with coal at the staithe. It was propelled by paddling with a shovel or a pole, or whatever was handy.

The sons at "Teacake Farm" put it to good use to "fish" coal out of the canal. This was done by fastening a large mesh riddle to a short boathook with strong wire.

With the flat moored to the bank by its chain, the person in the flat scooped down into the water which was about eight feet deep. By bringing the riddle carefully back to the surface the thin sludge ran through the riddle leaving the pieces of coal to be emptied into the flat.

It didn't take very long to dredge a sackfull of good coal up from the bottom, because when the bottom doors of the wagons were dropped allowing the coal to fall into the chute (or "Spout")

as it was called), many sizeable pieces bounced over the sides and into the water. So when two or more boats were loaded in a day needing anything up to sixteen ten ton wagons, many pieces missed the boat and dropped into the water.

The widows son "Digger" and the eldest son next door took turns at dredging for coal, and this plus the odd buckets of small coal and dust swept up in the holds of the empty coal boats together with driftwood, ensured a fire that was kept burning day and night.

The girl at the first house had a speech defect and was unable to form words properly. Yet none of the schools for handicapped children would accept her because Bank Houses didn't pay rates to either the West Riding County Council, or Leeds City Council.

Nor could she go to the school at Stourton because she was inarticulate and could talk! Which goes to show that "passing the Buck" and turning a blind eye, are not evils of modern officialdom alone, they both existed many years ago.

I found out later in my travels, that there were many places isolated and literally forgotten by Authority all over Britain, albeit they were mostly on private land.

While on the subject of houses off the beaten track I will digress to mention an incident that occurred during the last winter before I left school to start work.

In a field well back from the Wakefield Road, at the foot of Bell Hill stood a single cottage. In it lived the local midwife with her husband and their son, both of whom worked for the market gardener on whose land it stood. This was the same midwife who had brought me into the world thirteen years previously.

The hillside in front of the cottage was a large grass field which stretched over the top of the hill. When this slope was covered with snow it was very popular with the local youths because it provided a two hundred yards toboggan run.

One Saturday morning one of my mates brought his home-made sled and we went to Bell Hill. After a good snowfall on the Friday night, and followed by a frosty morning, the slope was in excellent condition, so after one or two short runs we went right to the top to get a longer run, and we did!

We shot down the slope at great speed, but when we got to the cartroad at the bottom we couldn't stop. Fortunately the garden gate was open and we managed to steer ~~it~~ through it and across the garden.

Mrs. Garside was baking and the door was wide open, so the pair did stop at last, albeit underneath the kitchen table!

What the good lady said was very much to the point. We didn't stop to argue, but fled hurriedly sledge and all. Surely I must be the only youth ever to deliver himself back to the midwife at that!

Often there were things happening that were never intended to be funny, but they eventually ended up being comical. One such instance was that of two shops near Suspension Bridge.

They were next to each other at the end of a row of back-to-back houses. One was an eating house, or "Coffee Shop" as they were usually called, and the other was the office of a funeral director.

On his window (a large plate-glass one) was an elaborate sign which stated that the proprietor was a joiner and undertaker.

The coffee-shop window simply had the menu stood in the window bottom for passers-by to read. Over the windows of both

shops a wide black fascia board ran which carried the following notice in the same bold letters in unbroken succession.

"Breakfasts, Dinners, Teas. Meals All Day. Funerals Promptly Attended To. Day And Night Service".

In spite of all my exploratory wanderings I still went into the Steel Works, and on one such occasion when I went into the Bessemer plant to see my father, the chief chemist was there.

He asked Father if he thought that I was interested in chemistry, and suggested that when I left school I should apply in writing for work as a laboratory assistant.

However as things turned out later I didn't get that opportunity, because in August 1921 Leeds Steel Works closed down.

At the time many people said that the colliers strike of April 1921 was to blame for the recession that followed, but in fairness to the colliers, the truth was that British exports had been falling off since early 1920. Also the demobilised servicemen had swelled the labourforce to a point where there were far more workmen than jobs.

As the universal fuel in industry was coal the miners were hit by the slump, but all the basic trades like Iron, steel and heavy engineering felt the pinch as well. All wage rates had dropped, and all branches of engineering had agreed to big wage reductions in the hope that this would result in more work because of cheaper production, but it didn't.

After a few days the big users of coal and coke like forges, blast furnaces, steel works etc had to stop work to conserve whatever stocks they had. So with production stopped, all the workers except a skeleton staff were laid off. Priority for any fuel supplies available was given to hospitals, gas and electricity works and of course the railways.

Everybody needed fuel for heating water, baking, and cooking, so every bit of coal, wood, cinders, or indeed any burnable material was carefully collected to burn in the firegrates.

This brought me (like many more children) another spare time occupation, namely "Coal Scrattin'". In effect it meant going to any tip, or any place where bits of coal, coke, cinders, or wood might be found, and sorting through the discarded waste material for fuel.

As most of these tips (particularly pit tips) were on private land, one had literally to "dodge the Bobby" because the local policeman would come on his bicycle and take the name of anyone he could catch on the site.

Apart from the fact that one was trespassing there was always the danger that someone would start a slide by digging into the spoil heap or tip, in which case a person could be literally buried alive!

So provided the weather was fine, as soon as I came home from school I put on a pair of old trousers, quickly ate a slice of bread and dripping, had a drink of tea and set out to rendezvous with Dad according to instructions.

I took with me my soapbox barrow on pram wheels containing a sack and my shopping bag with a parcel of dripping-and-bread and a bottle of cold tea.

Usually it was at the Parkside tip, it belonged to Middleton Colliery, but it was a new tip not more than a year old in 1921, and nowhere more than ten feet thick. It had another advantage, namely the fact that the police rarely went there.

On the other hand, the old Middleton Colliery tip, the "Big Tip" as it was known, was over a hundred feet high and in full view of both pit yards. It was also on the Middleton "Copper"s

beat. It was also much more dangerous because it had been burning for many years, and it was red-hot inside.

The Parkside tip could be picked by digging out a hole and sorting the spoil, but there was a snag! If you left your hole someone else would get in to it, then you lost it. So if it was a good hole, that is if it had plenty of bits of coal and "Johnnies" the later being burnable but slatey and dirty, one left a reliable mate in the hole when he went away anywhere.

If one didn't take this precaution someone else would "Jump" the claim in Wild West fashion.

Another form of fuel found was an occasional "Busted" prop, i.e. a broken pit-prop, or perhaps a couple of "Lids" or "Foot Blocks". These were respectively slabs of hard wood to put on top and underneath the wooden pit-props when knocking them up to support the roof at the face.

Chapter.3.

The Last of The Schooldays.

As one might expect with the pits idle all the coal boats were laid up, but of course all the other forms of general cargo were being carried as usual on the waterway. The A & C.N. canal tugs ran their towing service as usual, towing both their own boats and those owned by other people.

In the same way my old friend George and the sand boat "Self Help" carried on as usual also, loading sand at Rothwell Haigh staiths and taking it to the Corporation wharf at Leeds. So when it was possible I met him.

It was on one of these trips that I got to know about another form of cargo carried on the waterways. I had seen boats moored in a certain part of the New Dock Basin at Clarence Road, and I had often wondered what their job was.

One day at the Whitsuntide holiday I spotted Georges boat "Dropping Down" from Leeds Bridge (that is allowing the boat to drift along with the flow of the river guided by a long boat-hook) so I went round by the road and under Crown Point Bridge to meet him. He passed me the end of the horse line and I helped him by pulling as I walked back along the bank.

As we came into the Leeds Lock but one of these boats was just coming out of the basin to go down the lock, so we went into the lock with him.

George and I closed the top gates, and as the horsemarine was already there (the man in charge of the horse was called the "Horsemarine"), he opened the ~~sluice~~ sluice and they opened the bottom gates so I went onto Georges boat.

George had already had a word with "Gadge" Firth the horsemarine and had given him 5 shillings (25p), so with our line

"Hung-onto" the other boat we set out for Thwaite gate and eventually the staiths to load sand.

Gadge's mule (incidentally the only mule I ever saw hauling a boat) hauled their loaded boat and our empty one with no apparent effort at all.

On the way down I remarked that the other boat was loaded with manure, to which George replied that this was the regular work that the other boatman did. He told me that Johnny (the owner of the other boat) had a contract with the Leeds Markets Committee to take away the manure and waste material from the Markets and the Public Abattoir.

He had two boats, that one called the "Ambition", and another one the "Margaret". They could each carry about 80 tons, and they always laid in the same place in the Clarence Road basin, because the big Corporation "Muck" wagons could tip their loads of market waste and "Slaughter Muck" into the boats at the wallside nearest the gateway.

Johnny worked one boat, and his son Ernest worked the other one, and they delivered the manure to farmers in the Selby area.

Each boat carried about a full hold of the rather odouriferous cargo which was discharged by forking it into barrows which were then wheeled along planks onto the bank at an appointed place for the farmer concerned.

Because of the fact that the cargo consisted of both vegetable and other matter such as intestines, inedible offal, animal droppings, plus straw and sawdust, it is not surprising that rats found the "Muck Boats" a very convenient source of food.

For this reason both Johnny and Ernest both wore leather leggings when working cargo, as also did the farm labourers who helped to unload it (they usually tied their trouser bottoms

with string) because no-one wants a rat bolting up their leg.

After emptying the boat would sometimes load at a sand quarry with a fine red sand for plastering, to bring to Leeds for a firm of sand merchants in the Clarence Road basin.

When potatoes, carrots, or swedes were available at the farms Johnny would buy several tons and sell them at the Basin to anyone on a cash-and-carry basis if they provided their own sacks. Because of this the basin at Clarence Road became known as the "Tattie Basin".

Another anti-social chore was pumping the biggewater out of the ~~muck~~ muck boats. As these boats had open holds of necessity, any rain which fell soaked through the cargo and seeped into the bilges. So it had to be pumped out by the hand pumps, and as the floor (or "Dennings") of the cabin was directly over the sump the flavour was always in evidence.

Although the deck and the gunnels and all were swilled down, and the return cargo was an odourless one, the memory lingered on especially in warm weather.

One noticeable effect of this that no other boats ever tied up alongside a "Muck Boat" particularly those that anyone lived on!

I never knew how long Johnny Spence had carried on that trade before I discovered it in 1920, but I do know that both Gadge and his mule were still hauling boats in the late 1930s.

I have no idea how old the mule was, and nobody seems to ~~know~~ know how long a mule can live, but I do know that that particular one had the Government's broad arrow brand on its rump.

It was a two days journey from Leeds to West Haddlesey, so it was necessary to stop and stable ones horse half way. Every lock had stabling for the boat horses, so these journeys along

the waterway were divided (by mutual agreement) into stages to divide the distance evenly as possible.

Often time was lost at locks, or when there was extra water (after heavy rainfalls) which slowed progress. Much of the Navigation is open river and floodwater meant delay particularly travelling upstream.

As must be obvious to the reader with two boats, one horse and horseman could not work night and day, so it was necessary to hire another horse and man temporarily. In which case Johnny would contact say "Flash Jack", "Piggy", "Kendal Jack" or any available horseman to do a stage from Leeds or wherever, because the same applied from West Haddlesey.

In a like manner if Gadge and Jenny the mule didn't have a job on any particular day, someone could hire them for the day.

In passing let me say that although mules have been notorious throughout the centuries for their stubborn perversity and bad temper, yet their hardy toughness has made them able to work and survive in conditions that would kill a horse twice their size.

It seems as if the stubborn will of a mule makes it refuse to accept that it cannot do a job.

The days of horse haulage have long passed into history, but in my mind's eye I can still see Jenny the mule walking (No mule ever hurries) at a steady two or three miles an hour.

At the end of the day it looked no more tired than in the morning as it picked its sure-footed way as lightly as a dancer without a stumble, while a yard or two behind plodded the imperturbable Gadge with his hands behind his back, and with either a hand-rolled cigarette in his mouth or a piece of twig, a perfect pair, reliable and unruffled.

So the days went by until in July the pit strike was over, and the colliers went back to work financially much worse than when they had struck work three months earlier.

In the weeks that followed, the plain truth of the trade position was evident to everyone, recession had begun, the slump was here to stay. Many old established firms closed down completely never to re-open again.

In the case of many family owned businesses that had relied on traditional methods with the attitude that "what was good enough for my father is good enough for me", it was the end of the road. Leeds Steel Works was that type of firm also, after only a few weeks working to get out the last remaining orders in their books, they too shut down putting 2,600 men out of work. The Bessemer Steel plant never did re-open.

Of the three shafts and the drift mine at Middleton Colliery two shafts closed putting 800 men out of work, and leaving only the drift and one shaft working.

That and other pits such as the Waterloo Main (Garden) pit, and Rothwell Haigh (Beeston) or Bell Hill, pit that took their workforce from the Hunslet area, closed never to re-open again.

However, just as I had resigned my self to the thought that I should have to spend another year at school, because an Act of Parliament had been passed raising the leaving age to 14 in 1922, a local engineering firm wrote to our school for two boys to learn coremaking in their foundry.

Myself and another boy were picked, and told to go to the works at once. This I did readily, because like most Acts it had a "Loophole" in it. One clause stated that if one had a job to go to, if one was 13 before the end of the midsummer term, then one could leave to take that employment.

Of course, like most other schoolboys, I was completely happy to be leaving school and joining the workers. So when I along with a boy from another school were accepted to work at the firm I walked home at 12 o'clock "On Air".

My father raised no objection, his only comment was "Well if they're satisfied with you, and you're satisfied with them, that's all that matters lad".

The firm was an old established one with a good reputation as employers, and a reputation for good workmanship too. To my mind things were just right, because if I hadn't found a job, as my birthday was in September I would have had to stay on at school for another seven months, which didn't appeal to me at all.

I am hurrying on too fast, so I must return to my interview in the Time Office of the Airedale Foundry that Friday morning armed with a letter from my Headmaster at school.

I duly presented myself at the time office of the Airedale Foundry. the timekeeper took it and saying to me "wait there" he went through a door into the inner office.

While he was away I was standing there gazing round at the things on the walls, such as a big calendar advertising "Kal-amazoo Loose Leaf Books", and next to it was large blackboard with red lines ruled across it. on this board were written messages in chalk.

One of these memo's read: "put back 42 and wait instruction". I turned this over in my mind, and as I have always had a habit of reversing phrases, and particularly numbers I was thinking: "42-24, 24-42". Just as I was thinking this the time keeper returned and me my age and date of birth.

Without thinking I replied: "42nd of September I'm thirteen now Mister". Looking at me in surprise he said "Say that again lad". So I replied "Forty-second of September 1908 Mister".

Opening the door of the inner office he called out: "Mister -----, we have acquired a boy who was born on a day which does not exist!"

By that time I had realised that I had got it back-to-front, so with a red face when he turned back to me and said; "Now try again, and get it right this time". I replied "Twenty fourth of September Mister".

He then gave me the following instructions: "Now don't forget! Next week is Bank Holiday week, we don't work that week, you'll start work on the following Monday morning at half-past seven, and if you aren't in by a quarter-to-eight the doors shut and you can't come in that day".

"Take this brass check with your number on, and when you come to work you take the board from the rack where your number is, and hang the check where the board was on the hook".

"Now don't forget will you? Take this note to your Headmaster, and we work a week-in-hand so you won't have any wage to draw the first week, you'll get your first weeks wage on your second Saturday morning, and don't lose your time-check!"

I understood the check and time-board system, because the Steel Works used the same old fashioned system and I had seen my father make his board out. The board about half-an-inch thick, and six inches long by four inches wide, had to be rubbed with a lump of chalk first, then rubbed with your hand to smooth it.

Then you wrote your name and number at the top in pencil, and underneath that the job or jobs that you were doing and the number of hours taken on them.

It was a cumbersome time-wasting method, and even in 1921 most large firms had punch-clocks and time-cards to record a workmans time in and out of the works.

As I took the note back from Kitson's to my school master I knew that this was the last of my schooldays, the dividing line for better or worse to come.

Looking back over those eight years at St. Joseph's and some of the things that made up a schoolboys day, it was all caning, boxed ears, and "Telling Off", although I suppose I was as big a teachers headache as any other boy would be.

The rule was for those boys who were quieter and (presumably) more diligent to occupy the back rows of desks, while the more talkative and less attentive one were at the front under the eye of the teacher.

These desks with their shelf underneath (originally for books) were also the depository for many things which were not in the curriculum, and included much contraband in the form of things that one was not allowed to bring into school.

For instance, next door to the infants school gateway there was a small shop which sold cheap "Goodies" for children. They were not "High Class Confectionery, but compared with to-days values that shop window was a "Gold Mine". If one considers that the "Penny" had a less value than a half of a Decimal pence ~~it~~ its value in "Goodies" was almost limitless.

One penny would buy 24 aniseed balls, a "Doctor Tanner Stick" wrapped in silver paper and smelling of cough mixture, or two ounces of such things as cough drops, mint lozenges, cocoanut ~~of~~ candy, dolly mixtures, jelly babies, wine gums, or a host of other desirable sweets.

For a half-penny one could buy an everlasting strip. It was a flat strip of soft toffee about a foot long, $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch wide ~~long~~, and an eighth-of-an-inch thick. Or a liquorice stick, liquorice bootlaces, or a liquorice telephone, or 4 small, hard Spa-

nish Juices. These were about two inches long and a $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch thick, they were hard and brittle and you could suck the bits for ages. If nothing else tempted you, you could buy a ha'porth of treacle toffee, sticky and broken small in the shopkeepers hand with a small iron toffee hammer, and wrapped in a bit of newspaper. Or perhaps a ha'porth of tiger nuts, or monkey nuts (pea nuts).

Having bought (after much deliberation) these much liked goodies, you returned to school black lipped, sticky fingered, trying to lick your digits clean then wiping them on your coat sleeve or your jersey.

Chewing gum was usually stuck underneath the lapels of ones coat, or underneath the desk top for future use.

This method of storage was frequently thwarted by the teacher deciding to change the order of the scholars in the rows of desks, especially if the talkative, or the inattentive ones had been suitably subdued. Or perhaps the back rows had become more talkative, or their eyes were not focused in the right direction.

On the command "Class stand" accompanied by the crack of "sir's" cane on his desk top, there would be a frantic, but furtive ~~the~~ fumbling under ones desk because this usually meant a re-shuffle for everybody.

In my own case I spent more time in the front three rows than I did in the back ones with the "Trusties". Yet I was not alone in that respect, and on one occasion at least I was can- instead of ~~the~~ the real culprit!

On that occasion a woman teacher had come into our classroom to borrow something, and as she turned to leave she said in reply to a question by our own teacher, "Oh well I suppose it was a case of "Noblesse Oblige" you know!"

The boy next to me nudged me and said in a stage whisper, "Hey Army, whats a nobless obligate?" I whispered "Sherrup" but too late the eagle eye had spotted us, and I was called out to receive three on the hand, and all our row were warned.

Needless to say that the others on the row told the culprit a thing or two at playtime.

Behind the Old Boys school was Rhodes's Mill, and behind our toilets only a five foot high stone wall divided our schools playground from the mill yard. It was easy to climb the old rough stone wall and drop down into the yard, run round from the yard out of the gate, and past the caretakers house back into the school yard.

If the bell rang before you could get back to the playground, then you were in for another "wiggling" when you went in after everyone else with weft bobbins from the mill in your pockets.

They were excellent pea shooters, but if the teacher saw then he confiscated your ill gotten gains. Truly there is no peace for the wicked! Also the the caretaker took a very dim view of us running backwards and forwards across the pavement in front of his house.

Actualy we were forbidden to go outside the school gates during school hours, the same prohibition applied to going through the passage past the infants school to go to the sweet shop.

However as is usually the case with rules of that kind, it is much easier to make them than it is to ensure that they are kept by everybody all of the time!

Since the wicket gate beside the main gates had to be open all day it would have been impossible (unless someone had stood at each gate all playtime) to prevent some of us dodging in or out occasionally.

On the last day at school before "Breaking Up" for the annual Bank Holiday, all the classes cleared the class rooms of everything not required in the next term. All the rubbish which included a lot of waste paper, was carried out of each class room and dumped into the old type midden in the ground beside the Boys toilets.

That particular day, my last day at school, in the afternoon when the bell rang for playtime we went as usual to the toilets for a "quicky" before getting down ^{to} whatever was in mind.

"Jacky" a notorious rebel, made a cigarette with a bit of soft paper and a discarded fag end. The midden was covered by a big thick wooden lid with a small hinged lid in the middle for everyday use.

Having made his cigarette Jacky lit it with a deftly purloined match, then lifting the lid he dropped the matchstick into the midden and closed the lid again to conceal the evidence. In the meantime myself and two more lads kept watch for approaching authority.

The match must have still been burning when he dropped it in, but we didn't have time to investigate because just then the bell rang for everyone to fall in. So with solemn faces we filed back into our classroom as usual, shuffled into our seats and sat down.

By this time the burning paper etc was creating clouds of smoke, which could be seen through the window. Some one raised his hand, and with usual "Pleasir" told the teacher that something was burning outside.

Hulligan the caretaker came at once to put out the fire, but it took quite some time and several buckets of water to douse it effectively.

Although inevitably questions were asked the unwritten law prevailed, no-one knew, and no-one "Squeaked" (or "Split") even if they did know what had happened.

On another occasion one of the monitors came back early after lunch with some Carbide of Calcium. At that time many bicycles had acetylene lamps instead of oil or batteries, so getting a little was not difficult.

Each teachers desk had three inkwells to dip ones pen into, one contained red ink, one blue, and one black. Our "Sir" at the time was not very popular, so Big Scully the monitor put a small bit of Carbide into each inkwell and replaced the cork that closed it tightly.

When carbide is wetted it gives off acetylene gas, so when our teacher pulled out the corks to mark the register a coloured stream of froth which smelt like bad eggs or bad fish ran down the desk top and dripped onto the floor.

After the mess had been cleaned up and something like order again restored in the classroom, everyone was questioned about who was the cause of it, but as the Headmaster said, "It appears to be the work of Mister Nobody". So the whole class of 33 had to stay in all playtime that afternoon.

These were obviously only two or three examples of the many pranks that we "Got Up To" during my schooldays, and I myself was no saint. On the other hand if anyone can show me a boy who has never been either mischievous or in trouble, then I would say that boy was abnormal!

As with all other things in life, ones schooldays have to end at some time, and mine ended when "Sir" gave the order: "Class Dismiss" that afternoon in August 1921.

Like all other boys about to start work on their first job

I was all eagerness to enter the grown-up world of the workers, so it is perhaps as well that we cannot see what lies ahead when we switch from phase to another

The ensuing week was Hunslet Feast week, the week when (in keeping with most other towns and cities all the local works shut down for their annual weeks holiday. Nowadays "Holidays With Pay" is the accepted rule in all industries, but in 1921 that didn't apply. If one didn't save up beforehand for a holiday, he couldn't afford one because he got no wage for the Holiday week, so it was literally a "Feast Before a Famine"!

However this didn't prevent me going to the Feast with its roundabouts, swings, coconut shies, shooting galleries, side shows and the host of stalls selling all manner of things from brandy-snap and nuts to chipped potatoes, peas and pies, shell fish, and tripe and cow-heel.

These big local fairs with their steam engines, blaring organs, steam whistles, smoke and dust, are now a dying attraction, and the big traction engines hauling their wagons and providing both electric current and light, are now only to be seen at rallies and museums.

So my last schoolboy week passed and I prepared to go to work on the following Monday, little knowing or even thinking about what might lie ahead for me.

Chapter.9.

Long Trousers-Longer Days.

The August Bank Holiday over, and Hunslet Feast with it's fun and showmen gone for another twelve months I duly presented myself at the Time Office of Messrs Kitson's Airedale Foundry to start work.

I was fully equiped with a newspaper parcel of bread and dripping wrapped ina big red handkerchief and a big bottle of cold tea to drink. Dressed in my first pair of long trousers and a pair of strong working boots i fet at least a year older and a foot taller when I arrived almost ten minutes early.

Taking my board off the hook marked 588, and left my brass check in it's place. Then I went up tp the window and asked which way I had to go to the Foundry, but by now the other lad starting work with me came in and took his board out, then all the other men started to come in as well.

The man in the time office called out to a broad shouldered man in his thirties to take us up to the foundry with him so we both followed him. The foundry was at the far end of the works, and as we walked our guide told us the different departments as we passed them.

The long wide passage, or road, was covered by a glass roof, and it had a single railtrack down the middle to allow a railway wagon to come down it to the bottom of the yard if necessary.

The man told us that this was called the "Arcade". It was paved and gave access to all the other departments, which were arranged on each side of it, such as the Plumbers Shop, Machine Shop, Fitters, Joiners, Pattern Makers, etc at right angles to the road, with the Stores next to the Ambulance Room right at the bottom of the yard near the time office.

At the top of the Arcade there was a wide open space with a wall behind it and at each end. This was called the Landing and it was also the Fettling Shop and it was raised about four feet above the railroad which ran close up to it, so that when the side doors or the side of a wagon was lowered the wagon bottom was almost level with the Fettling shop floor.

Fettlers are the men who trim, clean, grind and clean out all the cores and sand from the rough castings made in a foundry, and our guide was a fettler so he left us here.

Now a big red-haired man had caught up with us and he took us through a door into the Foundry (or Casting Shop as it was called by foundrymen. "Ginger Jack" as he was called by the workmen was the foundry labourer, the man of all unskilled jobs, and he told us more about the running of things in the foundry than anyone else.

He showed us the foreman's office and told us to wait there until the foreman came, and as we waited the foreman came.

He asked us our names then he said: "Wait there a minute" and went up the steps into his office. It was raised above the floor of the shop so that he could see all over his department through the glass sides whenever he wanted to.

Taking off his raincoat and cap he hung them behind the door and put on a brown warehouse coat and a bowler hat (commonly called a "Billy Cock" or a "Hard Hat") and returning to us he said "Follow Me" and walked smartly down to the bottom end of the shop.

We followed and came to a part at the end of the shop divided from the rest of the foundry by a wooden partition about four-and-a-half feet high. Behind this partition was another one at right angles to it, with benches at each side of it.

Going up to the first man on the first bench, the foreman turned to me and said: "Now this is Andy, he's the charge-hand core-maker. This is the core shop, you stay with Andy and do what he tells you to do". Then he took the other lad whose first name was George to a middle aged man on another bench on the wall-side whose name was Hudson, and told him to work with that man.

A coremaker's job is to make the cores that form the shape of a hollow casting on the inside. The moulder's work is to make the outside shape of the casting in a mould-box by ramming moist sand round a wood, or metal, pattern.

The coremaker makes the cores by ramming fine moist sand mixed with a binding emulsion into a mould of the required shape known as a "Core Box". Like the moulder's job it is skilled work of a specialised nature.

The lads' job in the core shop was to bring prepared sand from the "sandman" to the coremakers that he worked with. On my bench Andy was on my right hand side, and on my left was a quiet rather religiously minded man called "Sammy", and I occupied the bench between them.

George, the other lad did the same service for Hudson and another coremaker called Tommy on his bench.

The "sand Man" was a good-natured chap who whistled cheerfully all day long as he worked. His job was to bring the core sand in his barrow to the corner where he worked. Then after mixing a measured quantity of emulsion mixed with water with the sand, he shoveled it into the "shaker" an oblong sieve shaken backwards and forwards by a crank driven by an electric motor.

These details settled, and hooks found for our coats and "Snap" that is (food) we settled down to our first working day. George was a month or two older than I was, but he had a problem that

he
didn't apply to me. Because he was smaller than I was, had difficulty in reaching over his bench, so he had to stand on a wide box about six or eight inches high, otherwise he settled in nicely with Hudson and Tommy.

About ten o'clock Ginger Jack came down the shop to put coke on the fires in the "stoves" where the cores were dried. He came to Andy and told him that the foreman wanted the two core shop lads in his office. Wiping the sand off our hands we went up the shop to the office and I knocked at the door.

The foreman turned on his stool and called out to us to come in, this we did and stood by the side of his desk our hands behind our backs.

He came straight to the point by asking us our first names, then he said: "Right, now whenever you speak to me, or about me to anyone else I am Mister Sewell-understand? When I speak to you I shall call you by your second names, but when you speak to any of the men, a man is entitled to be called Mister, unless he tells you to use his first name".

Then he went on to tell us the rules of the firm, (or at least that part of which he was in charge). They were simple and sensible enough, such as no throughing things about or to each other, no bad language or cheek to any of the men, no stealing, now smoking under sixteen years of age, etc.

When we returned to our respective benches we were asked ~~what~~ what he had said to us. When we told them they all said: "Yes he always does that with new starters, but he's fair in all ~~the~~ things and he makes no special favourites of anybody".

Then Andy said to me: "Don't forget, if I'm away anytime, no larkin' about because out of his office he can see all round this shop, and he misses nowt! He's religious as well".

One of our jobs was to "Mash" or brew tea for the men who stayed in the foundry at lunch time. For this purpose there were two big old fashioned gas cookers about half way up the the shop, and in order to have these two kettles boiling at 12 o' clock it was necessary to fill them and light the gas cooker at 11 o'clock.

They were big cast iron kettles each holding two gallons, and water had to be carried from a tap behind the door of the urinal, any food that had to be warmed would be put into the ovens about half-past eleven. If Jack the labourer was not too busy, he would light the gas and fill the kettles for us.

The surprising thing was that although Kitsons was (for that period) a progressive firm there were no canteen facilities, and one had to eat at the work bench or any convenient spot, sitting on a box any other handy object!

Yet even so, compared with the rough conditions at Leeds Steel Works which I had seen when I went in there, this was a better organised and forward looking firm.

The head of the firm Colonel Kitson-Clarke was really a very forward looking man. The firm had been in the business of locomotive building since the early 1830's, but like all the rest of the heavy engineering firms they were feeling the trade slump and it's effect on their order books.

Jack told us that when the firm was busy forty men and lads worked in the foundry alone, and although some of them who lived near the works went home for lunch, both the big kettles were always needed to brew the mens tea at lunch time.

However when George and myself started work there, only twenty-five were working in our department, and that number included the fettlers as well as those in the "Casting Shop".

This applied to all the other departments as well, none of the shops had it's full complement of workers. In fact I don't think that Kitson's ever worked flat out again until the firm went on Munitions in the Second World War.

However as a boy leaving school and starting work, none of these things worried me at that time, the all-important thing to me was the fact that I was now a worker. I had on my first first ever pair of long trousers and heavy working boots, and my schoolboy knee breeches (Knicker-Bockers) were discarded for ever. George still had his short school trousers for the first two weeks at work.

In the first quarter of this century the usual and generally accepted leg-wear of a foundryman was "Fustian" or as they were generally known "Moleskin" trousers. They were made of a strongly woven cotton material and lined inside, and instead of side-pockets they had front pockets, with a rule pocket at the right hand side.

So I was not alone with my thick warm moleskins, although out the twenty-odd men and lads in the foundry about half wore cloth trousers, and some wore bib-and-brace overalls.

Two things that I did learn on my first morning at work were that when I had to get up at half-past six a.m to be at work at half past seven, and we didn't leave work until five p.m, it was a much longer day than going to school from 9 till 4.

Also I found that although molten iron is used to make the castings, an iron foundry is often anything but a hot place to work in, especially in the morning.

There was no source of heat except the "Stoves" in which the cores were dried (or rather literally baked), and very little of that heat radiated out into the shop. This was because they were closed by flexible "Roll Up" type metal shutters operated

by pulling an# endless chain.

One thing that I was warned about that when the stoves were closed up, air was cut off and Carbon Dioxide and Sulphur Dioxide fumes accumulated inside. So whenever the doors were opened, one must stand back, and never go inside until the fumes had cleared.

These fumes were caused by two big open fires, one in each stove. The fires were in huge grates made by building thick iron bars into the inside wall backed with fireclay bricks to resist the heat. There was no chimney and each firegrate held about four barrows of coke when full.

At first I was puzzled as to how the fires kept alight all night until seven-thirty next morning, a matter of fourteen hours, but when Ginger Jack explained it to me I understood.

During the day the shutters were left with a gap of about six inches at the bottom to allow air to reach the fires, because no fire can burn without oxygen. So during the day the heat built up inside until it was really hot.

Jacks last job at night was to go in when there was very little fire left in the grate and fill it to the top with coke.

Because there was no chimney there was no draught, and when the shutter was closed the only air that got in was round the sides of the shutter, so the fire just smouldered all night.

Each stove was about about 15ft long by 8ft wide and 8ft high inside and resembled nothing so much as a medieval torture chamber, with no ventilation it could be a lethal chamber as well if care was not taken.

There were iron racks and shelves around the walls, and also iron stands on the floor, and it was on these that cores were placed to dry then one closed the door again.

Still the escaping heat did little to warm the rest of the casting shop because along the ridge of the roof, which was about 30ft high, there were louvres for ventilation.

These were really necessary because when casting was in progress, and the molten iron was poured from the ladle into the moulds, the smoke and hot gases released not only from the molten metal, but also from the red-hot sand and the oily emulsion in the cores rose straight up to the roof.

On my first afternoon in the foundry I was surprised to see the foreman "Casting" (pouring molten metal from the ladle into the moulds) wearing his bowler hat.

On asking I was told that this was standard foundry practice in all iron foundries. The foreman always took the biggest ladle (in this case five tons), and the bowler hat was the traditional headgear of a foundry foreman at that time.

One could see at a glance that the man in the "Hard Hat" was the foreman. There were no protective helmets in use then, so the bowler hat was not just for show, it was also protection against sparks and metal splashes.

A few days later a messenger came to Andy to say that we were both wanted in the Ambulance Room, so George and I duly went.

There was no internal telephone system then so all communication between the Offices and the departments was by messenger, the various "shops" communicated in the same way.

It is perhaps worth mentioning here, that because the Ambulance room was situated against the main gate. So in the case of a serious accident at the opposite end of the works, valuable time would be lost in getting a stretcher and ^{the} Ambulance Man who was also an assistant storekeeper! It would be necessary to travel back the whole length of the works, a round journey

of several minutes, of course every "Shop" had a first aid box.

In our case however it was simply the usual doctors inspection of new boys starting work and only involved the usual examination and questions.

The next time we were sent for a couple of days later, it was to see the managing director Colonel Kitson-Clark in his private office. On that occasion we had to go to the General Office where we had to wait until the bell rang for us to go through into his private office.

He interviewed each of us separately and he was in no way pompous or overbearing but in a fatherly way he told us that he was satisfied with our foremans report. then he gave us a talk on the fact that we were now employed by a firm nearly eighty years old, whose locomotives were known all over the world wherever there was a railroad.

Then he told us that when we had been with the firm for twelve months we could apprentice to our trade, if our parents agreed to it, and he hoped that we would eventually become good tradesmen in keeping with the firms tradition.

As events later came about, I never was apprenticed to that or any other trade. Yet it is debatable whether in view of the long depression years that were to follow, if I would have been any better off in the long term, when so many good tradesmen had to join the "Dole" queues.

In retrospect i don't think that very many school leavers ever settle permanently in the first job they take on leaving school, because rarely if ever does the reality match-up to the image in a teenagers mind.

Although I stayed on at Kitsons for a year, there were several things that made me change my mind about taking up core-making as a permanent job.

Not the least of these snags was Andy the charge-hand, or "Leading Hand" to use the local description of his status in the core shop. I had not been there very long before I realised that he was

not liked by the other workmen in general.

Some time later I was talking to my father about work, and he told me that he knew a moulder at Kitsons and he had asked him what he thought about Andy and the work I was doing.

I liked this moulder because he was good humoured and helpfull and he told my father that I seemed to get on well with everybody. As for Andy he told my father "Andy's a good coremaker, but he knows it and he wants everybody else to know it as well Harry" (my fathers first name was Harry like the moulder whose first name was also Harry).

There is no doubt that if our foreman had been a less vigilant and less keen disciplinarian, Andy would have been a petty tyrant to us lads, and the other apprentices in the foundry.

However Sewell was a hard-headed foreman who ruled his department fairly and without bias and never took back his word once given, and Andy knew that and never overstepped the mark in the shop.

Instead he contented himself with making "Snide" remarks about other men, more particularly if that person happened to be of a religious turn of mind, or a quiet inoffensive type of chap.

This applied to Sam the other moulder on our bench. He was a quiet man in his thirtys and his bench was on my left, while Andy's bench was to my right. So I was directly in line with his sarcastic remarks to Sam, or about Sam.

For instance if he saw Sam speak to me, he would say "Don't let him talk you into going to his chapel". Or on one occasion when he was helping him to carry a heavy core into the stove

to dry he called out loudly:-"Is this your sacrifice to the Lord Sammy?" Sam would just let that kind of remark ride and say nothing at all in reply to it.

I was told that Andy had not been made a charge hand very long when George and myself started work there, and that he had tried to cause trouble for the apprentice moulders, but the ~~old~~ chargehand moulder had told him that any complaints about the lads in his department must be made to him personally, and not to any other person not in charge of them.

It is quite possible that this situation could have carried on indefinitely, if only he had kept his trouble making inside his own department and the casting shop, but finding that no-one in our department would give him that satisfaction, he turned his attention to making trouble in other departments.

However more about that later because there were other reasons why I felt that I didn't "Belong" in Kitsons foundry.

At the end of the second weeks work there I drew my first weeks wage on Saturday morning, but as Father had become unemployed when Leeds Steel Works closed down almost on the week in which I had started work I was the only wage earner now in our household with my 10 shillings (50p) a week.

This meant that our total income with Fathers War pension plus his "Signing On" money, my mothers 5 shillings a week allowance for the loss of my brother, and my 10 shillings, was a little over £2 a week. Although not entirely unexpected, this was quite a big reduction from the wages Father had been used to at the steel works.

On the last weekend of the month, when I took my board off its hook on Saturday morning there was a large aluminium check with it! So I asked what it was for and I was told:-"Oh thats your bonus check-when the clerk brings ~~your~~

the wage packets at eleven o'clock you'll get a bit of bonus as well in another packet".

I did receive a bonus packet which contained a half-crown (12½ p) besides my 10 shillings wage. It was a rule of the firm that everyone including the boys shared in the monthly bonus because all the workers helped in production in one way or another, so all were entitled to share.

The men received £1 or more according to their jobs, a tradesman getting more than an unskilled worker. To a man with a family even £1 was a very welcome addition to the income.

Kitson's was the only firm that I ever worked for out of many, that paid the wages on Saturday mornings. As time went on I found that there were other disadvantages to foundry work besides dirt and fumes. One of these was that coremaking and moulding were both jobs that could not be used in any trade except a foundry, so both of them were what might be called "Dead End" jobs.

Even so, at a time like 1921 when employment was becoming scarcer week by week, if one had a job it was wise to stay in work until another opportunity came your way.

Also I was working for a firm that had been building steam locomotives for many years still using the same methods. Although they made full use of both electricity and compressed air in their working processes.

They had never branched out in any other form of product, but this was typical of many old established firms, they specialised in one product from generation to generation.

In the case of Kitson's Airedale Foundry however the firm not only survived the depression years, but continued in the same ownership until 1949 before being taken over.

One thing that made a welcome break in the otherwise monotonous day standing at the bench making smaller and less complicated cores and listening to Andy's conceited talk (in which I could take no part) was the fact that I was asked (or rather told) to go errands and take messages to other departments or the stores.

I got much more of this kind of work than George, but George didn't mind at all, because the two men that he worked with were much more down-to-earth and better to work with than Andy was, and George would rather stay on his bench than go ~~to~~ errands and take messages.

In general I got on well with the other men and the lads in the other departments with whom I came in contact. As usual ~~in~~ in most workshops there was the leg-pulling, practical joking, initiations etc, but supervision was too keen for much "Horse Play" in working hours.

I never went out of the works at lunch-time from twelve o'clock until one P.M., but stayed in the shop to eat my "Snap" sitting on a box by the stoves with the others who stayed in (Andy always went out). Then in the time left before the bell rang at 1 o'clock I would often go to talk to the fettlers or the crane driver.

We had two fifteen ton S.W.L overhead cranes in the foundry and the crane driver was a middle aged man. He was very methodical, and he always thought carefully before speaking. His name was Bob, and his favourite piece of advice was "Never say anything that you might have to account for afterwards".

There was no yard to the works which surrounded by public roads, so the lads used to kick a ball about in front of the landing at the top end of the Arcade.

Strictly speaking this was against the rules of the firm, but ~~if~~ nobody complained if no glass was broken or any damage done, but Andy was always telling the foremen of one or other of the departments that when he was going out (or coming in up the Arcade) that some of their lads were either playing cric-ket, football, or playing cards or dominoes for half-penny's.

For myself I didn't give him an opportunity because I only watched from the landing, and he couldn't stir much up for George or myself in the shop with a foreman like Sewell in charge of it.

Andy didn't like us talking to people like Jack or Bob, he would say that they weren't skilled men and they couldn't teach anybody anything.

So things went on until August Bank Holiday 1922 came around. We did not go away on holiday that year, and in point of fact, the last time we ever went anywhere on holiday (if that is the right term) was in 1917 just before father was discharged the Army when we went to see him at Newcastle for a week. I never had another weeks holiday until again until 1932.

As I had now worked at Kitson's for 12 months, it was inevitable that the question of apprenticeship arose. I could not be bound apprentice to any trade under the age of 14, now I was 14 I could not be bound apprentice until a written agreement was signed between my parents and the firm.

This procedure had been the normal legal practice for many years, and it was legally binding on all parties concerned.

If the apprentice left his employment or the agreement was broken in any way, his parents must forfeit a sum of money (usually £20). Also the parents must provide the boy with all the tools of his chosen trade, and pay all fees for tuition at evening classes etc.

In his own turn the employer was bound by the agreement to teach the apprentice all of that trade, until he was qualified as a fully fledged journeyman tradesman. The employer could not sack or discharge an apprentice before the seven years training was completed, except for gross misconduct at work or otherwise on his masters property.

When one was apprenticed the wage dropped to three or four shillings a week (in my case it would have 4 shillings and sixpence (22½p) and only increased by a few pence per year.

My father knew this, and he also knew that at any time within the next six weeks before my ~~fourteenth~~^{fifteenth} birthday I would be bringing him a letter regarding apprenticeship.

With that in mind he took me aside and gave me a talk on the subject and asked me if I wanted to stay at the Airedale Foundry, and if not what would I prefer doing.

I think that if I had wanted to learn coremaking under Andy's supervision, he would have done his best for me although it would have meant no small sacrifice for my parents.

They would have had to literally feed and clothe me for nothing besides buying tools and paying 3 shillings and sixpence a week for night school lessons.

This I did not want to do, so I told him so and why saying that I would be in a rut and there was no future in that particular foundry for me. Even so, I didn't dislike engineering and working with metal.

In one respect Father was very broad-minded in the way boys should learn a job of work. He did not believe that because a man had been in one trade all his life, that his son should do the same work whether he liked that trade or not.

He did not agree with the old fashioned dictum that the son

should follow in his fathers footsteps. He only stipulated that every individual should work and earn a living for himself in his own way.

Realy I think that he would have been amazed if I had said that I did want to stay at Kitson's.

After a pause to light his pipe and take a puff at it dad said "Oh well that's settled then, don't say owt 'til they tell you, but be looking for another job for when you leave.

In due course Sewell the foreman sent George and myself and told both of us that our work and our general conduct had been good, so our names had gone forward for apprenticeship.

At the same time he gave each of us a letter to take home to our parents. In a way I felt a bit mean and underhanded by not telling anyone that I should not be staying on, but Andy's comment when I told him dispelled that feeling.

Instead of giving either of us credit for our work, he said that it proved what a good tutor he was! His reaction made me glad that my time in his hands was getting shorter.

I told Ginger Jack at lunch time what Andy had said, and his verdict was straight to the point. "Yes Joe, he likes the idea of having two apprentices to be in charge of. Since he was made leading-hand coremaker he thinks he's king of the castle, but he'll fall lad, he'll fall!"

It would serve no usefull purpose to go into a lot of wearisome detail about the next two or three weeks, but to cut a long story short I met the widow's son "Digger" Brownfoot from Teacake Farm. He told me that he was working at the Copper Works in the Refinery and why didn't I try there for a job.

So I did that and was accepted, so I gave my weeks notice to leave at Kitson's and drew my two weeks wages, and as it was

the end of the month and there for "Bonus Week" I also got my half crown bonus.

It was the biggest wage that I had ever drawn, and in a way I felt rather important, yet at the same time I felt a bit down-cast and apprehensive because I should be working at a big works that I had only seen from the canal bank and I didn't know what kind of work they did there.

In a way it simply emphasized the fact that for better or for worse I was now a worker employed to do whatever work was asked of me by whoever was my boss at the time. Boyhood was now fast receding into the background as only a memory.

XX

Chapter.IO.

Other Jobs-Other Bosses.

A wise man once said;- "In the exchange of jobs the workman changes little behind the name of his master". My father used to put it in another way by saying;- "It doesn't matter whose shilling you spend, you only get the same for it when you take it to a shop, neither more nor less".

He would also add;- "It depends on what you have to do to get that shilling!"

The above quotations just about sum up my own experiences at work. The two things that count most in any job are if you are content in the work you are doing, and the reward you receive for doing it.

I knew that the Yorkshire Copper Works used copper and a lot of coal and coke, but I had no idea what the end product was.

Starting from the Time Office I found that every thing was entirely different to anything that I had ever seen or been told about.

This firm (a large firm) used time cards and punch clocks, and my clock number was 558. I was given a job in the drawing mill on a drawbench working with a man called a drawer.

The firm all kinds of tubes from copper, brass, and all sorts of non-ferrous metal alloys, and my job was to be the "Dogger".

The "Drawer" fed the tube into a die which was the size the finished tube had to be. Then I attached the "Dog" to grip the end of the tube, at the same time hooking the dog into an endless chain which travelled along the drawbench.

It was a monotonous, dirty job because everything including the bench was greasy, but taken all round I found it more interesting than the foundry because there was much more to see.

There were three drawing mills and each of them was much bigger than the foundry at Kitson's, and as they all had glass roofs they were much lighter to work in. There were other differences as well, one was the huge clock which had two faces dominating not only No. 1 mill where I worked, but No. 2, and No. 3 mill also.

There were 18 drawbenches in No. 1 mill, and considerably more than that in each of the other two mills, so the constant smell of hot oil and the endless clatter of tubes and the rumble of machinery made an atmosphere that I had never encountered anywhere before.

Everyone except those employed on a constant process which could not be left, had to clock their cards not only at morning and night, but after the meal break as well.

Another thing that was both new and novel to me was the works Policeman. He was a uniformed policeman of the then West Riding force, and the works was covered day and night, and the policeman on duty had full authority to stop and search anyone leaving the works.

There was also a works canteen, and everyone except those on continuous jobs had to go there for meals. It was divided into three sections, one for men, one for women, and one for the staff.

To reach the canteen one had to pass through the Time Office, and no one was allowed back into the works without clocking in again before starting time.

This was a complete contrast to anything that I had seen at either Kitson's, the Steel Works, or any of the other workshops that I knew about. The Copper Works did have one thing in common with the others. facilities for washing ones hands were conspicuous by their complete absence!

To clean the grease from your hands one kept a rag or a piece of waste soaked in paraffin near the drawbench, and then wiped them on a bit of dry waste.

I had not worked at the Copper Works very long before I had my first eye-witness encounter with sudden death.

Like many other Hunslet "Kids" I had seen corpses brought into the "Dead House" (the Mortuary) at Old Mill Lane or Thwaite Lane. The inquisitiveness of youth made the mortuary a place of gloomy interest, and I had often seen "Floaters" in the river.

In fact most of us knew a widow, a middle aged woman who had the rather macabre job of washing and "laying out" these "Stiffs" on the slab. By standing on someone else's back one could see through a ventilator onto the slab!

Yet I had never been "In At The Death" so to speak before that foggy night. It had been foggy all day and as darkness fell the fog became thicker, so by the time that we were clocking out at five o'clock, it was impossible to see more than four or five yards and we soon lost touch with each other in the darkness.

For the benefit of anyone who cannot remember the days before smokeless fuel and the Clean Air Acts, the smoke from domestic coal fires and factory chimneys turned what would have been a grey or a yellow fog into black "smog" which tasted of soot and made one's eyes smart.

As I walked up the lane towards Stourton I saw a light bobbing along, and as I caught up to it I realised that it was my old friend George the sandboat man. He was carrying a hurricane lamp and he was on his way home after leaving his boat at the staithe.

As I was now working I didn't see George as often, but we had never lost touch, so we walked on together. As we went

through Stourton towards Hunslet the fog was even worse in the built up area, and it was almost pitch dark near the high railway embankment because the old fashioned gas lamps only made small circles of light here and there.

It was here that a motor coach passed us traveling very slowly. Then suddenly there was a shout and the noise of brakes and people running, so George and I crossed the road to where the bus was standing at the end of a street.

In the light of the gas-lamp I could dimly see a cow, and behind the coach we could see a heap. The light from our lamp shone down onto it, it was a man and both the back and the front wheels had run over his head and one hand crushing them to pulp.

As we turned to come away I heard some one say: "He was driving that beast-the bus driver couldn't help running into him".

As for myself, for several days afterwards I couldn't look at the meat in a butchers shop window without shuddering!

A few weeks later I met the foreman pattern maker at Kitson's one evening when I went into Leeds. He was a friendly type of man, and after asking me how I was going on, he told me that Andy the charge-hand coremaker was now a much different man to get on with.

It seemed that he had caused a showdown with the lads only a week or two after I had left Kitson's, by being more than usually offensive about them playing football in the Arcade.

So two days later as Andy came down the Arcade to go out at 12 o'clock, they were laid in wait on the Landing, and as he passed they bombarded him with lumps of clay, handfuls of wet sand, broken cores, and a few choice names that they called him.

Obviously the management wanted to know the cause of the disturbance and uproar in the works.

After the foremen of the departments where the youths concerned worked had told the works manager why the lads had rebelled against Andy, the foundry foreman was sent for and instructed to tell Andy that in spite of the fact that he was a good tradesman, if he didn't leave lads from other departments alone he might cease to be in charge of anything in future.

To return to my work at the Copper Works. I now got a different job instead of working on a drawbench.

One afternoon the mill foreman sent for me to go see him in his office and I wondered why he should want to see me. His office was almost opposite the end of the drawbench that I worked on, was it possible that he had seen me do something that I should not have done?

I knocked at his office door and went in, but in the event I was surprised when he said that because I had worked in a foundry he was sending me to work in the refinery, and I should have to start work at 6 o'clock next morning.

It was a long walk to the Copper Works from where we lived, the distance would be about two miles, so I set out a little after 5 a.m to be in time for 6 o'clock start.

When I arrived at the Time Office the night time keeper was still on duty and he told me that I had a new number, and in future my number would be 166, so I clocked in on 100 to ~~200~~ 200 o'clock and went on into the works.

Turning left instead of right as previously I walked the full length of No. 2 and No. 3 mills along the landing, and then turned right through the Peirce Mill where the night shift was just finishing work, then across the yard into the refinery my destination.

As I had been passing the works previously I had often won-

dered what kind of work was done in the long building with five chimneys that one could see from the canal bank, now I was about to find out for myself.

I knew that it was some kind of a "Casting Shop" but as nobody except those with business in there, and the men who worked there ever went in there, that department was literally "Out-Of Bounds".

So in I went and walked straight down to the furnace that was in use. The furnace gang was just arriving and they told me what my job was to be. I had to stand beside the furnace and open the furnace door for the ladles and close it again as required and take the cans up to the canteen to "Wash²the tea etc for the meal breaks.

This was a twice-a-day ritual because we had a breakfast half-hour at 8 o'clock, and a mid-day lunch hour when casting was finished for that day.

First I had get the "Washings" of tea, coffee, or cocoa mixed with sugar and condensed milk and screwed up in a piece of newspaper. These had to be scraped off the paper into the appropriate cans, then putting the cans on two long sticks which I carried, one stick in each hand with 3 cans at each end of each stick.

On arriving at the canteen which I entered through the Staff door, the cans were filled with boiling water and I then had to carry them back to the refinery again.

After our meal the men in the furnace gang charged-up the the furnace ready for the next day. The smaller hand-fired furnaces held twenty four tons each, and the big Siemens-Marten gas furnace held between 30 and 40 tons.

While charging was in progress my job was to bring fireclay for the ladles, and ganister and loam-clay for sealing the fur-

nace doors with. Also I had to the stores with a barrow for any stores that might be required in the next 24 hours. If there was too many items for me to handle, the shop labourer was sent to help me.

This done and the furnace charged and sealed we washed our hands in the hot water in the "Bosh" where the red-hot billets were cooled when taken out of the moulds when cast. There was a tap for drinking water but no washing facilities.

Then at 3.30 we took the long trek back along the the mills to the time office to clock out before going home. I had seen "Digger" and the gang going home before, when I was working in the mill, now I was one of the "Black Gang" and I knew how the copper billets which I saw in the piercing-mill were made.

We used a considerable amount of powdered charcoal, and this together with mould oil, dust and sweat made us the same colour as colliers, and as we wore clogs to work in people often thought we were as we walked along the road and through the streets home again.

In general I got on very well with the furnace gang, and I always got a three-penny-piece or some "Coppers" from each man for tea mashing, and one of the two ladle-men "Big Jim" a Canadian was my favourite. The other ladle-man was a bad tempered irascible type, and as there was no love lost between "Big Tom" and "Big Jim" Jim was a valuable friend to have about.

By and large I had got the job that suited me and I would have been happy to work in the refinery all the time, but like every other branch of engineering the Copper Works was far from being on full production in 1922.

So much so that one furnace could produce enough billets to last for another six weeks, after only six weeks casting. So I

had to go back to work in the mill until I was needed again in the refinery.

As I was not now regularly working on a drawbench all the time with the same benchman I got quite a variety of jobs to do, this in a way did have some advantages because I didn't become bored by repetition so much.

However there was one disadvantage that made a disadvantage considerable financial drop for me. When I was in the refinery I got about 3 shillings and sixpence (17½p) a week for "Tea Mashing" and I did not get any "tips" in the mills at all.

I had an agreement with my parents about pocket money. My father insisted that any money that I earned for myself apart from my wages I could keep, provided that I gave Mother all my wage which was now 12 shillings a week.

When I got no other money except my wage I only got one shilling and tuppence (7p) a week pocket money, a considerable reduction for me.

So switching over to my leisure time activities, when I had extra perks such as "Tea Money" I was rich enough to go into Leeds to the City Varieties for sixpence (2½p) in the Gallery (commonly called "The Gods") on Saturday night.

For the sum of one shilling (5p) I could have a good night-out with cheap sweets at tuppence for four ounces, or peanuts and raisins, fried fish and chips for 3 pence, and still have a penny left for a tram ride half way home.

Obviously when this opulence was not available, a much cheaper entertainment was called for. The local cinemas were cheap with seats priced threepence, fourpence, and sixpence.

The cheapest seats were at the front nearest the screen, they were long wooden seats, unpadded, and made to tip up backwards.

So for an overall outlay of threepence plus one penny for mint rock, cough drops, or peanuts, one could have two hours of silent Westerns, comedy, or thrillers!

On Saturday afternoons there was a matinee for children, admission was one penny, and this caused it to be called the "Penny Rush". This catered for children under school leaving age, but actually a few undersized or young looking fourteen year olds often sneaked in for a penny.

For this reason the Fireman (or "Doorman") or as he was often called the "Chucker Out" because he was also the "Bouncer", was usually stood beside the box-office window to prevent over age "Nickers In" from nicking in as school children.

I must admit that I have occasionally managed to "Check-it-In" at some "Flicks" where I was not too well known!

At that time empty jam jars were returnable, and one or two enterprising picture houses accepted two jam jars instead of a penny for the "Penny Rush".

Our local cinema was on an island site composed of a block of property triangular in shape, that was fork between Branch Church Street and Church Street, and facing the end of Jack Lane. It had two side exits beside the foyer entrance.

One night I called on one of my mates who lived in "Plevna" and as he was going to the Billiard room over the cinema I went along with him, to take a message to his father.

To comply with the law, the billiard saloon had to have a fire escape beside the front entrance over the shops at the front.

This fire escape was directly over one exit of the cinema and we went in that way. Walt's father was playing when we entered so we waited and watched until he finished his game.

In the meantime I needed to dispense with the surplus fluid inside of me so I stepped out onto the fire escape closing

the door behind me. It was quite dark in the yard so I stood close to the wall and peed down it.

Just as I put away my proof of boyhood and stepped back into the billiard room doorway, the light over the cinema exit came on and that door banged open and the "Chucker Out" stepped out just in time to receive the liquid offering from above!

Of course he was furious, but by the time he had dodged the people coming out through the doorway and climbed the fire-escape I was back in position watching the game on the nearest table to us and Walt's father had finished his game.

So Walt gave his father the message, and his father gave him tuppence, and we went out through the entrance at the other side. Then we called in at the fried fish shop at the front for a pen'orth of chips each (with scraps on).

As we passed the entrance to the yard again to go down Church Street, the angry "Chucker Out" was just saying in a loud voice to the cinema manager:—"I aren't 'ere to be ----- well ----- on by anybody!

Such incidents were not uncommon then in districts like ours nor was it unusual when the "Penny Rush" came out on Saturday afternoon to see a row of small boys "Weeing" at the kerbside.

Although all cinemas displayed notices to the effect that "Children in arms" would not be admitted, it was quite common for young babies to be smuggled in under a woman's shawl.

If the child was noisy the responsible person would be asked to leave by the attendant, but often someone would be breast feeding a baby during the film in the smaller cinemas in the poorer districts, like the Pictodrome in Hunslet which I have just mentioned.

It was quite a common thing when passing a house in such districts to see a woman sitting in the doorway, or even on the

doorstep breast feeding a baby(in suitable weather)and holding a conversation with a neighbour,at the same time getting the benefit of any"Fresh?"air available.

Fifty or sixty years ago most children were breast fed. Bottle feeding was looked upon as being most unnatural,and only to be ~~used~~ used in cases of great necessity.

Indeed one often heard remarks passed such as "So-and-So's kids look as if they've been brought up on't parish pump an't milk tin".

As fresh milk was delivered in cans and measured out on the doorstep it was always a source of infection. Yet more years passed before all milk was delivered in sealed bottles and either sterilised or pasteurised as a safety measure.

The alternative was thick sugary condensed milk sold in tins at grocers shops,but most people like ourselves who had no effective means of keeping milk fresh overnight,relied on sweet-end condensed milk for everything.

It was much more convenient to make a "Mashing of Tea"by folding a piece of newspaper double,placing on it two teaspoonsfull of sugar,two teaspoonsfull of tea(tea bags had not been invented then)and then dropping a big blob of thick condensed milk in the middle of the heap and then screwing it up.

One of these was sufficient to make a pint and half enamel-ware can full of tea.

The mashing/s were put inside my can which I slung on my belt together with my snap tied up in a red cotton handkerchief. In this way my sandwiches or bread-and-dripping kept dry under my coat tail when it rained,and both my pockets and my hands were free as well.

This was no small consideration on a two mile walk,and much

better than carrying liquid milk in a bottle, or carrying a bottle of cold tea.

Returning to the subject of after work leisure activities, there seems to be a general idea that in those days there was no permissiveness or imorality, and that people were not broad-minded about the facts of life.

I am of the opinion that this is something engendered by the older generations tending to see the best of life in retrospect.

The truth is that actually fifty or sixty years ago young people had very few inhibitions then, and although the "Upper" or "Better" class people as they were often called, affected a "More Holy Than Thou" attitude towards the "Lower Classes" it had very little basis in fact.

There was very little that happened openly among the working class people, that didn't happen among the so called "Better Class?" people underneath the cloak of respectability.

Much has been said about moral slackness and permissiveness in the 1970's, but at least people do behave honestly about sexual matters. They do not brand an unmarried mother as a social outcast, or the child of such a woman as unfit to be accepted in decent society.

After all no child has ever asked to be born, so why brand it for something it couldn't avoid.

My reason for mentioning the moral aspect the way of life is because like every other "Teenager" I used my newly acquired liberty and adolescent inquisitiveness to find out for myself just what grown up's did after working hours.

At the ripe age of fifteen I was in that unique position when one can still mix with schoolchildren, and also move in a grown up world as well (that is if I didn't overstep the mark).

One thing that I never did, because I never had any wish to do so, was to be one of a gang. Many lads after leaving school either got together in a gang, or joined a gang already existing. Inevitably this led to gang fights and trouble.

Although rivalry was keen between the street gangs and any excuse was good enough for picking a fight with a gang from another district, I never knew of a gang either attacking or picking a quarrel with anyone who went about their business and did not interfere.

The unwritten law of street gangs was:—"Pick your own age and your own size and 'em as good as they give you".

The worst insult was to say about a gang member that he could only "Fight young kids and old men". The only answer to that jibe was to fight, and no backing out of it!

Actually I have seen a street fight in progress, when one of the gang has left the fracas to see an old or a disabled person across the main road, and he then ran back to join in again with the others.

In general the street corner lads respected the law, and in turn the police only stepped in if a crowd gathered and caused an obstruction. Usually a sharp "Come on now—break it up!" was sufficient, after which the spectators dispersed the show was over for that time.

In those days when everyone, or almost everyone, lived next door to somebody else there were two things that must appear a little "Out-of-Step" by to-days standards.

One of these was the way that folk helped each other in time trouble. The fact that two families were not on friendly terms or that the sons of both houses had been fighting the night before made no difference, if help were needed help was given.

If the housewife were ill then a neighbour would with household tasks such as baking, washing, or getting the children ready for school and giving them a meal at lunch-time.

If the man of the house were injured at work, which of course meant financial problems, help would be of a practical kind, ~~and~~ such items of grocery, vegetables etc (Often given by the street hawkers) "Until better times luv". Often a street collection would be arranged among the neighbours, especially if there was a bereavement in a home.

Any one who didn't either offer help or contribute in some way in such cases would be in no doubt as to what their neighbours thought about them and their scrooge like attitude.

They would be "Sent to Coventry" in every sense of the term.

That is if they were in a position to help the family in their misfortune at the time when help was needed.

The general attitude to helping others was: - "you never know it might be my turn to-morrow".

Another unwritten law of the streets was that one didn't interfere in neighbours quarrels, or in rows between husband and wife no matter what you thought about it.

When anyone was so quarrelsome and rowdy that they were a nuisance to the other folk in that street, their neighbours applied their own remedy effectively as I said in my opening chapter, yet if life was rough it did have its compensations especially for young and active folk.

Chapter.II.

AT Night In Town. Then.

If money was scarce, which it often was I simply wandered around home. On a wet evening I would either stay in and read or call to see one of my friends. This left my pocket money intact for Friday and Saturday.

I was never interested in hanging around street corners, and being a good walker I much preferred to go for a walk away from the same streets that I saw every day. Even in Winter I would much rather go out than stay indoors after working all day.

One way of having a cheap night out without staying around home was to walk into Leeds on Friday night. Setting out after tea I would walk along Hunslet Lane and either turn off at Black Bull Street to go into Leeds over Crown Point Bridge, or go straight along Hunslet Road to go into Briggate and the city centre.

Even in the 1920's the shops were all open until late at night, not only in the centre of Leeds, but along Waterloo Road and Hunslet Lane as well and shoppers thronged the pavements.

On Friday night especially at intervals of a few hundred yards there would be disabled or blind people selling matches, playing an instrument, singing cap-in-hand, or just openly begging.

However much people reminisce about those times, the fact remains that there was a very seamy side to life then, and the seams showed all round.

Leeds Market like the shops was open late at night also, and in George Street behind the covered market there was also an open air market where stalls were let to the traders who hired them from the Markets department.

This was known locally as "T'back o't Market" and most of the

traders had rented the same stalls for years. Each one was an individual in his own line of business, and each one had his own line of "patter" with the rhetoric of a fairground show-man to draw the crowd around his stall, while the "Backchat" between the stallholders provided an attraction as well.

There were many examples of this "Patter". For instance Rhodes the "Potman" who sold household crockery, mostly "seconds" it is true but nevertheless serviceable.

He would hold up perhaps six small plates with a shout of:-
" 'Ere y'are ladies, give us five bob (five shillings) for these-
no three an' six then, No! Well give us 'alf-a-crown then come
on! They're cheap enough to throw ~~at~~ at your Paddy when he comes
home drunk from the Woodpecker! No, well lets try summat else ~~in~~

Another trader would be shouting:- "Look 'ere-solid gold
watches! Only five bob apiece-I'm giving 'em away! Then prob-
ably some "wit" in the crowd would shout: _-"Aye, we know t'same
sort o'gold as they make brass candlesticks out of!"

Also there was Alf Sloman selling toilet soap and offering
to eat it to prove it's purity. While next to him would be a
stall with bedding and curtains. Yet another would be selling
remnants of floorcoverings, such as linoleum, staircarpet etc.

One trader who was always sure of a good audience was the
seller of cheap sweets and chocolates. ¹Albeit they were mostly
old stock bought in bulk from warehouses he always did a good
trade among the bystanders.

"Come on! he would shout. "Let's treat you and the kids ladies
watch this bag. Ther's a quatter of ----, and a quarter of ---
---, a quarter of ----, a box of Liquorice Alsorts, a bar of Nut-
milk chocolate, and a bar of Cream Chocolate, give us a bob for
the lot! Come on now who wants another bobsworth?"

There were also the "Crocuses" (the "Quack Doctors") with their self made and self styled "Medical" remedies. They were clever exponents of the art of convincing people that the pills, tablets, salves and ointments etc that they sold could relieve or cure almost any known ailment of the human body.

It was centuries old profession and they were adept in the art of making the most extravagant claims without saying anything that would put them within reach of the law.

Another feature of the city streets was the "Barrow Lads".

In 1931 it was estimated that there were in Leeds about 80 barrow boys trading from the kerbside in the city. The making of the hand-barrows was specialised job that provided work for three or four wheelwrights locally.

The hand-barrow differed from the hand-cart in every way.

Both had two wheels, but whereas the handcart was built of thick, strong material with large thick wheels and a pole shaft with a crosspiece, the handbarrow was built of light materials to avoid unnecessary weight.

It had a longer body made with light flexible wood, with shallow sides to display what the vendor was selling. It had two short handles to push or pull, and much lighter wheels than a handcart. It could hold 3 or 4 hundredweights of fruit or vegetables sufficient a man to wheel about the streets.

The Barrow Lads day was a long one, but he was his own boss, he must be at the Market early to buy from the wholesaler, and at weekends he was at the kerbside till late at night.

Many of the barrowboys worked the streets that were reachable during the other days of the week, while some acted as porters for the fruit and vegetable merchants in the Market, but it was from Friday evening until late Saturday night that

barrow men came into their own in the city centre's shopping streets(that is those where street hawkers were allowed).

Another feature of Leeds night life was the boxing booths.

Some carried the description of "Sporting Clubs",there was one in Holbeck near Meadow Lane,and another in Kirkstall Road area. In these the contests were held between members indoors, But perhaps the best known was Heslops.

When I went into Leeds via Crown point Bridge and Kirkgate I passed Heslops at the end of East Street. It stood on private ground behind a hoarding in which ~~was~~a large double doorway which gave access to the open space in front the "stadium" as it was described.

The actual Stadium itself was in an old building in front of which a wooden rostrum with a canvas canopy was erected.

I was friendly with a lad about my own age who lived in Waddington's Yard at the foot of the bridge,almost opposite Heslops,and when I called for him if Heslops was open we sometimes went into the yard to listen to the "Barker"^{AND} see who went in.

There was an evenings bill of contests between young hopefuls(mostly locals)from 14 years old to adults. They were picked from among previous contestants,and the top purse for the evening would be no more than £5 for the winner out of two "Up-and-Comings".

Those youths from the crowd who accepted the"Barkers"challenge to fight three rounds with a picked opponent,would get £1 for a clear cut win. He might also get the promise of a return fight or a billing against another novice.

The challengers on the rostrum were for the most part the "Bruiser"type,and while many from the crowd who accepted their challenge were "Greenhorns",the challenger might find him

self challenged from the crowd by a rugged veteran of many street fights and brawls. Since he had challenged all comers he had no alternative if the man was sober (obviously drunks were not tolerated).

There were boxing "Emporiums" and "Stadiums" in most big towns and cities, and the boxing booth was a common feature on most of the fairgrounds. Invariably some of their staffs had a proportion of broken noses and "Cauliflower" ears.

Yet in fairness to them and the clientelle, many of our successful boxers have progressed upwards to the professional ring from the booths with their flaring naphtha lamps and glaring arclights.

As one walked over Leeds Bridge and turned along Duncan Street to Vicar Lane, or turned along Boar Lane, or even went straight up Brggate itself, one saw not only the brightly lit shops the kerbside folk as well.

There were newspaper sellers, peddlers of all kinds selling anything from collar studs, shoelaces, matches, small toys, artificial flowers etc, and at intervals streetsingers cap-in-hand, and handicapped people of both sexes.

Another feature of the night scene were the buskers who used to "work" the theatre queues and cinema queues in town.

They walked slowly alongside the queue singing some well known song or ballad, or playing a mouth organ cap in hand.

It may seem curious now, but at the time there was no byelaw to prevent these things. The only provision was that whatever the entertainer did, he or she must not ask for money or cause an obstruction. If one did either of these things, one could be charged by the police respectively with begging under the Vagrancy Acts, or Obstruction of the Public.

Added to all these were the ubiquitous "Barrow Lads" selling fruit at the kerbside. The building up of the display on these two wheeled two legged vehicles cum stallion -wheels required a certain skill on the part of the hawker.

A barrow had two legs at the back to enable it to stand level, but it had no such legs at the front, so the display must be made with most weight at the back. Otherwise the barrow would tip-up and spill it's load.

The barrows were not the property of the hawkers, they were hired from the people who built them. The hawker paid a fixed sum per day or week, and the builders kept them repaired as and when required. The barrow lads and the other kerbside traders disappeared, about 1960 when buses replaced tramcars. Motor traffic made kerbside trading too hazardous and obstructive.

The city in the 1920's had many "Charactors". Most of them were harmless enough and caused no trouble to anyone. They were unemployable for various reasons both mental and physical and had no fixed homes. They picked up a living in any way possible and either slept rough or in hostels (or Common Lodging Houses funds permitting).

To name but a few of them there was "Aeroplane Jack", "Woodbine Liz", "Jimmy O'Leary", "Old Nitty Whiskers", "Tommy No Legs" and "Chuff-Chuff".

Taken in that order "Aeroplane Jack" was a harmless little man who walked about waving his arms round like a windmill and shouting cheerfully. "Woodbine Liz" dressed in any old finery given to her and begged cigarettes from anyone she met. Jack did odd jobs for his dinner and the price of a night's "Kip" (usually a shilling (5p)). Jimmy O'Leary was a middle-aged

man who slept underneath the Arches in Marsh Lane in a rag ~~shop~~ store. He wandered round the town dressed in a tramcar drivers overcoat and trousers with a string tied round his waist on which hung an enormous bunch of old door keys. He lived by eating any food given him by shopkeepers.

One night a passing Policeman saw smoke coming out of the ragstore, and on going inside he found that O'Leary had set fire to some of the rags and was sitting there like Pheonix among the fire. He was taken into custody and put in a mental institution.

"Tommy No-Legs" had been born without legs, and he propelled himself along with a thick wooden block in each hand using his arms as crutches. He used to pitch in front of Trinity Church in Boar Lane accompanied by a woman to whom he talked shamefully oblivious of passers-by.

The "Tin Whistle Man" was a tall old soldier who played a tin whistle at the Kirkgate entrance to the Market on Friday and Saturday nights. He was always accompanied by a very small old woman who held a tin mug for coppers for which they always said a polite "Thank you".

"Nitty Whiskers" was a man who slept in Benson Street Brickyard. He was unshaven, his hair was uncut, and he was so dirty that no-one would go near him. As he walked he muttered and grumbled to himself. Periodically he would be taken to a workhouse for a clean-up and then discharged again.

"Blue Nose" and "Cherry Nose" both sold newspapers, and got their nicknames because of the unusual colour of that prominent organ.

These were the best known characters but there were many others besides them.

Leeds had many courts, yards, back alleys and side streets running off both the main thoroughfares of the city, and the less frequented ones behind them as well, and they literally covered a multitude of sins to use a common expression.

Much of the other side of Leeds nightlife took place in these "Behind the Scenes" places. On any night in the week, but more so at the weekend, the ladies of easy virtue plied the oldest trade in the world in entries that were pools of darkness leading off streets lit only by gas lamps.

There was another use to which the dark doorways and yards were put by members of both sexes. It was quite a common thing for both men and women to go up a dark entry to urinate, in spite of notices saying "Commit No Nuisance"!

Nobody took much notice of them anyway, and even the police didn't bother too much unless there was blatant exposure or a very strong protest by someone in authority.

In fact even the offence of soliciting in a public place, only carried a fine of two pounds in a Magistrates court.

At this point it is worth mentioning what were described as "Common Lodging Houses, All large towns and cities had them, some smaller ones too.

They catered for what were officially described as "Persons of no fixed abode", this meant in effect anyone with no permanent home. Itinerent labourers, casual workers of all kinds, and anyone with no fixed "Roots" and no dependants.

One in particular was owned by Leeds Corporation and run by a manager. It had formerly been a corn mill many years earlier in the mid 19th century in Dyer Street, almost where Millgarth Street police station is now.

This one was known by the "floating" fraternity of unsettled men over much of England, particularly the Northern Counties

as "The Big Model". These larger lodging houses were called "Model Lodging Houses" and all had to be registered with the local authority and open to Police inspection.

Under a Bye Law of Leeds Corporation, men and women were not allowed to live together in a Common Lodging House, so the Big Model housed only men, but it could scarcely be called a Model dwelling place in the strict sense of the word!

The original mill had been built with four buildings forming the two sides and ends of an oblong with a wide yard in the middle paved with stone setts. A gate gave admittance to the yard, and at the far side of the yard was the "Kitchen".

This kitchen was the ground floor of that wing, and it was in this kitchen that all cooking and eating had to be done. There was a huge hot-plate about four yards long, and on this several big cast iron kettles were kept boiling all day from very early morning until night.

A deputy appointed by the manager was responsible for keeping order in the kitchen, replenishing the coke fire under the hot-plate, and mopping the stone flagged floor. There were a number of bare wooden tressle tables on which to eat a meal, and the "Deputy" washed these and emptied the rubbish bin beside the hot plate as well.

The only washing facilities were a row of sinks with cold water only in the ground floor of ^{THE} wing opposite the kitchen at the other side of the yard. The deputy looked after that as well to keep it clean.

Inside the kitchen and opposite the doorway was a wooden shop which was open from 6 A.M until 7 P.M where one could buy such basic items as packets of tea, sugar, tinned condensed milk, cocoa, eggs, cheese, bacon, margarine, jam etc, and bread.

If one required only enough for one meal a mashing of tea cost a penny (without milk), a bread cake cost three halfpence, and a quarter of a pound of cheap streaky bacon cost tuppence-halfpenny.

There were some heavy cast-iron frying pans and saucepans for the use of lodgers, and if one asked at the shop one could borrow a basin, a plate, or a pint mug to use there and then.

These were all enamel ware, and underneath the bottom of each one it stated "Leeds Model Lodging House - Stolen". Cutlery was not loaned at the shop, but with practice if one didn't possess a fork, one could do many things with a pocket knife and a spoon handle when cooking and eating.

The way that I got to know so much about the Big Model was by meeting a young man who worked at the Copper Works. He had a labouring job in the No. 2. Mill, and he sat at the same canteen table as myself.

His name was Blakey, but in a firm which employed several hundred men, his first name was forgotten and he was nicknamed "Blacky" and that name stuck. He told me that he lived in a lodging house in Leeds, otherwise he had no home and family.

One Friday night as I was standing listening to a Jewish stallholder behind the Market selling odd lines in new and second-hand foot ware Blacky came and stood ~~by my side~~ beside me.

As we talked he told me that he was living in the Big Model, so as it was a cold night I went back with him to the great gloomy barracks of a place.

Being Friday night there were not many men in the kitchen and the shop was shut. A few were sat reading newspapers and some standing round the hotplate to keep warm.

My first impression as I looked down the length of the kitchen was of looking along a dark tunnel. It was stone flagged, and

from the "Ceiling", which was the underside of the floor of the room above it supported by thick wooden beams, hung the gas-pipes for the lights. They were the incandescent mantle type, but even so they seemed lost in the big whitewashed space of the kitchen.

After that first night I called in to see Blacky a few times that winter. He really wanted to go into "Private Digs" ~~///~~ that is lodgings in an ordinary household where he could pay full board and lodging.

However that was not as easy as one might imagine. Because even with regular work, a man from a "Kip House" as lodging houses were called in slang terms, was always regarded as a doubtful proposition by "Respectable people."

One night I took Blacky home to our house and my father had a talk to him over supper. He told us that he had been brought up in Halifax, but he never knew his parents and he had never seen his birth certificate.

His chance came soon after when another labourer started at the Copper Works and he was sent to work with Blacky. He and his mother who was a widow lived not very far ^{from} ~~us~~ in Hunslet, and it was arranged that Blacky could live with them and pay his board as one of them. So Blacky moved in with Jake and his mother and ^{stayed} there several years.

His experience shows how deep prejudice went between different levels of even working-class society then.

Sometimes I would go up into Leeds on Saturday nights with a couple of other lads my own age, and we would go to perhaps the Empire Theatre or the Theatre Royal (at that time Leeds had six live theatres), but more often we would go up in the Gallery at the City Varieties.

The "Chucker Out" kept his beady eye on us, or any other group

of rebels like us going up into the "Gods". Because with pockets full of little oranges and peanuts we were potential nuisances up there. Invariably we did get shown the exit for shooting peanuts or orange pips at bald heads, or any other tempting target below us, or whistling too much.

It was about this time that I thought that as several of the lads that I knew had got jobs in the pits that I would do the same. So accordingly on the next Saturday morning that I was not working I went along to the Rothwell Haigh (Fanny) pit.

I duly arrived back home at mid-day with a great sense of achievement. Father as I have said previously was not a stickler regarding which job one did, so long as one worked. As so many of our relatives had worked in the pits I thought that he would be pleased that I was following in the family footsteps.

Imagine my amazement then, when I proudly announced "I've got another job Father I'm going driving I'm going to work for Charlesworths down 't Fanny" a week next Monday". His reaction really shook me. "Who says so?" He asked. I replied "Bailey he's underground manager, and there'll be a lamp out for me on Monday mornin' at six".

In that even voice that I had learned not to argue with he said, "Write him a letter an' tell him 'at tha's changed thi mind, -befair to him!".

In a last hope that he might give way, and remembering that he had once worked down a pit himself I said: "I'll get two pound-two-and-six a week Dad and some'lowance from 't colliers as well!"

He replied with finality: "Tha's not goin', and if tha goes into a pit-yard again I'll break thi (Rude word) neck. I wor

trammin' Corves (pushing tubs of coal) dahn Bruncliff pit afore I wor thy age, keep away from t^s bloody pit!"

So that was that. There was six fet and thirteen stone of him, and only five feet and seven stone of me, and I knew he meant what he said.

All the same £1 and half-a-crown every week plus perks seemed big money t^a me at fifteen years of age.

A few days after Blacky got his "Digs" I went back into the refinery for another spell on the furnaces, and one morning as I clocked in at 10 to 6~~30~~ I got another shock that I have always remembered.

As I turned to go into the works a man was coming out supported by one of the overhead conveyor drivers. The mans arm was a mass of torn flesh and muscle, and although the conveyor man had made a rough tourniquet with the shirt sleeve and a piece of string blood was still dripping.

Fortunately one of our casting-pit men was just coming in and he helped the night timekeeper while he was ringing for an ambulance.

I don't think that I spoke to anyone before breakfast that morning. In spite of the heat from the furnace my face still felt cold.

I think that if there had been a steady job in the refinery for me i could have settled in and progressed through to man-as a furnace hand. It was the kind of work that I understood and could identify with.

As it was however, I had but little chance to settle anywhere into either kind of work because I was shunted back and forth between the drawing mills and the refinery.

I wasn't in the mill for more than about eight weeks before

I was wanted back in the refinery again, and no one wanted a mate who was literally here to-day and gone to-morrow. So I was given small temporary jobs like a sort of juvenile labourer.

It was during one of these spells of odd jobs in the mill, ~~th~~ that a rather disgraceful episode took place which involved myself, three more lads and a girl, which led up to me leaving the Copper Works.

The firm employed quite a number of women and girls. No women worked at night, but during the day most of the women worked either driving the conveyors overhead, or in the Radiator Tube department. The younger girls also worked in the radiator department.

A foreman supervised their work, but all the female workers were under the direct control of a middle aged, strict and unsmiling spinster, and her word was law in working hours.

The girl concerned in the incident lived at Rothwell and she was a buxom country type.

On that particular day I had been working in the Radiator department of No. 2 Mill, and when accompanied by another youth my own age ~~at~~ 12.45 we were returning there, the sixteen year old girl was walking along the landing with two more lads.

They spoke to us and all five of us went along to the Peircing Mill where no-one worked during the day. To cut short a long story, the girl was wearing overall trousers which she willingly discarded behind the big machine for the benefit of the two who were with her.

My companion and I took turns "Dogging Out" one watched along the landing while the other watched the proceedings. We had forgotten one thing however, we were plainly visible from above, and a conveyor passed through on its way taking scrap to the

refinery.

In mid-afternoon to my surprise I was sent for to go to the general foremans office, and when I arrived there the lad that I had been with, and the other two were already there, and it was quite evident that the conveyor driver had given a detailed account of what had been seen from above.

The outcome of the affair was that the other two lads who were over sixteen and the buxom wench were sacked, and myself and the other lad received a verbal dressing down. Their offence was misconduct on the premises during working hours.

As usual in such cases ill news travelled fast, and in a week just about everyone in the works knew about our lapse from the straight and narrow path. Also as one could expect I got a lot of "Ribbing", "Leg Pulling" and not a few rude remarks as well, but the thing that worried me most was the fact that sooner or later my Father would hear about it via some of the men who had worked at the Steel Works and knew him.

A week passed, then another week, and every night when I went home I was expecting Father to ask for my version of what he had got to know, but that didn't happen and the suspense was making me really worried.

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Chapter.12.

Run Away--and Return.

On the following Sunday morning the weather was bright and clear, so after a good breakfast I decided to do what I often did on a Sunday, and that was to go for a good long walk.

In that way I thought that I might be able to find a suitable solution to my dilemma.

It was mid September and everything seemed just right, so I went down Old Mill Lane and along the canal bank to Knostrop Fall Lock. I deliberately chose that way to avoid any other lads who might know me, because I didn't want to be drawn into conversation about other things.

Crossing both locks to the Old River bank I crossed the river at the Waterloo Colliery Staithe and carried on up the colliery railroad, and in what seemed a very short time I arrived at Halton on the Leeds and Selby Road.

An old man was leaning over his cottage gate and I asked him the time. It was not yet eleven o'clock so I decided to make a day of it. I had been this way before and I intended to turn right at Garforth Cross-Roads and come back again through Swillington and Woodlesford then home.

Know^{ing} that if I was not home at 2 o'clock Mother would put my dinner aside cold to be eaten later. It was a rule in our household that what was left over at one meal must be used up, nothing must be wasted, so that created no problem for me.

At a little cottage-shop I bought a two-penny packet of biscuits, a little further on a notice on a gate said "Milk Sold Here". However when I went to the farmhouse and asked to buy some, the woman said to me gravely:—"This is the Lords Day my son, and we must not work or do any business on the Sabbath Day, but

I will give you a drink youth!"

This she did by giving me a pint-potfull of fresh milk, and I can remember how good it tasted compared with the tinned milk that we used at home.

At Garforth I decided to go straight on instead of turning right as I had intended doing, but to this day I don't know why I decided to run awgy. Keeping straight on the Selby road to the Boot and Shoe Inn and then to Selby Fork, again I chose to go to Selby rather than Goole.

Thanks to the amount of walking that I did normaly, and the good boots that I was wearing I was at Selby Bridge at teatime so I paid the half-penny toll to cross the Ouse, and carried on towards Hull.

Of course I had sat down at the roadside at intervals to rest, even so I found myself almost in the town of Howden as darkness fell. Also it was becoming cold and seeing a Dutch barn near the roadside, half of it was stacked with straw I went to it made a hole in the loose straw, and laying down covered myself with it.

Tired out I fell asleep and when I awoke again I heard a church clock strike three, it must have been Howden Church clock, an owl hooted I remember followed by a "Kee-wik" as another one passed over, it seemed the lonliest sound in the world.

My teeth were chattering and I was stiff, when I rose to my feet they were too cold to even feel sore and I could hardly move them I almost crept to the road again.

Almost without realising what I was doing I turned towards Selby seeming to walk without knowing how. What I can remember is that when dawn broke the ground was white with frost!

I must have crossed the old Loftsome swing bridge and paid

my toll to cross it, but I don't remember it and it was almost breakfast time when I found myself back again at Selby Toll Bridge again.

Then one of those strokes of luck happened that seem to occur unexpectedly from no-where.

The bridge was just opening to allow a tug with some boats to pass through, so everyone had to wait to cross it. As I stood there a motor wagon loaded with sacks of flour etc stopped beside me and the driver leaned out of his cab to me.

He must have been a mind reader, because I had just been wishing that I could get a ride on my way home. He looked down at me saying:—"Save a ha'p'ny kid gerin 'ere wi' me!"

It took an effort to pull myself into that cab but I did it and we moved on when the bridge closed again. My eyes were almost closing when he stopped at a "Coffee Shop" on the main street so I went in with him. I wanted to pay for my own but he said no, he'd paid for both so forget it.

He brought me a big steaming pint potfull of tea and a new breadcake with bacon in and dipped in the fat. Until then I had never realised how good a potfull of hot sweet tea tastes when you are really hungry and chilled through, and I felt it circulate all round me.

Then he asked me if I'd been out all night, and I said "Yes" so he said that he'd stayed out all night many-a-time and was I going far? I told him that I was going to Leeds.

Remarking that it was 21 miles to Leeds he said:—"Well I'm going to Peckfield and Aberford I'll give yer a lift to 't Boot an' Shoe lad".

As we got back into the cab of the wagon I said that I hadn't seen the bridge keeper take the toll from us, to which he

replied:-"Oh the Boss pays the toll for the wagon 'an whoevers in it,an' nbbody ought ter pay ter walk ovver a bridge anyway!"

I must have dozed off to sleep before we reached Thorpe Willoughby, because the next thing I knew was that we had arrived at the Boot and Shoe Inn where the road forked off to Leeds.

Thanking the kindly driver I set out for home again. There was not very much motor traffic on the roads then, and I walked like a machine too tired to realise that for the very first time in my life I had had a ride in motor wagon.

It was still not eleven o'clock when I set out from the Boot and Shoe, and it was nine o'clock and dark when I finally arrived back home, but to this day I don't know how I managed to walk more than fifty miles in thirty-six hours.

Opening the door(it was never locked)I went in closing it behind me. Mother and Father were there sitting in the lamp-light by the fire.

Fully expecting a tirade of verbal fireworks it was a complete anti-climax when Father just put on his cap, lit his pipe and said calmly:-"So tha's come back then, I'll go tell 'em"and went out.

When he returned from the Police Station I was sat at the table eating, with my feet in a bowl of warm water with a pinch of salt in it after having a wash. I went to bed with instructions to go on to the Police Station next morning to make a statement about it.

Going to the Police Station next day i thought that there would be a lot of explaining to do, but the sergeant at the ~~desk~~ desk knew us and only asked me how far I had walked, and never asked why I did it.

When I told him I'd reach^{ed} Howden he whistled and said:-"Well

you don't seem any worse for your "Forced March"but you don't do things by halves do you!"

Perhaps the most surprising thing was that when I went in to work on the Wednesday morning,nobody seemed to notice that I hadn't been there for the last two days?

When I arrived home from work that afternoon my Sunday Dinner was there warmed up between two plates as if I had only been late for dinner. Mothers only comment being:-"You know lad you can always come home when you can go nowhere else lad!"

As for my father,when I explained to him why I had tried to run away,he studied for a minute and then burst into a laugh saying:-"Well you ----- monkey!"

It was during the next spell in the refinery that I learn that there was only a limited length of time for a lad to work with the furnace gang in the refinery.

Some weeks previously when the big gas furnace had been in use a younger lad had come to work with us,because with two doors and a greater output of metal more men were needed,and two lads instead of one.

On the next run when we went back onto the smaller hand-fired furnaces this lad and myself shared the work between us with the smaller gang.

It was only when the two of us were helping the furnaceman to seal up the doors after charging one afternoon that I realised that my job with the furnace gang was nearly over!

He said to me:-"You've trained a good successor for when he takes over from you go back after you're sixteen".

I was stunned,it had never occurred to me that a time would ~~come~~ come when I was too old for one job,but not old enough for the next job in the gang.

Later before we went home I asked the refinery foreman if I would have to leave the refinery when I was sixteen.

He said:-"Oh yes,you'll have to go back into the mill or somewhere,then when you're old enough for mans job in here, well you'll get the same chance as anyone else lad".

That gave me a feeling as if the ground had given way under my feet. Now I knew why Digger had dropped out of the refinery before I went in there!

The work on the furnaces was more than just another job to me. I liked working down there because the lake of molten metal,the ladles,the red-hot billets sliding out of the cast ~~iron~~ iron moulds to roll hissing into the bosh to cool. They made an interest that I never felt when drawing tubes all day.

When I told Father about the matter he explained my position as regards furnace work.

It was very much like his own job had been at the Steel Works where Bessemer steel was cast into ingots for rolling out inthe rolling mill. In our case we cast the refined copper into billets of various sizes to be made into tubes.

In both cases there was no other work such as Moulding,coremaking,fettling as in a foundry,so there was no jobs that could be given to a youth to do.

He pointed out that as I was now long past my fifteenth birthday,unless I could get a job in a foundry or something similar my chances of getting out of the rut of a dead end job were getting less as I got older.

By making a few discreet enquiries I found that this was indeed the case,and further-more if I stayed on at the Copper Works,when I was eighteen years of age I would be clasred as an adult,and therefor liable to be suspended from work when

ever there was a slack period.

This was a system that fortunately does not exist now, it gave an employer an unfair hold on the workforce because if one were suspended, in the view of the Ministry one was still on the books of the firm and therefor not eligable for any employment elsewhere unless his employer sacked him!

So accordingly after studying the "Jobs Vacant" adverts in the newspaper I decided to go after a job with a small firm of coppersmiths and brassfounders.

The works was at the far side of town and involved a walk almost as long as going to the Copper Works but in the opposite direction, yet as I was a good walker I did not mind that.

There were three more lads like myself replying to the advert and each of us were engaged to do different jobs. We all were told the same regarding wages. We would receive 12 shillings and sixpence a week for the first three months, then if our work was satisfactory we would get another half-crown a week making our wages 15 shillings a week.

The foundry was a very small one with only two "Pit Fires" down in the ground, and large enough to take a 60 pound crucible or "Pot" in which to melt the metal to make the castings.

There was only the moulder and myself to work there and Jack (that was the moulders name) was an easy man to "Get On" with,

He made his own moulds with sand and I helped by making the small round cores that we used in them. We only made the brass fittings for the boilers and cylinders made by the coppersmiths

My work involved cleaning out the ashes and clinker from under the two fires and lighting them each morning, then I fettled the castings before taking them to the stores to be weighed and put into their respective bins.

Then I called into the machine shop with the box in which I carried the castings and filled it with the cuttings and borings from the lathes. There were two turners and a young improver in the machine shop, and their job was to machine the castings etc as required.

The brass cuttings that I carried back in the box provided another job for me. When the "Pots" were worn and would not hold the full 60 pounds of metal they were passed to me and using the other fire I melted the borings etc using the other fire.

When I had a potfull of metal I lifted it out with the Tong tongs and after skimming off the dirt poured it into the ingot moulds and then repeated the process.

Each potfull made two ingots weighing about 25 pounds each and when these went into the stores (having first been weighed by the storekeeper) Jack received a bonus on the weight at the weekend. Jack gave me an "Allowance" of three shillings and six pence a week, so I was happy bringing cuttings, melting them (it needed about 3 potfulls of cuttings to get a potfull of metal), taking the ingots into the stores.

We had a tin kettle which we used to make tea boiling the water on the red-hot iron plate which covered the fire-pit, or on two hot ~~1800~~ ingots. The job suited me, it was work that I understood, and I was happy on the thought that in a few weeks time I should get a rise in wages.

However this was not to be. I had only been there about eleven weeks when I went in as usual on Monday morning and lit the two fires thinking that Jack the moulder would come in late, but he didn't come in at all!

I went on with my work as usual and about half-past nine the boss himself came into the foundry and told me to let the fires ~~go because Jack would not be coming in~~

go out because Jack the moulder would not be coming in. He also told me to go see storekeeper and he would find me a job.

So I just poured the metal from my pot into the ingot mould, and then tidied up again by which time it was twelve o'clock and then after lunch I went to clock my card and report to the storekeeper.

He was a youngish man who combined the duties ^{of a} storekeeper with that of timekeeper, and he also drove the small Ford wagon when needed as well. With a full staff of 18 including the boss and his brother (his partner in the firm), he could easily carry out all three jobs.

He gave me a job emptying the rubbish bins and tidying up in the store for that afternoon.

When I clocked in next morning I asked him what he wanted me to do. Without looking up from the book he was writing in he said quite casually:—"Oh just go into the shop and do any jobs they want doing". I asked him if Jack would be a long time before he came back to work?

"Jack won't be coming back here", he replied. "He had a row with the old man and he sacked him on the spot!"

I carried on doing odd jobs about the shop and the works in general, and as I talked to the other men one of the copper-smiths told me that Jack had been sacked for booking more castings than had actually been made, in order to get more bonus!

When I told Dad he said:—"Mm, well watch what you're doing don't give him a chance to get at you for anything".

It was now 13 weeks since myself and the other three youths had started work with the promise that if our work was satisfactory, our wages would be increased after working there for three months. However on the Friday evening when I went to

Of course when I found myself a job I could hand in, or my new employer could send in my receipt card and then I would get my cards out again.

It was then mid-day, and apart from needing a meal I also wanted advice. Just as it happened Dad was working that week so I had to wait until he came home at night.

He was working in a gang making a new road, and it was part of a scheme sponsored by the local council (there were others in various other towns) to provide work for unemployed men.

In order to find some work for as many men as possible, two gangs were employed on alternate weeks. This was known as working "Weeks About" and entailed improving existing roads and making some new ones, and helping on some other municipal works in the area. On the week that they did not work they "Signed On" for benefit at the Employment Exchange, hence the tag "Weeks About".

This only applied to married men who were eligible for benefit, there was no such scheme for teenagers or for single men.

There was no Youth opportunities, or job training schemes of any kind at that time, and the general attitude of High Authority seemed to be:—"Oh their parents or guardians will look after them", but there was no aid or "Family Allowance" to help them.

Even youths who had worked at the same firm since leaving school three or four years ago were suddenly finding themselves without a job through no fault of their own.

One bitter comment on this state of affairs was:—"All the gaffers want is cheap labour, kids leavin' school. When they have to pay you a bit more money they don't want you". Mine was certainly not an isolated case by any means.

When I told Father the result of my interview at the "Lab

our Exchange"he just said:-"Well go out and see what you can find to do, it doesn't matter what it is if they pay you for doing it".

The grocer from whom we had bought our groceries for many years gave me a part time job helping to weigh out flour into stones(14lbs) $\frac{1}{2}$ stones, and quarter stones, on Mondays and Tuesdays and taking out orders on ~~Wednesdays~~ Thursdays and Fridays.

For this I received 10 shillings a week plus a wrap-up of bacon spare ribs or a bacon hock, or a small shank on the Friday night.

It was a good business and he employed two full time youths as well as two adult shop assistants. Through working part time for him I got a full time job with a Leeds firm of whole sale grocers in the warehouse getting orders ready for despatch or collection.

The wages in the grocery trade were not as good as they were in industry, but otherwise the job did have some advantages to offset that. For instance one didn't need to bring food to work, and we were allowed tea, sugar, and milk for our meal breaks.

The only stipulation was that nothing must be taken off the premises without the permission of the warehouse manager. As for the boss himself was a big smart ex-Army officer, a genial man who treated his staff as friends and was on speaking terms with everyone.

My fathers comment this time was:-"It's regular work and half a loaf is better than no bread at all!" As for myself I thought that at last I'd got a job that I could settle down to because even when times were bad people still had to eat.

After several weeks during which I had got on first name terms with the warehouse manager and the clerk/typist in the office and the rest of the staff the "Jinx" struck again.

This time there was no warning, when I arrived for work the manager, normally a smiling leg-pulling type was there already and his face was grave, and the clerk/typist was crying! I knew that something must be wrong.

When everyone had come in he told us all the bad news.

Our boss the jovial "Big Cheese" had been found dead with his shotgun beside him! Cutting a long story short the cause was financial trouble, and on the following Friday night I received my wage plus another week's wage in lieu of notice.

Once again I was out of a job and on the search for another one, but what and where I had no idea.

Later after some months that firm was taken over by another grocery firm, but that did nothing to help me then.

By one of those coincidences that occur in life, on the following Monday morning as I went along Waterloo Road to go job hunting I met a lad who went to the same school as myself.

He was two years younger than myself and he had been working for a one-man grocery shop. It was run by a man who gave a bonus of three shillings in the £1 on all cash purchases.

However on that Monday morning he had not arrived to open up the shop, so Tommy was standing in the doorway waiting for him, so as it was now nine o'clock I advised him to ask some of the adjacent shopkeepers if Mr. Jones had been seen.

Eventually it transpired that Mr. Jones didn't put in an appearance because he was completely "broke" without even enough money to pay the rent for the shop let alone the creditors.

That shop did re-open as a grocer's, but this time the proprietor was an experienced down-to-earth man with a family who also shared in the running of the business. Terms were strictly cash and there was no bonus for anyone.

As for Tommy he got a job in a clothing factory, so I saw little of him afterwards, but his experience shows how small businesses were "Folding Up" all over the place.

In the meantime I went to work for a painting contractor who wanted a youth to help the painters on a housing site, but after only six weeks owing to bad weather the painters had caught up to the builders a brush-hand and myself who had been the last ones to start there, were given our cards and money.

On that kind of work in the building trade an employer could sack anyone anytime if he gave the man an hours notice to leave the site.

My next move was in reply to an advert in the evening paper. It was in a street between Vicar Lane and Briggate in Leeds and they passed films on from one cinema to another around the West Riding of Yorkshire.

The shop was used as an office where a woman in her twenties answered the telephone and did the clerical work. She was the wife of one of two brothers who worked in the cellar under the shop checking and where necessary repairing the films and re-dispatching them as they came in from the various cinemas.

It would appear that the young woman and her two brothers were all equal partners in the joint venture.

My job for which I received £1.5shillings a week, was to take the cans of film in their sealed boxes to the appropriate railway passenger station, and bring back any in-coming films.

On the day I started work there I asked the usual question, did they keep a week-in-hand? The elder brother (who seemed to be in charge) said:—"Oh no, we don't keep any days in hand, you'll get paid straight up to Saturday on Friday night".

When I got back home that night and told Dad about it he

said straight away:-"Well it might be alright, but it could be that that they do it so they wont have to give you a weeks notice if they want to finish you".

My job started at ~~11~~9 o'clock in the morning with an hour for lunch at 12 o'clock, and finished at 6 o'clock, and nine o'clock till one on Saturdays.

The film containers were heavy and I had a hand-cart to pull through the town to the various stations, but of course the traffic was mostly horse-drawn apart from tramcars. So I could dodge in-and-out of traffic like any other lads did with their hand-carts or barrows.

There were about four other offices like ours distributing films from Leeds, and they were much older established. Inevitably as we all went to the same stations the other lads got know me in the few short weeks that that job lasted.

I had just got settled into the job routine, when one Friday evening at five-thirty the elder brother came downstairs with my wage as usual and said:-"Here you are, thats your wage and your cards. Don't come in the morning we sha'n't be needing you any more".

In amazement I asked him what I had done! He simply said:- "Nothing-nothing, you've done alright-there just isn't a job for you to do".

When I passed the shop-cum-office on the next Monday morning the blinds were down and it was obviously closed. By now I had begun to think that I never would have a regular job again.

Frustration-Determination.

In the course of my job-hunting I came in contact with a number of other lads and men who were unemployed, and I found from talking to them that it made little or no difference whether one had learned a trade or not. Because with trade so bad the various firms could not provide enough work everyone even skilled men employed full time.

As far as I was concerned the possibility of getting a permanent job that I could settle down to seemed as far off as the proverbial "End of a Rainbow".

In the short spells of unemployment between jobs I managed to get one two spare-time jobs helping with such things as gardening, hedge clipping, painting, white-washing and other small "Handy-Man" jobs for a bit of pocket-money.

While I was doing one of these "Allowance Jobs" the man I was doing the job for asked me if I was interested in a job at a brickyard, because at the brickyard where he worked they wanted a lad in the presshouse.

The mans wife tried to "put Me Off" going there to work saying that it was the last place for anybody to work, and all that one needed was a strong back and no brains!

However I wanted a regular job so when I got back home I asked father what he thought about it.

His answer was typical of his down to earth attitude to such things, straight to the point and no-nonsense.

"Yes I know that brickyard and I know "Owd Skodgem" (the boss) he said, "He's as mad as they make 'em, he'd as soon sack yer as look at yer, and he treats men as if they were on a string for 'im to chuck out and pull back when he feels like it".

So with that warning of what the work at the brickyard was like I duly turned in at the office door on Monday morning at 7 o'clock which was the starting time.

The working week was 49½ hours consisting of five 9 hour days from 7 A.M to 5 P.M, with two half hour meal breaks for breakfast and dinner(Lunch) at 8 o'clock and 12.30 respectively, and 4½ hours on Saturday finishing at 12 noon.

My wage of £1-7shillings and sixpence(about half a mans rate) was good compared with some trades such as provision and other warehouse work. On the other hand the work was much harder.

Knowing the rough nature of the work I went in the clothes which I had not worn since I worked in the brass foundry. The heavy boots and rough clothes, and my "snap" tied in a red handkerchief and slung on my belt with the enamel can with two mashings of tea, sugar, and condensed milk inside it.

My job was known as "Taking Off", that is taking off the bricks as they were made by the press. These were called "Green Bricks" (they had not been burnt in the kiln).

It was what was known as a "Double" press because it pressed two bricks at a time and could make 22,000 bricks in a nine hour day.

There was another youth "Taking Off" the same machine with me, and he loaded a barrow at his side at the same time as I was loading a barrow at my side. He was a big good humoured lad nicknamed "Hoppy" slightly older than myself and easy to work with.

Another lad worked with us. His job was to wheel aside the full barrows, first bringing an empty barrow to replace it.

Also he had to "Spell Off" that is take the place of either of us who had to leave the machine when it was running.

Each barrow(they were made without sides,just a high back and a flat bottom) and a barrow load was 75 bricks. The weight was so ballanced that it rested directly over the wheel so that the wheeler did not have all the weight on his arms.

It required practice to keep a full barrow ballanced with a total weight of almost 5 hundreweight of bricks on it,but the wheelers could not only wheel without tipping up,they almost trotted along the narrow steel plates"Flat Sheets"into the kiln for burning.

It was hard work on the press,but then there are no easy jobs in a brickyard! Obviously taking the green(unburnt)bricks off the press continuously,was far different to handling sacks of sugar and cases of Margering in a warehouse,or for that matter pulling a handcart through the city streets.

Yet after the first three or four days when the stiffness and backache had begun to wear off I didn't dislike the rough work too much. There was also the thought of the twenty-seven-and-sixpence at the week end as well(135p decimal).

On all unskiled jobs in a brickyard,when one reached the age of eighteen one got "Full Money"(mans rate). This meant that if I was still working there in a little over twelve months I would get £2-15shillings a week.

The "Drawers" and "Setters"were on piecework. They were the men who stacked the Green bricks in the kiln to be burnt(this was called "Setting"). "Drawing"was the opperation of opening the chamber and taking out the bricks after burning.

It was an old fashioned yard,and instead of having electric bogeys to take the bricks into the kiln and bring them out, they used the barrows that I have described. This made it necessary to have three men wheeling,making a five man gang.

Whenever anyone suggested that to use bogeys would save two mens wages in each gang the boss always said:--"If I want to pay another two mens wages that's my business and nobody elses."

Another unusual quirk of his was that no-one was ever too ~~old~~ old to work for him, if the man could do his job then the boss would employ him. This was always provided that the man could "put Up" with the tantrums of the boss and being called a "Damned Old Fool".

"Hoppy" the big lad that worked opposite me on the press told me not to be upset if I got sacked because just about everyone in the yard had been sacked at one various times, and then re-instated almost immediately.

That happened whenever anything upset "T'big Noise", "Owd Sack Him", "T' Mad Mullah" and he was on "The warpath". It made no difference whether the sacked one had done anything wrong or not "Skodgem" sacked the first one he saw.

I never knew anyone who had so many uncomplimentary nicknames in my lifetime!

The bricks even when coming "Green" off the press were rough on the hands, and even more so after they had burnt in the kiln so the men wore "Hand Leathers" cut from the tops of old boots or the rubber inner tubes of motor tyres.

One day at breakfast time the man who drove the steam wagon was having his snap with us in the engine house, and I asked him if he'd ever been sacked.

"Oh yes", he said. "More than once, but if you come back to work next day he'll let you start again. That's if he sacks you but if you leave on your own accord, then he wont let you come back to work. "Owd Narrer" likes you to know he's t'gaffer".

I did get to know later that there was one man, or perhaps

I should say two men because they worked twelve hours a shift alternate weeks day and night. They were the burners who were in charge of the kiln and responsible for burning the bricks.

They were "Key"men because a mistake could ruin a whole chamberfull of bricks(about 30,000 bricks)so to send the burner home without a replacement could spell disaster!

It was almost impossible to bring an action against an employer for wrongful dismissal,because there was no Industrial Tribunal,and the Ministry of Labour did not recognise the trade unions anyway even if one were a member! As a work ing man could not afford legal representation his case was hopeless against his boss.

Although it was rough work the men were easy to get on with in their own rough down-to-earth way and I got on well enough with them. Also as I said,the wages were good by comparison with other trades.

When one considers that the adult rate for an unskilled man in Engineering was £2 per week,and even less than that in a cloth mill for instance,our rate of pay was good.

Father's verdict was simply:-"Well if he gives you marching orders come home,and let him send for you if he wants you ter go back. You don't have to put up with that sort of treatment!"

Sure enough not many weeks later "Owd Harrer"saw me wheeling an empty barrow across the yard and sacked me on the spot.

I got my cards and money at the office and went home. He didn't send for me,and I never went back to ask for a job.

So there it was once again,the endless and mostly fruitless search for work. I had long lost count of the number of times that my name was taken down by a firm with the promise that if they had a job they would send for me.

At such places as public services departments, railway companies and the like, the lists of names of applicants for work were astronomical, and the chances of being accepted for a job were less than one in a hundred even after waiting many months.

Even trades like clothing, cabinet making, boots and shoes etc although they advertised in the papers most of the jobs were for "Boys and Girls leaving school" or "Outworkers" (women to do work at home).

In all this my mother kept a very low profile. Mother's attitude was:—"Do the best you can and I'll do me best with what you bring home to keep us".

As for my father, he had long since resigned himself to the fact that at 51 years of age his chances of getting a regular job were non at all.

For myself although I could not draw benefit at the Labour Exchange, the odd jobs that I got such as a shilling or two for whitewashing a cellar, or chopping a bag of firewood for someone, and occasionally a few shillings for helping a boatman to unload a cargo that must be handled like bags of valony or myrobalans for the dyeworks, boxboards or barrels at the soap works all made more grist to the mill not to mention pocket money for myself.

Mother knew that if I didn't come in at mid-day most likely I should be doing something somewhere for some-body. Another advantage to helping a boatman was that he always gave you a pint pot of tea and a sandwich or something to eat if you worked with him.

At that period in my life I had no desire for beer and cigarettes, and Father had long before cut beer out of his budget and only indulged in a pipe of tobacco. So by and large we could get by on very little without undue hardship.

My father had his 15 shillings a week War pension and his "Signing On" money (about £1 a week), and Mother had her 5 shillings from the Army per week for the loss of my brother George, so as Father said, we weren't too badly off.

Of course £2 a week left very little for clothes or amusements but many more folk were in no better position at that time, in fact some were worse.

The numbers of men from eighteen upwards who were unemployed and signing on at the Labour Exchange in Leeds now numbered more than twenty thousand totally unemployed. This didn't include those who were only working short time three or four days a week, and there were many more of these.

Quite a lot of the "Out of Works" of all ages, but more particularly those over forty had given up hope of getting work and just made the journey to sign on twice a week, draw their "Dole" money and then spend their time as best they could or just standing about at street corners.

In this way their days were spent, going home for a meal of sorts then going out again to wander aimlessly about if the weather was fine, or if not going into public libraries or the shelters in parks etc.

Those who were working often accepted working conditions that were bad or at best left much to be desired rather than be out of work. The Ministry were not interested in whether an employer paid the proper rate for a job, their only concern was to get people off the books at the Employment Exchanges.

If a man left a job of his own accord the Ministry could (and often did) stop his "Dole" for six weeks, so this was another reason for staying at a job when everything was against one, and the bosses knew it, and often played "Cat-and-Mouse".

In all fairness one must admit that ^{the} Ministry of Employment had what amounted to a hopeless task trying to administer the conditions as laid down in the Act of 1912. The Employment Insurance Scheme had only been in existence 13 years in 1925, and therefor the staff had no experience of unemployment on such a large scale.

Added to this was the fact that ^{the} amount paid in by contributions were not sufficient to cover the vast sums being paid out each week in benefit all over the country.

As I was not yet eligable to draw benefit I simply went to the Exchange twice a week to sign as unemployed and have my card franked. This entitled me to the services of a doctor if I should be ill.

One afternoon as I was returning home after another fruitless day, as I came along Clarence Road there was my old boatman friend with another boatman. Both of them were out of work/George because his boss had sold his boat when the sand contract finished.

So now George was himself signing on until he reached the age of seventy when his state pension was due. The other boatman was simply redundant and in no doubt as to what his chance of getting a regular job were.

It was the conversation between this boatman and George that gave me the idea that the time had come for me to make a break with the hopeless situation that I and so many more folk were in then.

This man was not talking to me but to George, and he was not talking about me but simply giving his oppinion on the subject.

He was saying:-"I know that if I wasn't married I wouldn't hang about here! I'd be off out o'town and get meself hired out to a farmer, or I'd follow public works up and down t' cou

ntry working for navy contractors. If I were young enough I'd join t' Navy but I'm a lot too owd to think about that now".

As I walked on home this was running through my mind. There seemed little prospect for me around home, and I had no wish to stand on street corners all day and every day.

Certainly there was always food and lodging for me at home, but I didn't want to be a sponger living on my parents. At ~~the~~ the least I had a right to work and earn my own living, pride would not let me become a scrounger.

Anything would be better than the endless frustration of asking for work only to find that it was a case of "Don't come to see us-we'll send for you-if we want you".

When one went anywhere in answer to an advert, there would always be a queue outside the office before starting time the next morning. More often than not one would be chosen and all the rest turned away without even reaching the office door.

Yet I was determined that I would find some way to get my own living by my own efforts, and leaving home seemed the only way for me to do that.

One thing I knew for certain, my father would never agree to me joining any of the Services. The only reason why he had left home to join the Army was to get out of the pits.

On the other hand I was confident that I could find sufficient casual work and "Odd Jobs" to provide me with a living of some sort. It would not be easy, and I would have to be prepared to "rough it", but it could be done!

That night after tea I put it to my father and asked for ~~his~~ his verdict on the matter. After all, had he not done the same thing himself when he was seventeen many years before?

In his typically deliberate thoughtfull way Father took a

puff at his pipe before answering me, then he said that he could see my point and understand how I felt. He also said that if I found later that I had (to use his own words) "Bitten off more than I could chew", then I could always come back home again.

Mother as usual had her misgivings about my project, for instance how would I manage to look after myself, and who would look after me if I was ill, and what would I do if I couldn't find a place to live? Then almost in the next breath reminded me that I could always come home when I could go nowhere else.

I could understand her doubts and fears, after all her own early life had been no bed of roses and she certainly knew what it was like to "Make Do" on a very little of everything.

So that ^{was} ~~it~~ settled then, from then on it was up to me to be my own boss or call it off (which I had no intention of doing).

There was no date fixed, no plans made and no time stated, all that was needed was a suitable opportunity to put my idea into practice.

Awaking early one fine morning I got up as if I was going out to work and lit the fire to make tea. While I waited for the kettle to boil I cut my usual four slices of bread about an inch thick and spread them with dripping at the same time sprinkling them with salt and wrapping them in newspaper.

Having mashed the tea and refilled the kettle to stand before the fire again I mixed the normal two mashings of tea, sugar, and condensed milk which I dropped into my enameled can.

Then putting some mixed tea and sugar into an empty mustard tin, I dropped the tin into my jacket pocket and poured myself a pint potfull of tea and ate a slice of fat and bread as I threaded my belt through the handle of my can and the big

red handkerchief in which were my four slices of fat and bread.

It was now six o'clock so knowing that Mother would soon be coming downstairs I put a bit of coal on the fire and went out dropping the latch behind me as I went.

The big old fashioned lock had long since ceased to function although the heavy cast-iron key was still in it, so the door was only held by the "sneck" or latch which had a piece of string attached to it and then passed through a small hole in the door.

It was just the same way that I had set out for work scores of times before, except for the fact that I had no idea when I would be coming back in again.

The only thing that I carried was a second-hand draymans overcoat. They were made of thick woolen cloth, and longer than an ordinary topcoat, this was to cover the draymans knees when he was sitting on his dray driving his horse.

Inside the coat was a big deep pocket commonly called a "Poachers Pocket", this was intended to hold the drivers book delivery notes that he needed on his round.

This pocket was roughly 12 inches long by 9 inches deep, and in it I carried a piece of soap wrapped in a rag which in turn was rolled up in a rough hand towel. Also in this pocket I had a flat tin box with a piece of paper rolled up with some cotton and a needle, together with a few matches and two or three buttons.

In the two outside pockets were the mustard tin full of tea and sugar, another small tin containing salt, and a dessert spoon. A fork was not essential because a pointed stick would serve the same purpose just as well.

In my jacket pocket was my pocket knife (an ex-army jack

Chapter.I4.

Open Road-To Where.

Going down Church Street and Old Mill Lane I took nearly the same route as I had done before on that Sunday morning, except that this time I left the Selby road at Garforth Cross Roads turning left at the George Inn and following the main road towards Tadcaster.

There was no need for me to hurry so I just kept an easy walking pace that could be kept up for hours without fatigue, and which allowed me to look around for whatever might be to my advantage in any way at all.

I was not exactly a novice now at the art of survival, because I had been able to see at first hand how workmen coped with primitive conditions when working on different jobs.

Even in large workshops canteen facilities were not always adequate for everyone, and on outdoor jobs such as road repairing, draining, pipe laying, paving etc it was a case of "Make the best use of whatever means is available".

For example such a gang would have a lamptrimmer/watchman who would boil water on his coke-burning brazier in big iron kettle at meal times. A workman could fry something on a clean shovel or a tin lid, or toast bread by impaling it on a pointed stick and holding it to the fire.

Council workmen on country roads often lit a small fire in a hedge-bottom for the same purpose, so a tramp doing the same thing aroused no special interest from passers-by.

Add this knowledge to the facts that I had seen at first hand what life in a "Kip House" or "Model" was like (Leeds had several, including the Queens Model in East Street where a semi-culverted stream ran past the kitchen windows level with

-knife)which was perhaps the most essential item and also a comb,because I had long since learned that a tidy appearance made a lot of difference when looking for work.

As for the rolled-up overcoat,my previous experience had taught me that some form of covering was necessary at night when it served as a blanket besides being a "Hold-All".

Slung over one shoulder with the two ends tiedtogether under my arm at opposite side(a countryman often did this when riding a bicycle)it left both arms free. So with my cloth cap I literally carried my whole wardrobe with me.

Equiped in this way I set out on that September morning with no particular destination in mind. The only thing that was a certainty was that in all towns of any size,there were so many people "Out of Work"that a stranger had little chance of getting even casual jobs.

Therefor the plan was to find the jobs on the outskirts or else in the country,then go into town to buy what one needed for ones use or find a "Kip-House"in which to cook a meal and spend a night in bed.

In one respect at least I did have one advantage,thanks to my own early experiences as a child and what I had seen in and around the "Common Lodging Houses"of Leeds and district I was not an absolute "Green-Horn",to use a common expression the corners had been knocked off beforehand.

the kitchen floor, and into which the kitchen drain ran.)

This stream wound it's way North to South across Leeds and almost became a semi-open sewer in doing so before emptying into the River Aire near the "Model".

The Queens Model was built in 1889, and whenever the Beck overflowed into the kitchen after heavy rain or snow, any of the lodgers who cleaned up the kitchen after flooding, was allowed that nights "Kip" free of charge.

Add to these common lodging houses the fact that Leeds and district had three workhouses besides the Hunslet workhouse at Rothwell, and it was inevitable that in my wanderings I had seen not only tramps, but also the local "Down and Outs" on the move as well. More about these types later, for the present I will describe that first day and the subsequent days of that Autumn of 1925.

The day that I left home behind was a Friday, and I didn't expect to get any odd jobs on that particular road that I had chosen to go. In the first place the Leeds to York road was a main route between the big towns to the West and the holiday resorts of the East coast.

In the second place it carried a steady stream of tramps and itinerant nomads every day in both directions. The more so because every workhouse had a "Casual Ward" where tramps could go for a nights shelter.

This meant that there would be nothing left for me, but York would be a good starting point for my project. With that in mind I went steadily on to Tadcaster and then on to York.

It is an amazing thing that things that seem trivial and of no great importance tend to stay in ones mind for years afterwards, and I can still remember the incidents of that Friday.

I wore a waistcoat and in the pocket of it was a second hand watch which I had bought for 5 shillings (25p) at a pawnshop in Hunslet. It was a heavy nickel-plated watch 2½ inches in diameter, and nowadays it would be a collector's piece, but at that time they were quite common, and most outdoor workers carried one especially countrymen and farmworkers.

Consulting this timepiece as I entered Tadcaster I found that it was not yet mid-day, yet I had not hurried and I had had a can of tea mashed at a house in Garforth at eight o'clock that morning and eaten half of my dripping-and-bread then.

The thing that stays in my memory most about that first day "On The Road" is the blue sky and the clean air. The many smoking chimneys were left behind, and although there were the three or four chimneys of the breweries and the maltings, even they seemed clean by comparison with the grimy buildings and scores of blackened chimneys back home.

After crossing the bridge at the far end of Tadcaster, as I glanced down a yard on my right I saw a door standing ajar, and in the doorway were freshly baked breadcakes cooling.

This was an opportunity to get a can of tea mashed, so putting a mashing in my can I went up to the house. A plump motherly looking woman came in answer to my knock, and taking my can told me to wait five minutes.

When she returned with the tea I remarked that the new cakes smelt nice. With a smile on her red face she said,—"If they smell that good then why not have some I'm going to anyway".

She returned with half of the cake (they were big cakes) torn open (no one ever cuts a hot cake) and thickly spread with home made jam between the two halves till it oozed out at the sides.

Thanking her I took the jam sandwich and my can of hot tea

and went up the road a little way to a low wall on which I sat to eat that and the remaining bread and dripping.

It is quite possible that the good woman thought that I was working nearby when she saw the rolled coat slung over my shoulder and the blue enameled can, but I still remember the good flavour of the home made jam and the warm bread.

Continuing on my way to York the "Road didn't seem to be treating me too badly that with things seeming to come my way in the right order. However, when I saw a bakers van standing outside a public house it occurred to me that I now had no bread left, or for that matter anything to eat with bread if I got some, so I sat on the seat outside the "Pub".

Presently the van driver came out to his van and I asked him if he had a loaf to spare. He must have been a man quick to "size up" people because he looked at me and said:- "Are you on "The Toby" (in other words walking the roads from place to place) to which I replied "Yes".

Reaching into the back of his van he handed me a round "Cob" loaf, and waving aside the fourpence-halfpenny that I offered him he said:- "Keep that lad you'll need it I turn off this road or you could have had a lift on your way".

Wrapping the crusty loaf in newspaper (I always carried some) I put it in the big poacher-pocket of my topcoat and went on my way to York. Friday is not a day usually associated with good luck but that Friday did seem to be my lucky day.

Even the weather was good and I was soon on the outskirts of the ancient walled city. Because there was no real reason why I should go through the crowded streets of the centre I turned left hoping to avoid doing that, but I didn't realise that in that direction there wasn't a bridge to cross the Riv-

er Ouse. When I did realise it I decided to make the best of the situation by having a meal and to do this I went into a shop in a side street.

It was the kind of small shop that sold almost anything and I wanted something to put on the bread,so I bought 4 ounces of margerine,a 2 ounce packet of tea,and $\frac{1}{2}$ a pound of sugar.

Milk would be difficult to carry,and most people would put some milk in your tea when they mashed it. if not,tea that had no milk in would do if it was sweet.

These items cost me a total of sixpence,and getting a can of tea mashed at a house near the riverside I went onto the bank with it.

A man of middle age was sitting on a long wooden seat so I also sat down there,and cut a piece off my loaf with my jack-knife spread margerine on it to eat with my tea.

The man watched me doing this and then said casuality:-"You're not a regular roadster are you boy?" That started us into conversation and I got the impression(although he didn't say it in so many words)that at some time he had spent some time"on the Road himself.

As we talked a man came past us along the bank towads the town. He looked like a "Down-and-Out"and my companion remarked to me:-"He'll be going up there to mooch a few coppers as the folks are leaving work at five o'clock or just after. You know you could get a few yourself if you did a bit o' singing or summat that way. They can see that you aren't a hardened old hand,you're not weatherbeaten and your clothes don't look rough enough for a reglar".

I asked him where-about a "Kip-House"was,he told me there was one kept by an Italian near the Mill Bridge:-"Butyhe said.

"I wouldn't go there if I was you, you've a good "Top-Rod" (overcoat), it'll be a fine night, find a dry edge-bottom and save a shilling kip-money".

With that advice I left him and walked along until I came to the wharf at the approach to Skeldergate Bridge. Near the Co-op coal yard was a youngish man probably in his thirties, further on nearer the bridge and the fertiliser works the man who had passed us earlier had taken up his position cap in hand to beg.

Sheltered by the buildings from the slight breeze it was warm in the sunshine. Taking my topcoat off my shoulder and laying it across my knees I sat on a thick bank of wood at the river side and taking off my cap I held it on my knee as I watched the two men.

Whether one could describe what followed as a sympathetic mistake, or an unintentional deception I don't know, but I was certainly amazed at what followed.

As the men came out from the coalyard and the other works the younger man began to sing. He had a strong baritone voice and I listened as he sang "I'm only an old rough diamond".

By now the women and girls from Terry's chocolate factory were passing together with one or two men as well going along the bank in the opposite direction to which I had just come.

As they passed me one by one, most of them dropped pennies into my cap, and I was so surprised that all I could do was murmur "Thank You-Thank You".

Not many minutes passed before the last had gone and I counted my collection, it amounted to more than thirty pennies, so my unintended gain was more than half-a-crown. When I left home that morning I had 2 or 3 shillings in my pocket, so now my to

tal wealth was in the region of five shillings.

It is now many years since that Friday evening but can still clearly remember the mans voice singing:-"Never a care have I, for I'm only an old rough di'mond, but a king of the road am I!" Continuing on my way I went up to the bridge pausing only to watch the tug "Kingthorpe" going into Foss Basin.

There was always something ^{about} a steam vessel that took the attention of people because of it's seeming effortless movement over the water, which has never quite been captured by a Diesel engined craft.

Another thing that seemed unusual to me was the large numbers of bicycles in York, because of it's flat roads they were a popular form of transport with everybody.

I went on over the Mill Bridge and keeping left I asked a passer by if it were the Hull Road, he said "yes, straight on"

With that I strolled on and called at a large shop (I think it was a Co-Op shop). Anyhow it was a grocers and I asked for "Two pen'orth of bacon bits Please". In the jargon of the road this was known as "Pitching the Fork", and it was the accepted technique for getting something cheap to make a meal of sorts.

Sometimes one struck lucky, sometimes not, on this occasion I got a good wrap-up including the thick fatty outside cut off a boiled ham. This solved a problem because in another two or three hours darkness would have fallen, and not knowing that road, lighting a fire would be a problem.

Passing through Fulford I was soon clear of the streets and calling at a roadside house I got a can of tea mashed, then a little further on I sat at the roadside to eat the cooked ham with some bread and the tea for supper.

It was now twilight and I just realised that since six o'clock

lock that morning I had walked about thirty miles. That was too much for one day really, but I had not noticed it in the novelty of my new surroundings. Now it was time to find a place for the night and rest till morning.

A little further and there was a small plantation of trees, possibly they may have been for game cover, but no matter it was a dry night and the trees provided shelter from the dew.

Underneath the branches was a thick layer of dead leaves, so going well in out of sight of the road and a possible Policeman on his bike I took off my boots and layed down.

Clearly, even after all these years I remember the profound, peaceful silence. With my boots for a pillow and my cap folded on top of them, and my coat for a blanket thought about the days events. With the optimism of youth I didn't worry about what the future might bring.

When I left our house that morning I had not called upstairs to say good morning to Mother, although I knew that she might have been awake. Infact I think that she would have been surprised if I had done so.

How long I slept I don't know, nor have I any picture in my mind of the next day and what I did. I do remember that on the next day (Sunday) I found myself once again approaching Howdown, which town I must have reached by some devious route.

I knew that there was a ferry to cross the tidal Ouse at Booth Ferry because I had been told of it, so when I saw a sign post indicating "Booth Ferry $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles I took that road to go to Goole. The alternative would have been a journey of 14 miles to Selby, then another 14 back down the other side to reach Goole.

I had no experience of tidal waterways and the ferries to

cross them, so this had to be a new experience for me in every way, but once again luck was on my side.

On reaching the ferry landing the tide had just turned and it was the flood with a good run upriver. The ferryboat was a flat-bottomed flat decked boat capable of carrying a horse and cart, or a motor car, or several people.

It was propelled by four men, one man at each corner pulling a long "Sweep" oar in unison, and the fare was fourpence per person and half-a-crown for a motor car or cart.

As I walked down the ferry landing a Ford car of the old "T" model came and I had to stand aside to allow it to pass me onto the ferryboat.

A steam keel (or Lighter) was coming with the tide and of necessity we had to wait until it passed before starting to cross the tide-race. As I stepped onto the ferry the man with the car turned to talk to me seeing that I was a stranger.

He asked me if I was going to Goole and when I said "Yes" and told him why he paid the ferryman for both of us and his car.

He must have been a farmer, and he said that although all the harvesting was finished and there was only root crops still in the ground I might get an odd day or two at the late potatoes if I got over to the Lincolnshire side.

When we got off the boat at the other side he drove off and I went on my way into Goole through which I passed to cross the Dutch River and follow the Lower Ouse bank through Swinefleet and Whitgift on towards the River Trent.

The Monday night found me on the other side of the Trent at Neap House, and a farmer there where I had some tea mashed said he would let me start potatoe picking next morning. It was a good heavy crop and I had three days work with him.

As was the custom among farmers in those days the farmer provided hot tea and sandwiches of bread and meat twice a day morning and afternoon, and as the ploughman who lived only two fields further up the road took me home to a hot meal each day food was no problem.

At night I slept in a barn at the farm for those four nights, and this again was a considerable help, because otherwise I should have had to travel four miles into Scunthorpe to a "Kip-house".

At that time many farmers still used the old method of ploughing out the potatoes instead of using a horsedrawn "Spinner" to dig them up and throw them out on top. This farmer did that and the ploughman's wife was one of the picking gang that I worked with, and she would take nothing from me for my dinners which I had at their table. Because she said, "You didn't ask us for a meal, we asked you-an' that's different boy".

On the Thursday evening almost as we finished picking the "Tattie" field the good weather broke and it rained all night.

On the next day, after spending my last night in the hay barn I set out again on my travels. Again crossing Keadby Bridge I went southward along opposite bank of the Trent in the hope that perhaps another similar job might come my way.

It was a dull, overcast drizzling day with no-one working in the fields and not even the sound of birds calling over the flat land and its dykes.

At that moment money was not my biggest problem because I had more than £1 in my pocket. I bought myself some food at a village shop on Trentside, but finding shelter was the great problem.

Most of the farmers sheds and out-buildings were in the

farmyards, and as all farms had at least one dog, the chances of being able to get into those without being heard were nil.

Then on the roadside near West Stockwith I saw a small building with its back to the road. Looking around carefully and seeing no-one else I crossed the dyke and went round to the other side of it.

This time my luck was "In" the door was only held by a "sneck" or latch made of wood, and open^{ed} by putting one finger through a hole to lift it.

Opening the door I went inside and looked around. At one end bundles of dried reeds were stacked, but at the other end it was empty down to the earth floor. At the least it would give me a dry shelter for the night.

Getting a can of water from the dyke I went back inside and closing the door. Up near the roof was a square window-hole in the gable end to allow any smoke to escape so that was no problem for me.

Dried reeds broken into short pieces burn easily and the flame is clear and makes very little smoke. I had long since learned that there is no need to make a fire bigger than one needs for the purpose, and I soon had a can of water boiling.

Father and other people had always taught me that running water, or water in which fish could live, was safe to use if you boiled it first, so I had no qualms about the clear dyke water because I knew that horses drank it besides other animals and birds.

The next morning was dry, but with the unpredictability for which the English weather is famous there had been a frost.

It had been warm enough laid on the bundles of reeds during the night, but when I went to rinse out my can and refill it y

with water from the dyke, the air was cold enough to make my teeth chatter. The warmth of my little fire was welcome, and the hot, strong tea even without milk was even more so.

After my early morning breakfast (it was not yet seven o'clock) I again set out along the road. At the junction where that road joined another main road there was a large farmhouse, and as I passed a man was crossing the yard from the outbuildings to the house.

In town life there are so many folk walking about that no one bothers to speak everyone who passes by, but in the open country everyone will pass the time of day. Which this man did calling "Good Morning" to me, and I replied adding that it was a cold morning.

He agreed, and added that nevertheless they would have to get some stuff loaded for the market on Monday morning.

In my position one does not miss an opportunity for anything and I asked him if there was any chance of an hour or two's work? After asking me what sort of work and hearing what I had to say he told me to go into the house with him.

This I did and as we had breakfast he offered me a job to help him and his son lifting and tying celery into bundles and loading it ready for taking to Doncaster on Monday early morning for the market.

I agreed and together with his son (a lad about my own age) we went along the road riding in a farm cart until we came to the field where we were to work.

First we wrapped sacks round our ankles and the calves of our legs. The soil was thick alluvial silt known as "warp" soil and when wet as it then was, made a thick grey-brown mud that stuck to everything including our feet.

To lift the crop with a spade would be both slow and very hard work, so they used what he called a "Rooting plough" to loosen the sticks of celery so that they could be pulled straight up.

the cart-horse pulled the plough led by the son, while the man guided the plough along the side of the rows just missing the sticks. It had no share and no coulter but simply a sort of "Foot" to open the soil at one side.

My job was to pull up the sticks of celery one in each hand, then lay them at the side of the row all facing one way for tying. The man and his son did this using thin green oziars- or willow twigs to tie thirteen sticks in each bunch.

Thirteen to the dozen was the standard practice at that time for many things, and was called the "Bakers Dozen" to allow a profit margin, although the large wholesale bakery firms didn't use it even then. they just sold at a fixed price per 2 pound loaf/etc.

After a frosty night there can be few things colder than a stick of wet celery, and my hands (at first) were blue with cold, but with the labour of pulling up the celery and turning to lay it down I soon got warm.

In mid morning his wife came to the field with "Drinkings" as it was called. That was a big canfull of hot sweet tea and sandwiches, after which we carried on with our work not stopping again until we had got enough to load not only the two wheeled cart, but the four wheeled dray as well.

By that time it was afternoon, but he had told his wife that we would finish the job in hand before we came in for a meal, so when we arrived back at the house a hot dinner was waiting for us in the kitchen.

Even after the lapse of so many years since that day in 1925 I can still remember how good the hot roast belly pork tasted with the steaming vegetables and potatoes, followed by a boiled apple pudding. Truly there is no better appetiser than working outdoors in the country air in Autumn.

After the meal and a good wash and clean up, he gave me my days wage, saying as he did so. "There you are boy I've given you a full days money seven shillings and your meals".

He pointed out that although we had only worked for seven hours, if I had not been there to help them, he and his son would have had to work until evening to do the same amount of work.

He also added that although I had never done that sort of work before, "You pulled thundering good for a new starter".

Then he asked me where I intended to sleep that night, and when I told him that I should be "Sleeping Rough" he said he would see what could be done for me.

I expected that he would let me sleep in an outbuilding among the straw like I had done where I'd been "Tatie Pickin" at Neap house, but when he came back he told me that I could share his sons bed for the night.

With that arranged we settled down for the evening indoors after his wife had been into West Stockwith on her bike to the shops there. She had already baked bread and pies during the morning, as indeed most farmers women folk did then.

After helping him and his lad to feed and bed down the two horses and attend to four beef cattle that he had, we sat and talked about our different ways of life.

I don't think before that evening that I had ever given much thought to the difference between life in town, and day-to-day life in the country, there was no comparison!

At nine o'clock the mans wife asked me to leave my shirt downstairs, and giving me another old one, gave Robin (the lad) a candle and told him to take me up to bed.

It was a big old fashioned double bed with ample room for both of us, and blowing out the light we laid down, and Robin told me that his father together with him and his mother lived in one half of the big house, and his fathers brother lived in the other part with his own wife and two girls.

They were both Market Gardeners growing produce for the wholesale markets for resale to shopkeepers. Like most country folk with fair amount of land, they both kept a pig or two and the one who was his father had also the four young bullocks that would eventually be sold for beef.

I asked who owned the hens that I had seen wandering about and he said "Oh both of 'em, they gather eggs every morning do the girls for both houses".

When I woke up again (Robin must have talked me to sleep) it was eight o'clock on Sunday morning, and Robin was shaking me to get up for a wash and breakfast.

The man had been up and about since Half-past four attending to the animals.. This was perhaps the greatest difference between a "Towney" and a countryman.

Whereas in town and factory, life is ruled by the clock, in the open country and especially on the farms, the day begins at dawn (or even earlier) and the needs of the livestock come first.

My shirt was at the side of the bed washed and dry ready for me to wear. After sleeping in clothes for more than a week, to undress and sleep in a bed was a real luxury and after a hot breakfast I was again ready for the road. so after thanking them I set out along the road to whatever might happen next.

Chapter.15.

Stranger in a strange place.

On that Sunday nothing happened out of the ordinary for a normal Sunday in the country at that time. In the 1920's a countrymans Sabbath was very much a day of rest except for those whose job it was to look after livestock, in which case the man responsible went twice a day for that purpose.

The day was fine and bright and I went along the road to a junction where a wooden signpost with two arms indicated Bawtry and Retford to the left hand and Doncaster to the right.

Taking the Doncaster road I went steadily on my way keeping a look out possibilities of any jobs for the next day when the weeks work re-started.

With no traffic, not even farm traffic the flat road was almost deserted except for an occasional cyclist, that being the commonest form of transport for everyone on their ordinary pursuits and short journeys between places.

Because everyone knew everyone else, any stranger was noticed at first sight, and I had cause to remember that on that Sunday.

I had got a can of tea mashed at a small village a little way back down the road. It was only a small place little more than a hamlet with only one row of cottages and two or three more scattered ones by the roadside.

With the food I had left from the previous Friday's purchase on Trentside, and half a loaf with butter and cheese that the market gardeners wife had given me that morning, together with a large piece of apple pie I had quite sufficient for that day.

So sitting down at the roadside I prepared to eat. As I did so a bike stopped beside me, and as the rider dismounted I saw that it was a policeman. Although he was not wearing either

his tunic or his helmet, the blue Melton cloth trousers regulation pattern boots told the identity of the wearer.

A man of about thirty he was a typical country policeman, not the ponderous, officious, slow thinking type portrayed by caricature artists and comic playwrights, but the down-to-earth straight talking "Village Bobby".

In answer to my "Good Morning" he came straight to the point asking me where I had come from, what was I doing there, and where did I live. As I was not conscious of having done anything wrong I had no hesitation in answering him quite frankly on all three points.

He seemed satisfied that I was a genuine type, and then he told me a few things for my own benefit regarding myself and the law. Personal experience is a great teacher, and I learned quickly in my travels.

He told me:- "I knew within a minute or two when you begged hot water near my house. Country folk miss nothing that goes on round 'em, so I came to find out who was out and about on Sunday morning.

If you ask for hot water to make tea, that's begging, because the water must be boiled for you and that is giving a service, but asking for cold water is not begging according to law.

If you offered a penny or even a ha'penny for hot water you aren't begging because you offered to pay for it. I can't prevent you walking along a public road or a footpath, but remember! If you sleep rough on private land, or I found you in somebody's shed without permission I could take you in custody for trespass, or being on enclosed premises for an unlawful purpose.

I can see that you aren't a vagrant, but if you are walking about, or sleeping rough after dark and before 6 A.M with no money, or less than one shilling (5p) in your possession, then you

are liable under the Vagrancy Act for being without visible means of subsistence.

So although you are living by your wits so to speak, if you remember what I've told you and don't get in trouble with us you'll be alright".

With that he mounted his bike and rode back to the village, and with my meal finished I washed out my can in the dyke and went on my way.

The next morning after an early breakfast by the roadside a few miles further on towards Doncaster a motor wagon passed me and stopped a little further on. The driver got out of his cab and climbing over a gate went into a field to do what comes naturally to us.

Thinking that perhaps I might get a ride to Doncaster I went up to the wagon and waited until the driver came back to his wagon again.

In answer to my question he said that I could ride with him all the way to Harrogate for which town his load ^{of} carrots and swedes was destined.

Although my original intention had been to stay the night at the Hotel in Doncaster (I had been told that there was a good "Kip House" in that town) one place was just as good as ~~the~~ another for me so into the cab I got.

Even though transport wagons were in those days restricted to 20 miles an hour speed limit, and allowing for a stop en-route for tea and a sandwich at a transport cafe, it was only early afternoon when we arrived in Harrogate.

After replenishing my food stock again in town I took the road out to the North West.

Even if it were possible for me to remember every detail of

every days activities, the repetition would become boring to the reader. Because although the individuals concerned might be different, the general objectives and the methods used were basically the same.

For that reason I have recounted those incidents and situations that were unusual or noteworthy and therefore I have remembered them vividly even after many years.

In that way the next Friday morning found me sitting on a low dry-stone wall near Gargrave on the Skipton to Settle road where the surrounding countryside is mainly grazing land with little or none suitable for arable cultivation. It was completely different to the rich flat lands of the Vale of York and Trentside.

In the three days since leaving Harrogate behind on the Monday two or three little jobs had netted me two or three shillings each, so I had enough money for what I might need in the next few days.

Having reasoned that by getting "Lifts" from wagon drivers often took me either past or away from possible work opportunities, and the weather still reasonably good for Autumn I was surprised when a motor wagon stopped beside me because I had not "Thumbed" him!

Leaning out of his cab he asked if he could give me a lift because he was going to Carlisle, but he would drop me anywhere on that road if I wanted to get off before Carlisle.

Possibly he wanted someone to talk to because he said that he'd come from Osset that morning, and it got a bit "Dowly" on a long journey on your own.

With only one stop at Settle for tea and a sandwich, it was afternoon when we parted company in Carlisle, and I went to

find a "Kip-house" for the weekend, and also look around for what one could call "The Main Chance" for myself.

I found a "Model" lodging house not far from Caldewgate, and after having something to eat and a good wash in the wash-house which was in the backyard I went out into the town to get some food for the weekend besides looking for possible odd jobs on the outskirts.

Carlisle was not only an important railway junction and locomotive maintainance depot, it was also a busy market town for all that part of Cumberland. That meant that the food shops like grocers and butchers would have bits and pieces to be had in wrap-ups for two or three pence.

I must have arrived on a Market day because the town was packed with shoppers, and the shops were very busy, nevertheless I walked round and got a wrap-up at a butchers, and together with an onion plus some potatoes I went back to my Kip and cooked a hot meal on the hot plate frying the meat and liver etc with the onion while the potatoes were boiling.

As I had crossed over the bridge across the River Eden I saw something that I have always remembered. It was a salmon on it's way up the river to spawn, and the first salmon that I had ever seen alive and swimming. The clean water of the Eden was far different to the black polluted rivers of the West Riding of Yorkshire.

After my evening meal I went out into the town again. By that time the many stall holders were packing up to go home, and the larger shops were clearing out the days rubbish and left-overs so this was my opportunity to see what could be got for a few more pence. In my position the chance might not be there on the following day to get these things.

Again I did well at the shops with bacon bits and cheese etc and as I retraced my steps towards the "Kip" a stallholder was packing up after the days trading, so I helped him to load his things into a small motor van.

He had a young girl with him, but he appreciated my help, and when we had finished gave me a sixpence and asked which way I was going when I left Carlisle again.

When I said "North" he gave me a bit of advice about the route to take into Scotland.

He said:—"From here to Dumfries is a good 33 mile going through Gretna, and it's a hungry road because there aren't many houses before Gretna, and every tramp and pedler has mooched 'm to death. If you go the way I tell you, you can cut six mile off the road to Annan."

Then he told me where to turn off to the left for Bowness-on-Solway, and then go over the disused railway bridge to the small town of Annan.

The next day (Saturday) was uneventful and not very fruitful as regards finding jobs to do, although I remember that a butcher gave me a sheep's head, and would take nothing for it. The meat from this after boiling it, provided me with a hot meal together with potatoes, and the broth which was left I gave to another lodger for his own use.

In this way the cooking skills which I had learned from my mother were a great help to me. Whether or not it was a case of "Beginners Luck" or not it would be hard to say, but certainly both the weather and other things had been on my side.

Knowing that I would not find anything profitable before I crossed the Border into Scotland I left the kiphouse on Sunday morning early and took the road Northward out ^{of} Carlisle.

There were few people out and about before breakfast time on Sunday morning except a few railwaymen and milkmen, and soon I had left the town well behind, but there was no hurry.

Besides which because of my "Shopping" activities I had enough bread, cheese, bacon, tea and sugar to last me the next couple of days at least with care.

After leaving the outskirts behind I realised what the ~~stal~~holder meant when he called it a "Hungry" road. There were ~~✓~~ not many houses, and both sticks and water were not to be seen at the roadside.

When I did eventually get a can of tea made, the man who came to the door had such a "Fed Up" expression that I almost regretted asking him for hot water! When I thanked him he never even answered me.

I had no difficulty finding the side road to the left to Bowness-on-Solway, like all the roads at that time it had a signpost to tell where it led to.

It was a narrow "Metalled" road (without tarmac, just stones rolled down flat) and the fields on each side showed by the the ditches full of water on each side, that it was marsh land.

I had not gone far along it before I came to a large house with an overgrown garden in front, with an overgrown privet ~~✓~~ hedge round it. As it seemed likely that even though this was a Sunday, it was possible that I might be able to get the job of cutting the hedge and cutting the grass for the next day.

With that in mind I went along the weed grown path to the front door and knocked with the iron knocker.

Life on the road was always full of the unexpected. One had always to be on the lookout for an unfriendly dog, or even a hostile householder, but I was certainly not prepared for what

did happen on that occasion.

I heard the sound of bolts being drawn back, then the door opened and a woman of perhaps forty stood there.

Before I had a chance to speak at all she thrust a half-crown into my hand, then closed the door leaving me standing openmouthed on the step looking at the closed door as I heard the bolts shot home again!

Returning to the road again I went on my way in a sort of dazed amazement, half-a-crown richer but wondering what kind of folk lived in that house.

Possibly in the years since 1925 some more houses may have been built there, but at that time apart from a row of old cottages at the roadside, plus one or two scattered ones with thatched roofs Bowness was little more than a hamlet in the Solway marshes without even a village shop or a Policemans house.

Nor was there any sign of that accepted part of village life, the village church or a chapel. It was hard to believe that almost within seeing distance was the main road into Scotland.

It was truly an isolated community in every sense.

The day was well advanced but I had no need to press on because that was my destination for that night, so I got my can of tea mashed at one of the cottages where an old but very healthy looking man sat on a stool by the doorstep.

He asked me if I was going to Annan, and when I said "Yes I am" he said "Well don't go onto the bridge at night. Get down to it somewhere 'til daylight". He even told me of a suitable place to spend the night under cover.

His attitude was in every way typical of the genuine countryman. Down to earth and taking everyone at face value on an equal footing as another working-class individual like himself.

As I sat by the old mans door eating and listening to him describing their way of life in what seemed to me a place that had been passed and left behind by the rest of the world, it occured to me that Bowness could have changed very little in the last 200 years!

The man speaking to me was old enough to remember the makig of the railroad and the building of the Solway Bridge in 1869.

He told me how the villagers cut peat from the peat delphs, the men digging out the peat with long bladed grafting spades while girls and women wheeled them away and stacked the peats to dry ready for use on their fires.

Even the cottages themselves built of roughly dressed stone and limewashed white were roofed some with roughly cut Cumb-erland slates, or thatched with reeds.

Once a week a butcher called with his van, and on Mondays a grocer came with his van bringing groceries. When the post-~~man~~ called on his bike he took back any mail for posting.

Although I had found many country places in my travels, it was the most "Cut Off" community that I had yet seen, yet it had an air of contentment!

Walking on out of the village I had no difficulty finding the spot where I was to spend the night. There were two Peat delphs(it was the first time that I had ever seen one)and I continued along the road until I reached a cottage behind which was the second delph(or digging place).

A little further on I could see a row of Alder and willow trees at right angles to the road, on the opposite side of the road to the cottage, behind these I would find the shed that the old man had told me about.

Now at my stopping place for the night I prepared for the

rest that I must get before I crossed the Solway Firth next morning into Scotland.

Taking my can off my belt I went to the cottage to get tea mashed, then coming back to the roadside again I sat for a little supper before approaching the "Rough Kip" behind a small farmyard where all seemed quiet.

It was a roughly made but strong shed with the boards overlapping to allow air between them, and also prevent rain from running inside. The inside was full almost to the roof with dried bracken and reeds. There were hurdles tied together like a gate across the front which faced into the yard.

Climbing up these I made myself comfortable for the night among the bracken. Darkness was falling and the mist gathering over the marshland, but there were at least ten hours to pass before six the next morning.

During the daytime I had seen and heard many "Peewits" (plovers) and curlews feeding and calling across the quiet landscape, now as nightfall came on I could hear owls.

Their flight was silent as always, but the drawn-out hoots and "Ki-wiks" as they fly on their hunting mission must surely be the lonliest of sounds at night.

After winding my faithful "Turnip" watch I fell asleep thinking of the days events, especially of the big, tweed dressed silent woman in the big house with its bolted door and the half-crown she had given me.

A fact that may seem a little strange to a reader, is that although I had now been away from my home and my home town I had not thought about it much except to contrast the open country and fresh clean air with the polluted smoky atmosphere of the crowded streets of Hunslet.

Although it was now 16 days and a half since I had closed the kitchen door behind me that Friday morning, there was no homesick feelings in me. The thing that did surprise me, and still does, is the distance that one can cover in a day by just walking steadily and not hurrying at all!

Having slept well I awoke to grey daylight a little after dawn to hear a cockerel crowing nearby. Gathering my belongings together I came down to the ground again and then back onto the roadside. It was time to make tracks to the bridge.

I had collected a handful of dry twigs the previous evening and saved half my can of tea from my supper I lit a small fire to warm the tea which I drank. Then washing out the tea leaves in the ditch I hung the can on my belt and set out again.

About 100 yards further and the road turned sharp left to pass the farmhouse and follow the high dyke (or floodbank) that prevented the tide flooding the fields at high water.

A little way further I could see a low bridge with a railwayman's house, a telegraph pole beside it, and the railway embankment stretching away to the left again.

Just a few yards before reaching the bridge I saw a well trodden path from the road up the dykeside, so I went up it to the bridge. Looking back over the bridge I saw the tiny station, it was only a halt with a small platform in front of the house on which stood a few milk churns and nothing else.

I had been told that although the villagers often went over to the shops at Annan, the railwayman would turn strangers back from the bridge. I looked at my watch, it was six o'clock and the sun was beginning to show through the mist. A dog barked inside the house, time I was on my way to Scotland.

Turning again to the bridge, across the bridge end several str

ands of barbed wire were stretched and there was the usual red painted cast-iron notice plate stating the penalty for ~~the~~ trespassing on the property of the railway company.

At a place where the wire had been pulled apart I bent down and went onto the bridge. The last train to cross the bridge had been in 1921 and now it was disused by rail traffic.

The bridge was built of iron and supported by hollow tubular legs in pairs like tressles, and each pair was bolted to big concrete blocks in the bed of the firth. The bridge was 1,940 yards long and there must have been 150 or more tressles to support the single track rail link with the other side.

Between the bridge parapet and the rails the structure was decked with ~~concrete~~^{very} iron plates riveted together, but there ~~was~~ was no wooden catwalk as is usual on a viaduct, only a tubular handrail about shoulder height. Between the sleepers the space was open and the water of the Solway Firth could be seen 30 or 40 feet below, the whole structure was painted red.

It stretched away to the Scotland side like some giant centipede and I set out along the lefthand upstream side in early morning sunlight.

The inch thick plates made good walking, and striding along I soon reached what seemed like a slight curve in the middle of the bridge. Then I felt the plate under my feet move with a grating sound, and I realised that it was only held by about four rivets at one corner, the rest had sheared off under the strain as the plates buckled and pulled apart.

Now moving forward cautiously I knew that what I had thought was a gentle curve, was in fact the middle piers of the bridge leaning over as the water whittled away the sand under the stone or concrete footblocks on which it stood!

On my side many plates had already fallen away, and through the holes could be seen the water ebbing out below, but more disturbing still was the certainty that if one did fall, one would certainly hit the struts bracing the tressle legs before one hit the water!

I had never been in such a situation before. To go forward was dangerous and to go back was impossible, to say that I was alarmed would be an understatement.

The fact that my topcoat was draped over my right shoulder, across my chest and back, and fastened at my waist on the left side like a plaid left my hands free. So stepping up onto the parapet girder and gripping the handrail I went forward hand-over-hand warily.

Some people might say "Well you shouldn't look downwards," but when the next step might well be into space, it pays to watch each and every footfall.

Eventually I did get past the dangerous part and was once again able to stride forward confidently. On the left-hand side of the bridge the plates had buckled upwards and overlapped instead pulling apart, and just as I reached the Scotland side a man wheeling his bike came onto the bridge to cross to the England side.

As we met I remarked that it was very bad in the middle of the bridge, and he said, "Why man ye crossed on the wrong side!

I always cross on the high side an' carry ma bike over the bad bit". I looked at my watch, it was seven o'clock and I had taken a whole hour to cover less than one-and-a-quarter miles.

Near the short road from the bridge end to the main road there was a row of houses, and I got my can of tea made at the first house where the woman was preparing to do the washing.

She asked me if I'd come "Ower the brigg"but made no comment when I said "Yes". Taking my tea I sat down at the roadside and had my breakfast with the last of my bread. I felt that I needed the hot tea that Monday morning.

As I rose to go into Annan I turned to look back at the red bridge and the Solway where the tide had now turned and was racing back between the piers of the bridge, and in my mind I made a resolution for the future.

It was that if ever came or went that way again I would go via Gretna Green walking the extra distance rather than save six miles and repeat that nightmare journey.

Two or three years later I did in fact come back that way to Carlisle, and I turned off the main road to take a last look at the Solway Bridge. Indeed it was still there unchanged (in fact it was not finally demolished until 1935) see note "The Solway Bridge" on last page.

Then I went on my way on my first ever visit to Scotland which I had literally entered unlawfully through the "Back Door". Sometime later albeit at dead of night when no trains were running I crossed both Crimble Viaduct and Arthington Viaduct between Harrogate and Leeds, but they were both in use and in good repair and still are.

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Chapter.16.

Over The Border

Whatever the reason put forward to explain it, it was remarkable how in spite of the constant flow of traffic and people between England and Scotland, and vice-versa, the division between the two countries was noticeable in every way.

When I called at a bakers shop in Annan to buy bread I found that although the standard loaf in England was 2 pounds, in Scotland it was a four pound loaf which divided into two halves for sale. So if one wanted a two pound loaf, one asked for a "Half-Loaf"!

In addition to articles of food and the people who dealt in being named differently (for instance I found that a butcher would also be called a "Flesher"), almost everyone spoke with a broad Dumfrieshire accent. The contrast between this "Brogue" and the slower more even Cumberland accent was so marked that one might think the object was to be aloof.

Despite this apparent "Us and Them" appearance I found no difficulty in fitting in with the different ways and customs.

Always a good learner I learned quickly to accept changes in situations as they arose, and I never found myself in any serious trouble wherever I went.

Apart from the unpromising weather there was nothing that I can remember that was outstandingly noticeable on ^{My} walk to Dumfries that day apart from the difference in landscape.

Here on the Scottish side the land was much higher and different in character being mostly grazing and dairy farming, in sharp contrast with the wet, marshy land of the area bordering the Solway Firth on the Cumberland side.

The bright morning had turned to an intermitant drizzle be

fore I had got very far beyond Annan, and the road offered but little in the shape of either firewood or shelter.

There was some of the bacon that I had got in Carlisle left in my poachers pocket, but as it was almost impossible to light a fire I got some tea mashed at a cottage and contented myself with bread and cheese.

I knew that there was a lodging house in Dumfries, because a couple themselves on tramp, that I had spoken to near Annan had just stayed the weekend there. With that in mind I pressed on to Dumfries and the "Kip House".

When I arrived in the old town where Robert Burns had died almost 150 years before, finding the "Kip" was easy because the woman had told me the name of the street and the woman that owned the place.

Like most of the Scottish lodging houses, it catered for both sexes under the one roof. It was in a large house with four bedrooms, one for men only, one for women only, and the third one for married couples. The fourth bedroom was the landladies private quarters.

It was good clean "Lodge", clean, friendly enough, but strictly "No Nonsense" and Mrs. Drummond the landlady ruled the roost.

The charge was one shilling (5p) per night, and adjoining the kitchen there was a wash-house which was well used not only by the lodgers but by Mrs Drummond also. Besides the washing for that house, the Drummonds also owned the "Kip" at Hawick where Mr. Drummond was in charge and sent the washing from Hawick to Dumfries on the Sunday evening bus to be washed on the Monday and returned on the Wednesday bus.

When I had paid and been booked in I made myself a meal of fried bacon and bread, and then availed myself of the wash-house sink to have a good head-to-foot wash.

The next priority was as always food, so with that object in my mind I went out into the town.

Even in 1925 the ancient towns of Dumfries and Maxwealtown divided only by the River Nith, and joined by the ancient bridge across it, were very much a tourist attraction.

Obviously in Autumn the tourist season was over for that year but the narrow winding streets (or wynds and vennels as they were called in the old town) were there with the shops open for business.

So possibly because of the old Scottish saying that "There is aye (always) something for a strange face" I did very well with two or three pennies at the butchers and grocers etc.

When I returned to Drummond's kip I had bought some potatoes and onions, and taking a pan I boiled potatoes and onions with some minced meat and oddments from the butchers and made a hot stew on the hotplate.

A middle aged couple were staying there, and they had a fifteen-year old daughter who worked at a mill where yarn was made for spinning into artificial silk. The mother and father earned a little money by mending and making doormats which at that time were made of cocoanut fibre (Coir) spun like a rope and plaited together everyone even shopkeepers used them.

The girl Maggie had just come in from work when my stew was ready, and as there was much more "Hash" than I could possibly eat myself I went across to them and asked if they would like the remainder while it was still hot.

When anyone is of no fixed address, and lives from day-to-day and job-to-job and by ones own wits, no useable offer is ever refused, it is an unwritten law of survival. They accepted it gratefully and after their meal washed out the pan and repla

ced it back on the shelf from which I had got it.

They talked to me for a while before going to bed, and as they talked they were each mending two small doormats. It was a rough, dirty job, and very hard on the hands. As she worked I noticed that her hands were as rough and hard as any manual labourers would be.

The man had been a collier, but there was no work in the pits for him now in Lanarkshire, so they scraped a living by mat mending (or to use the slang term "Tiger Hunting") and the few shillings that the girl Maggie earned at the mill.

They suggested that I should go to the mill because the manager was an Englishman and he might find me a labouring job in the mill.

On the following morning I went down to the mill and enquired at the office in the yard. A woman whom I took to be the receptionist came to the window marked "enquiries" and said that she would see the manager for me.

To my surprise a tall man that I supposed was the manager came out to speak to me, and his first words were "You're English aren't you?" Of course I replied that I was, and I was "Job Hunting" was there a vacancy for an unskilled workman?

He remarked that I was typical, straight-to-the-point, and he liked that. Then he dashed all my hopes at one go by pointing out that the firm's product was hosiery, there was very little unskilled work for men, and even packing and despatch was done by women and young girls.

But then he asked me what kind of "Odd Jobs" I was used to and then asked if I would like to do a job for him at their house. When I said "yes" he wrote the address on a bill head and told me to say that he had sent me from the mill.

I had no difficulty finding the house in a residential part of the town. It was a largish house with a front garden and a kind of "Lean-To" extension built on at the back. It had an outside door besides a door giving entry from the house, and if memory serves me right, either three or four sash windows.

The managers wife outlined my job to me. I was to whitewash the ceiling and colour-wash the with green "Distemper" (a forerunner of emulsion paint which superceeded it) then paint the inside woodwork doors and window frames.

They supplied all the materials and brushes, and this was a time when my previous experience with the painting contractor paid off for me.

I wore my cloth cap and an old cotton smock to work in and I worked three full days in all finishing on the Friday at mid-day. The lady of the house was well pleased with ^{my} handiwork on the job.

As for myself I considered that as I had had two good meals each day, and numerous drinks of tea as well. Also a pair of thick tweed trousers (my own well worn one being splashed when doing the walls and ceiling) a pair of good wool socks and a flannel shirt, all that plus £1 and 3 shillings in cash I had had a good well paid job.

It was a blue Scottish £1 note that I had ever seen, but after paying my "Kip" I went straight out and got it changed by buying tea, sugar, a tin of milk, and basic items that I would need for the weekend.

Here again my luck held out for me. Having got my requirement in a paper carrier bag I went onto a wide thoroughfare at the riverside known as the White Sands.

This was what might be termed the Dumfries bus station be

cause it was there that coaches from and to anywhere could park. The narrow streets of the old historic part of the town being unsuitable for large motor traffic even then.

So I sat on the low concrete parapet to check my money and count my change before returning. I had done very well with my shopping, and at the grocers where I bought the tea, sugar, ~~at~~ etc and into which I had been a day or two sooner he had asked if I was staying at "Drummond's place" when I said I was he wrapped a ham shank up together with the "cuttings" from the slicer.

Looking down I saw that a two shilling piece had fallen on the ground and a ten shilling note also. Thinking that I must be more careful with my hard-to-get money I picked them up and returned them to my pocket.

However when I arrived back in the kitchen and having put my food in my locker I rechecked my money before putting the ten shilling note in my tinbox for safety. With a shock I found that I had not one "Ten-Bob" note, but two! I could only think that someone had dropped it when getting out of a bus.

For the precise reason that no-one "flashes" bank notes about in a common lodging house I had changed the blue pound note for my shopping.

Most of the lodgers at Drummonds were "regulars" and well known locally, even so my trousers and jacket with my money inside it were folded under my pillow at bedtime. For that matter I don't think anyone trusted the "Deputy" too far.

He was a young man about thirty years old, and he was not above taking a frying pan in which someone else had left meat fat or bacon fat, and frying bread or eggs in it. He watched everyone cooking anything with that object in view.

Also he was an inveterate grumbler, and on the Sunday night

he complained to me that he had to go down to the White Sands to meet the bus and bring back the dirty washing from Hawick.

When I remarked about this to the mat-mender and his wife, they both remarked to me. "You'd do well to take no notice o' yon fellow he knows which side his breads buttered! He gets bed and breakfast, and seven shillings a week for keeping this down stairs tidy and emptying the trash and the bedroom buckets.

Manies the time that we two have no more than that for wearing out shoeleather finding "Tigers"(mats) to mend, out in the weather while he's in hear under cover."

In the kitchen there was a "Hobbing Foot"(the local name for a cobblers last), and with a few bits of leather and some boot rivets I had got from a boot repair shop I tipped the toes and heels of my boots. Then I greased them well with the fat from my frying pan to keep them soft and waterproof.

On the Monday following I went over the bridge to Maxwelltown to see what opportunities there might be for me, but although I did get a small garden to dig for half-a-crown, a can of tea and a scone and cheese (a Scotch Scone is large and it takes the place of bread), it was evident that there were not enough odd jobs in both towns to keep me very long.

When I told the "Tiger Hunter" of my decision to "Hit the ~~the~~ Road" again he agreed and told me a route that I could take along the Border country and eventually back into England.

The next morning, Tuesday I again set out on my travels. It was a fine though dull day and I made good time to Lockerbie where I found a "Kip" of sorts. At tenpence (4p) a night it wasn't as good as Drummonds had been. It was only an old cottage up a narrow back alley, and I was glad when morning came.

The road to Moffat produced nothing for me except wet clothes

and when I did arrive at the little town of Moffat it was to find that there was neither a lodging house or any shelter where I could spend the night, it was my first real experience of a Scotch Mist which penetrated everything.

I am told that now-adays there are more people and more facilities in Moffat than there were in 1925, but at that time it consisted of one long main street, a grocery store and general shop and little else.

At the shop I got bread and tea, and quite a few cheese and other bits. The butcher shop was not open, but at a House (the single story "Abot-an'-Aben" type) an oldish lady made me a can of hot tea and gave me a hot scone. She said that I could sit in the porch between the two doors to "Take Your Piece" (eat my food) in the dry.

She seemed glad to have someone to talk to and chatted to me as I ate. Remarking that I had a good top-coat, but it was "Gey Wet" she said that often a tramp would go to the Gas Works to dry his clothes at night.

So as darkness was now falling I made my way up the side street at the top of which could be seen the chimney and the gasholder of the small gasworks. As one could expect the big double gates to the yard were now closed for the night, but a small wicket gate with a latch gave access to the yard. Opening this I went inside and across to the retort house.

The night stoker was there (he worked from 6.P.M until 6.A.M and he said that I could stay in the retort house until morning when he went off duty.

It was hot and dusty, and every two hours he came to draw the coke from two retorts, and then recharge them with fresh coal.

I half sat, half laid on the coal stack sleeping in snatches between charging, when the clatter of the coke drag and the

Clang of the coal shovel made sleep temporarily impossible.

Even so it was still better than spending a night outdoors in the wet, drizzling mist, and besides drying my clothes, with so much fire and water available I could make tea, albeit without milk, but still hot and sweet.

After that night at Moffat, whenever I was in need of a "Rough Kip" and a small town gas house was handy I went there to spend the night.

After a wash in a bucket of cold water I went on my way at 6.0'clock taking the road to Innerleithen, with the "Scotch Mist" enveloping everything like a wet blanket.

I had breakfast in Moffat, and it was a good thing that I had a fair amount of food with me, because there was nowhere on that road before I reached Innerleithen the next evening where I could get food. Even cottages were few and far between, with no dry fuel to make a fire by the roadside.

I have no doubt that in Summer the Dalveen Pass and the headwaters of the River Nith are very picturesque and beautiful, but on that grey late Autumn day with everything wet, grey, and sodden, even the Cheviot Hills rising at either side looked dark and forbidding.

The tourist season was over, and the only two cottages that I passed had their doors and windows boarded up. The wooden huts and kiosks at the roadside were also shuttered and locked up for the winter.

Then as I turned a bend in the road I saw a sight for which I was totally unprepared. Away to my left in a small glen some distance back from the road was a magnificent waterfall!

I was cold and hungry, and doubtless the spray from the fall added to the mist blowing down the pass, but I stopped a few

minutes to look at it, because I had never seen such a fall in my life before.

Later I learned that it's height was three hundred feet, and during the passing of countless centuries the water had cut away the softer parts of the rock to leave a natural spout from which the water fell in an unbroken stream into the pool at the foot of the hill.

It was then that I saw the first vehical to pass me since I had left Moffat. It was a battered old Ford car with a typical hill farmer driving it with his dog in the back.

Shortly afterwards I came to a roughly built stone cottage by the roadside. There was a whisp of blue smoke from the chimney so I went to the door with my can, knocked, and asked the man who answered the door to scald me some tea.

Taking my can without a word he went back inside to return a few minutes later with the steaming tea which he handed to me saying as he did so:--"You'll need to hurry or you'll no' make the Loch afore dark".

Then without another word he shut the door again and I sat in the little wooden porch and ate a meal of sorts with the bread etc that I had with me before continuing my journey.

I had lost track of time because my watch had stopped. I had not wound it that morning, and by the time that I had reached Saint Mary's Loch it was dark, the mist had cleared, and the still surface of the water reflected the stars like a big mirror.

By the roadside opposite the Loch was a long low cottage with a lamp burning in the living room. Thinking that it was not wise to knock at the door at night I went carefully round to the back. There was a woodshed and lifting the latch I went inside. Besides logs and sticks for kindling there were

some dry sacks

Spreading these on the sawdust covered earth floor I layed down and fell asleep. Although my coat was wet I covered myself with it to keep off the draught from the door.

How long I slept I don't know but when I awoke daylight was breaking and I was shivering.

Getting to my feet I beat my hands and stamped my feet, then looking out I saw the cottage chimney smoking, so I went and asked the woman to mash me some tea.

When she brought me my can of tea she asked me where I had spent the night, so I told her quite truthfully. Shaking her head she simply said;-"It would be gey cold in there for you",

On leaving the Loch behind I found myself crossing an empty desolate moorland with nothing on either side except peatbog heather and bracken, and the empty road in front. The only living things were sheep and an occasional curlew or a plover until I met a farmer type.

Asking him the time I set my watch going again and continued on my way to Innerleithen.

I had picked up a handfull of dry twigs in the woodshed, and with these and a handfull of dead bracken I lit a small fire in a sheltered spot to boil water in my can from a spring.

All I had left to eat was some raw bacon and some tea and sugar, the last bread I had eaten at breakfast. So I had hot tea and bacon bits there at the roadside.

Further on before I came in sight of Innerleithen I saw a small rough stone cottage near the road, and going to the door I asked the old woman if she would sell me something to eat.

Going back indoors again she returned with a steaming bowl of hot broth and a thick piece of hard rye bread.

She would accept no payment from me, saying that she could not take payment for a Christian duty to feed the hungry.

Even after the lapse of all those years I still remember how good that peppery broth and bread tasted.

At the Co-op shop in the town I bought bread, tea, sugar, and got some more bits of cheese and bacon etc, and Margarine.

I spent that night in the retort house at the gas works, and in the corner was a gas ring and a kettle. A long flexible pipe came through a hole in the wall to the stove, and I fell asleep on the coalheap watching mice running down the pipe to eat crumbs on the floor, and then running back up again and through the hole.

The next day was fine and I got two small jobs which provided me with another two or three shillings, and I also met a man and his woman (both middle aged) who were also "On the Road". They said that they would stay the night in the Shelter House.

This was something which I had not thought about before, possibly because the Scottish poor law system is not like the English equivalent. The "Inspector of Poor" (the Scottish equivalent of the English "Relieving Officer"), could issue a "Line" (a note) which one gave to the caretaker of the "Shelter House" authorising a night's shelter.

So the three of us duly presented ourselves to the Inspector at the appointed time of 6.P.M. Then joined by another man we took our "Lines" to the shelter house which was almost next door to the Gas Works.

It was simply an empty room with a fireplace, but no furniture on the bare wooden floor, or even a blanket for covering.

The woman had brought with them a small sack with some wood in, and I volunteered to go to the Gas Works for "Two

Pennies worth of coke". Taking the sack I got about a bucket-full of coke for tuppence, and the stoker told me that the splendid waterfall that I had seen on my way was called "The Grey Mare's Tail".

In Spring and Summer tourists came many miles to see it and the Saint Mary's Loch, but because of so much rainy weather I had seen it at its best, albeit I was not on holiday.

We lit a fire and made tea and had a meal, then we settled down for the night. It provided us with shelter but nothing else even so it was better than a night in the open in the cold weather.

Next morning we went our separate ways, the couple and the man to Peebles, and myself Southwards to the Border.

At Melrose (where I spent the night in the Gasworks) the last rays of the setting sun lit up the old red sandstone Abbey.

Surrounded by green grass it was a picture that I still clearly remember in my mind's eye.

From there onwards even the names of the towns and villages sounded like a page of history. Darnick, Dryburgh, Galashiels, Coldstream, Berwick, Spittal, Belford, Alnwick, and Morpeth.

The weather was cold, wet, and changeable and jobs were very few and far between. While most people were reasonably good natured and helpful there were others who seemed to only see a wayfaring person as undesirable and an object of suspicion and distrust.

On one occasion I spent a whole morning sawing and splitting logs, for which I received half-a-crown (12½p), a drink of tea, two slices of bread and jam, and a lecture on the evils of drink and idleness!

On the the road between Alnwick and Morpeth I met a tramp

coming from Morpeth where he had stayed the night in the Casual Ward at the Workhouse. He asked me for a match, and after exchanging the usual question "Which way have you come", He said he had been to a farm off the road "A piece" (a little way) where the farmer had offered him a job "Topping and Tailing" neeps (swedes).

He was a real old "Cossie", but his information suited me and I went to the farm where two women were already working in a field. The farmer said that he would give me five shillings a day (25p) and two "Drinkings" (tea and sandwiches morning and afternoon) so I agreed.

Our job was to pull up the swedes and chop off the roots and the tops with a short "Billhook" and throw them into heaps to be carted away for storage.

It was a small field and we finished it in two days. The farmer was well pleased and gave us twelve shillings each, it was a welcome addition to my exchequer.

In addition to this the farmer had allowed me to sleep in the "Boothie" (the stone built hut where the farm hands had their meals). It had an open fireplace and with a wood fire it made a comfortable enough "Skipper".

One night the farmer's wife brought me a bowl of broth and a good "Doorstep" of crusty bread for supper, the next night she brought me a basin of porridge and cold milk. As I saved some of the bread and fat bacon from "Drinkings" for lunch I had no need to buy food for those two days.

Next morning I "Took The Road" again and stayed the night at Morpeth Gas Works before proceeding on my way to Newcastle.

I didn't stop in Newcastle but went on straight down Pilgrim Street over the Swing Bridge and up Bottle Bank, not stop

ping until I was well clear of Gateshead. At a watchmans fire by the roadside I stopped to "Drum Up" making tea and having a meal, then on towards Sunderland.

I remember that as I fried bacon over the watchmans fire on a shovel, the local "Pollis" (Policeman) passed on his bicycle but he didn't even bother to look at us.

There was no point in trying to get odd jobs in County Durham, because with their level of unemployment far above the national average, every little spare time job was eagerly sought after by local folk.

I did however get a good break at Cowpen Bewley. On the Sunday night I asked a woman in the village to wash me some tea and as we talked she said that a farmer just down the road going to thresh the next day. quite close to the farm was a brickyard and I spent the night sleeping on the coalheap in the boiler house.

At seven o'clock next morning I was at the farm, and the farmer told me to "Fork off the stack". It is perhaps best at this point if I describe a threshing machine and how it worked because like the steam traction engine that accompanied it the machine is now a thing of the past.

It was a "Self Contained" unit all the machinery being enclosed in a strong wooden body on four wheels, with a drawbar so the engine could pull from place-to-place. The traction engine also supplied the power to drive the machine with a belt from it's flywheel to the pulley of the thresher.

A man stood in a "Well" at the top of the machine, and as the man on the stack tossed the sheaves to him, he cut the strings and fed them into the machine.

As it was fed into the "Drum" the machine "Thrashed" the corn from the ears, separated the ²⁵⁹ grain from the chaff, separated the broken bits of straw and weed seeds from it, and a liver-

from the ears, separated the grain from the chaff, separated broken straw and weed seeds ("Cavings") from it, and delivered them all down separate spouts into sacks to be taken away.

The long straw was tied into bundles called "Bats" by the machine to come out down a chute at the back for carting to wherever it was required.

My job was to fork the sheaves to a man in the middle of the stack who pitched them to the feeder. As the sheaves had to be fed with the ears all one way, the man pitching had to pitch them all one way onto the feeding board.

There were seven men and three women, and when the drinkings came we shared a two gallon can of hot tea between us. I well remember how good the sandwiches of cold roast mutton and homemade bread tasted with the hot sweet tea. Roast mutton was something one rarely got on the road, because of necessity every thing that one cooked must be either fried or boiled, even in a "Kiphouse".

An unwritten law among threshers was that if you forked off the top of the stack you must also fork up the bottom also.

This was harder work and more dusty as one got lower down the stack, and we tied our trouser bottoms with twine because of rats in the stack bottom.

In the mid-morning two rat catchers came from the village one had an Irish Terrier and the other had a Bedlington, and between them they got ten rats, for which the farmer paid one shilling^{for} each rat caught.

One rat did get away, but the farmer was satisfied. Because the stack was under a Dutch Barn there had been no thatch to take off the top and we finished threshing in mid afternoon, so after drinkings he paid each of us 7 shillings (that is the

hired hands like myself)and we each went our separate ways, myself to the brickyard at six o'clock when the boiler firer/brick burner came on night shift.

Putting some potatoes which I had got from the farmer,under one of the boiler firegrates to roast I availed myself of the opportunity to have a good "All Over"wash. For this purpose I stood on a sack on the warm footplates in front of the boiler with a bucket of hot water,afterwards I washed my shirt and towell in another bucketfull.

It is strange how a trivial and often comical incident can stay in ones memory long after more important things have been forgotten.

On that particular Monday night the village "Bobby"decided to pay a routine visit to the brickyard. His amazement when he saw me stood in the nude in front of the boiler I can still se in my minds eye.

"Howay man",he said in his Durham accent."You're nuthung like the statue o' Venus stood there!"

He asked me the usual questions about myself,and then asked where Harbottle the boilerman was. I told him that he was attending to the brick kiln,he left me and I got dressed again.

Before he left me he gave me a tip about the possibility of a day or two's work on the Stockton road.

A bricklayer had contracted to do the brickwork on two shops which were being built for a new housing development.

He had only one man working with him,and he neede help to mix and lay the concrete foundations for them. We had to mix the concrete by hand on a big board,it was hard work but I got £1 and a stamp on my Insurance Cards,so it was a big help for me,so I went on into Stockton where I bought food and

spent a night at a lodging house just off the Market Place.

It was a good clean "Kip" and after a good nights sleep I went to try for work on the new dock which was under construction at Billingham then. Had it rested with the gangers on the job i would have been "set On2", but the contract was let on the understanding that only the local men unemployed would be employed on the site.

I could have got a job at the I.C.I works at Haverton Hill, but again I had no fixed address, and without a job and a weekly wage I could not get lodgings anywhere.

So I took the road again via Thornaby and North Yorkshire.

I can't remember now where I spony that night except that I slept "Rough", but the day after I saw a Motor wagon stood by the roadside, as it was facing the same direction as I was going, and I had not had a lift since leaving Carlisle I decided to ask the driver for a lift on my way.

chapter.I7.

Problem Solved.

and

People of The Road.

Crossing the road to the wagon I looked in the cab, but it was empty. However even as I looked the driver came out of a field where he had been because of necessity.

When I asked him for a lift on my way, he said that he was returning direct to Hull, and I could go with him to there if I wanted to go that far, so I accepted.

He did stop once more before reaching Stone Ferry at Hull where he dropped me off, nevertheless we reached there before tea time so I walked down the road parallel with the River Hull to Hull Harbour.

It was then that I met a boatman whose acquaintance I had made when I had frequented the riverside at Leeds. The surprise was mutual, and Billy asked me how I came to be in Hull?

When I told him he said. "Well we're on the berth at Rank's and we'll be loading to-morrow to go to Goole on afternoon tide, so if you want you can go with us, and I'll give you the ten-~~bo~~(10 shillings=50p) purchase money".

For the benefit of my reader let me explain that a boatman always spoke of his boat and himself together as "We" meaning his togetherness with his vessel.

With that I went on my way turning up past Rank's flour mill where I looked from Salthouse Lane Bridge and saw Billy's boat on the berth before crossing to the other side of Old Harbour.

I found a lodging house in an aptly named street called Blanket Row. It was a small place in a converted dwelling house, and they charged a shilling per night with the use of the fire and pans for cooking. also it was near the Pier, this made it handy

for going to the Old Harbour or the Town Docks area from Dry-
pool to ~~Albert~~ Dock including Queens, Princes, and Humber Docks.

~~It was~~
It was a good clean kip and after a good nights sleep I went
to Ranks's where Billy was loading flour for Ranks Depot at
Leeds. Loading was finished at mid-day and after I had washed
down our decks we left for Goole with the flood tide.

Billy had two foibles, one of them was that he did not like
to make any journey on the waterways at night. He also liked
(quite understandably) to be back home in Hull each weekend.

For those reasons instead of towing with the Goole & Hull
towing Co, he always towed to Goole with the steam keels owned
by Spillers flour mill at Hull.

On that particular day the "Flour Packet "as these vessels
were called by boatmen, was going up the Ouse past Goole to
Selby. Even so I was surprised when we were moored in Barge
Dock at Goole in less than three hours, for the Humber tide
runs fast.

As both of us was going to Leeds he said that I could stay
the night on board with him and go to Leeds because he would
tow with the Aire & Calder canal tug at six o'clock next mor-
nigg which also suited me.

Canal travel is much slower than the tidal river, and it was
late afternoon on Friday before we reached Leeds together with
four more boats and the tug where Billy gave me the ten shil-
ings "Purchase Money".

To explain this, all boats working in tidal water must have
two men on board to satisfy the Insurance regulations. So a
man was hired to go with a boatman who was "All Hands One" (
that is alone on his boat). The hired man was known as the
"Purchase Mate" and his contract ended at Goole or Keadby

according to the destination, either on Ouse or Trent.

I took my turn steering etc and this was to my benefit because it was an unwritten law of the boatmen that if you helped on a boat your "Skipper" was morally obliged to give you a drink of tea and a sandwich, or something to eat.

If he didn't his name would be mud among the other boatmen, and this meant that I did not need to buy any food at Goole.

By accepting Billy's offer I had not only earned ten shillings, but I had also solved the problem of finding some kind of shelter in the unpredictable English Winter.

Not only Billy, but also the other boatmen now knew that if they saw me I would be willing to "Go Purchase" or help to stow or discharge (unload) a cargo.

This not only earned me a few shillings, but because as mate I had the use of the "Fo'castle" (the forward cabin) I had a shelter where I could light a fire and sleep as well as cook on the stove. It also meant that I had no need hang around home sponging on my parents although I could still go to see them.

Of course come Springtime in the month of March I could again return to my wanderings on "The Road" when the weather was lighter and not so severe.

Here I will once more digress in order to describe the kinds of folk that I met with "On The Road". They were many and diverse in every way, a part of an era now long gone.

They did however have one thing in common. None of them had anything but contempt for the "Town Dropouts" who just hung around towns and cities "Scrounging", sleeping in brickyards or any place that allowed them to sleep the night and go back to a day spent like stray dogs, objects of contempt and ridicule.

Among them were many Methylated spirit drinkers of both sexes

who would beg from anyone to buy the "Blue Lady" as it was called among the vagrants. It was by no means unusual to see one of these shiftless dropouts searching a rubbish bin behind the kitchen of a hotel or a cafe in order to find some discarded bits of food to eat!

Even the hardened old tramp who wandered along the roads ~~at~~ between towns and villages, begging his living and sleeping in any barn, building, or haystack on his way, would not have any "Truck" with a "Local Moocher" as he called them.

The real tramp was a person who traveled over a regular area often covering more than one county on his "Round" at more or less regular intervals between places, but never staying long anywhere, yet his face would be familiar.

For the most part the real tramp or "Dossier" was middle aged, but occasionally younger ones might be seen on the road.

There was also another type of "Dossier". This was what was called by the other vagrants a "Spike Wallah", or a vagrant who simply travelled from one workhouse to the next on his round and stayed in the "Casual Ward" of that institution.

The Casual Ward, or "Tramp Ward" was provided under the Poor Law Acts to provide a night's shelter for single vagrants and was set apart from the other wards of a workhouse. It was set apart so there was no contact with the Pauper Inmates of ^{the} rest of the Institution.

It also had a different set of rules for the Casual Poor.

For instance, any person resident in the area covered by a particular workhouse was not allowed to stay a night in the Casual ward. Such a person must apply for admission as an Inmate if destitute.

In the case of a tramp or any casual poor person, admission could only be gained by presenting oneself to the porter

on duty at 6 o'clock in the evening. the porter then booked the following particulars before admitting the person.

"Name, age, trade, where from? Going to? Have you any property?"

The term "Property" referred to anything other than ones clothing which had to be handed in to be returned the next morning, often after being disinfected or "stoved".

The applicant then usually had to bath and put on a shirt provided for that purpose each night. Accomodation was either in separate cells, or in one large room, and each person had two blankets and slept on the floorboards which were bare and were washed by the casuals as their "Task".

the porter had authority to search each casual on admission to see that he didn't take a knife, pipe, tobacco, or matches in with him, but he could take his boots as a pillow.

For supper each one received eight ounces of bread and margerine and a tin mug of weak tea. For breakfast he got a pint of "skilly" (porage made of meal and water with salt added), and if not discharged at eleven o'clock A.M, he received eight ounces of bread, four ounces of cheese, and four ounces of boiled potatoe (unpeeled) at midday.

All these food items were handed out in the ubiquitous tin mug except that is for the bread and margerine, which was in one thick slice and simply held in ones hand to bite and eat.

In many cases nowadays the term "skilly" is used for soup, but this was not so. The unsweetened meal and water porrage was always called "skilly".

There was indeed a provision made in the diet prescribed by the Act for a casual which allowed 1 pint of broth made by boiling bones in water to which possibly a little potatoe or an onion would be added with pepper and salt.

This thin watery concoction was usually given at midday meal and took the place of tea along with the bread and cheese, and it was dubbed "Cock Broth" certainly never "Skilly".

Under the terms of the Act of Parliament covering the Casual Poor in the "Tramp Ward", certain tasks of work must be performed before casuals were discharged.

A copy of the Act of 1879 had been displayed on the Notice board in the ward, and this laid down not only the tasks, but the number of hours to be worked. It also laid down the penalties for refusing to work.

quote:-"Eight hours work in digging, pumping, cutting wood, or grinding corn". In some workhouses the tasks included stone breaking also. All work was allocated at the discretion of a "Taskmaster" (usually the porter).

If a casual refused to do his "Task" or damaged any property of the Institution, he could be taken before a Magistrate who could sentence him to from 7 days to 3 months imprisonment with hard labour. The charge was "Being an idle and disorderly person within the meaning of the Act".

If a casual was kept in the whole day following his admission he would not be ~~discharged~~ until 8 A.M. on the following day.

The Taskmaster could give a four hour task, and if so the casual would be discharged at eleven A.M. In either case he received a voucher which stated "Give the bearer 8 ounces of bread and 2 ounces of cheese, for which this is to be your voucher" this carried the Official stamp and the name of the shop to which it must be taken. In most cases the shop would be about half way to the next town, but if no shop en route took those vouchers, the bread and cheese was given when discharging the casual.

Having been discharged from a "Tramp Ward", a casual must not apply again in a less time than four weeks to the same casual ward. If he did so he could be detained for four days.

This was known as being "Under the Month".

Because of the meagre fare and rough conditions in a "Spike" (the name by which casual wards were known on the Road), no duffer wanted to be detained four days.

To avoid this sometimes a casual would give a false name to the Porter, but that worthy was often pretty shrewd.

At some "spikes" anyone in for four days had to wear the work-house clothes to prevent him absconding. As these were all the same grey colour and stamped, he would soon be arrested then charged with being "Idle and Disorderly".

Besides the old hardened tramps and the spike wallah's, ~~the~~ there were some who although they were "On the Toby" from one place to another, were willing to work and even do "Odd Jobs" in order to pay their "Kip" and buy food etc.

It was with this type of wanderer that I indentified myself, because it was precisely for the independance of finding my own living rather than "Sponge" that I had left home.

There was also the itinerant navvy. He traveled the roads from one public works job to another, making what could be termed the "Skilled" workforce on works undertaken by contractors in the making of roads, sewers, laying cables, and excavations of all kinds.

Any kind of digging and excavating machinery was very much in it's infancy in the 1920's, and public works contractors relied on the navvies for their casual labour.

Usually a heavily built man he could with pick, shovel, 14lb hammer and steel wedge, cut out trenches etc in all kinds of

ground from clay and sand to chalk and solid rock where an explosive was needed.

Most of Britains canals and railroads were constructed by the itinerant navvies, who also drove the tunnels for them.

As an individual, although he was a fellow traveler on the roads, the navvy kept his own company with fellow navvies.

Allways adaptable to circumstances. if necessary he would "Rough It" near the job. If the job was near a town he would stay at a "Kip House", or even on a big contract in huts provided by the contractor on site.

He might also stay (if available) in "Private Digs" (as a lodger in some working class household).

Navvies in general represented almost every part of the British Isles with a preponderance of Irishmen, but in spite of this they were not usually rowdy or quarrelsome.

They had a distinctive mode of dress usually a thick cloth double-breasted jacket with deep pockets inside and outside, with a waistcoat to match, and made to measure.

He wore thick brown corduroy trousers and heavy boots. This together with a strong flannel shirt, and either a cloth cap or a soft felt "Trilby" hat completed his wardrobe.

In a lodging house his eating ^{was} equally simple and without any "Frills". He would buy meat or bacon to fry with eggs, or he often bought a ham shank or a bacon hock, or a piece of beef, and this stewed in a big pan with vegetables and potatoes and a loaf of bread formed his larder.

His recreation was equally simple. A few pints of beer at the nearest "Boozer" was the usual nightly "Break".

Even at work the navvy still kept up his independant style in his attitude to the boss and his job. The accepted condit

ions of employment and the payment of wages fitted his own attitude admirably.

On all Public Works employing casual labour, each man was booked onto the job each day by the "Ganger" (the charge hand or foreman). A man could be sacked at one hours notice by the ganger, likewise a man could leave the job by giving one hours to his ganger. In either case all wages due would be paid on the spot together with his Insurance Cards.

Also on most of these jobs after working a day a navvy could "sub" (get an advance payment, a loan literally on his wages.

This subbing was needed because a navvy was usually "Broke" when he came for a job. Even after being on a job a long time, a navvy rarely saved any money.

His philosophy was "Give me my money on the day that I work, one day at a time, let to-morrow wait until to-morrow".

All this meant that the Timekeeper on the job, not only had to keep track of the hours worked by everyone on the job, but he had to have some cash to pay out the "subs".

Besides this men came and went away again almost every day, so his duties included stamping Cards and paying up the men who "Jacked Up" (left the job on the spot).

For this reason the Timekeeper was nicknamed "The Navvies Clerk" by all and sundry.

Even in the 1930's the real navvy was a dying breed overtaken by the march of progress. Now like the true gipsy he is a character of the past, his like will not be seen again.

Another type of wanderer that one met on the roads and who stayed in lodging houses, was a type who had what one might term a "skill" or line of trade.

A person who went from door-to-door repairing doormats made of cocoanut fibre (Coir) was called a "Tiger Hunter" and usually

he would accompanied by a woman. The woman would collect the the "Tigers"(mats), cook meals etc in the "Kip" while her man did the repairs mending the mats in the kip where they were staying at the time.

One type in this class was a "Prickler". Again he would be accompanied by a woman for the same reasons.

The "Prickler" mended china and pottery ornaments by riveting with strong copper wire and a cement. Most of the ornaments had a sentimental value such as gifts or wedding presents.

~~at the~~ A third type was known as a "Funkum Hawker". Sometimes they would operate singly, but more often a man and a woman "worked" a district together. The woman made small bags by sewing little bits of thin material, and these were filled with lavender and sewn up to be pedaled (hawked) from door to door.

For the most part Funkum Hawking was simply a cover for outright begging and usually accompanied by a hard luck tale.

Where a man was in company with a woman he would be said to have a "Long Haired Mate", and a "Kiphouse" that took couples together was a "padding Can".

The various nomadic folk on the road had a common vocabulary which was understood by all of them even the local "Kiphouse wallahs" who rarely if ever left their town.

For instance "Doing a Skipper" was to sleep rough in an outbuilding or a shed. To "stay at Mother Greenfields" was to sleep outdoors in a field or a hedgebottom. To "Mooch" your "Kip" meant to beg a few pence for a nights lodging.

Any form of begging was "Mooching", and "Pulling Up" or "Gagging" meant accosting passers by in the street for money, cigarettes, or matches. An expression meaning the same thing was to "Tap" someone for a cigarette, matches, etc.

Anyone either "Gagging", "Pulling Up", or "Tapping" would be said to be "On The Lug", or "Lug Pulling".

Anybody picking up cigarette ends in the gutter would be "snipe shooting", and the resulting mixture of tobacco from the discarded "Snipes" was called "Hard Up". Sometimes a dosser would screw up small packets of hard up to sell in a kippa house at one penny each to other wallahs who hadn't a smoke.

"Door Knocking" meant going from door-to-door asking for something, or perhaps peddling something. If one went into a shop for two or three pence worth of anything such as bits of meat, bacon, cheese, or stale buns at a confectioners, they would be "Pitching The Fork".

Even the Casual Wards at Workhouses had nicknames for various types. For instance the regular Inmate who helped the "Spike" porter by handing out blankets, food etc, and helped in the bathroom, was the "Framp Major". The porter himself was a "paid pauper" and rated little better than an Inmate.

One character (now extinct) was the "Mush Faker". He usually "worked" around one area or district, and he might or might not have a "Long Haired Mate". His job was mending Umbrella's which at that time were all hand made and expensive, so the Mush Faker could earn a living repairing them at the "Kip" in which he was staying.

A traveling handyman like myself who was willing to take any reasonable odd-job offered, was considered as almost as high on the social scale (that is in the social order of the road) as a traveling navvy, or anyone else who had a service to offer.

The least rated folk on "The Toby" was the spike wallahs who rated little better than the Dropouts who simply haunted one town or city living like stray dogs.

As one might expect, the "Arm of The Law" had a nickname which varied according to which part of the country one happened to be at the time. Yet all of them would be understood by the nomadic fraternity in general.

Thus any policeman was a "Nicker" a "Slop" a "Rozzer" a "Peeler" a "Flattie" a "Busy", a "Bobby", or simply "The Law".

In fairness to them, the average policeman turned a blind eye to the activities of wayfarers, although all forms of begging and accosting people for that purpose were against the law.

There was no credit for taking anyone to court for begging, and a policeman considered that unless the begger was making themselves a nuisance to the public, such a person was below his dignity as a constable.

Anyone persistantly begging or accosting could be charged as a "Rogue and a Vagabond" under the Vagrancy Acts.

For the same reason if a policeman saw anyone cooking or making a meal by the roadside, unless there was a good reason he would not interfere.

Even the process of cooking by the roadside, and the means of doing so had it's own jargon. For instance everyone carried some kind of pocket knife (often an old table knife) and a large spoon. Sometimes the spoon was referred to as a "shovel" but a knife was always a "Chiv".

Having succesfully pitched the fork at butchers or any other shops, the next thing was find some place to cook whatever one had obtained.

On almost all main roads and most side roads, there were places such as where the road crossed a stream, or a spring from which water could be got. Such a place was a "Drumming Up Station", usually well known to wayfarers (and others)

To make a fire wood was needed, this was "Dry Crack", and a novice on the road would often try to light a fire with bits of "Green" (not dry or dead wood). Experienced folk collected dry twigs from hedge bottoms to start a fire, and nobody used more wood than necessary for the purpose.

To boil water one used a tin can with a wire handle. Such a can for making tea was a "Drum", a big one for boiling vegetables etc to make a stew, or boil potatoes was a "Shackle Drum".

Soup was called "Shackles", and the process of boiling anything was "Drumming Up". The fire was called a "Yog", and after use a dosser would "Douse" the ashes by either putting water on them, or urinating before leaving the drumming up station.

Here I will mention a distinction made in these terms regarding utensils. When using pans in a "Kip", one referred to them as "pots" not as "Drums", but one still "Shackled Up" in them.

On the road one used a tin lid to "Fry Up". Most of these tins could be found on Council rubbish tips, but most shopkeepers would give you a large tin that toffee came in, while a tobacco shop was generally good for a snuff tin for a tea drum.

The main reason for "Dousing" a fire before leaving was because no dosser wanted to start a grass-fire which might burn hedges and fences and damage crops, which would "put Him In Bad" with both the farmer and the Police.

Two trades that one never met on the road were a tinsmith and a glazier because of the impossibility of carrying their stock-in-trade from place. Also one rarely saw a pedler on the road because he had to buy pins, needles, shoe and boot laces, buttons etc which he hawked from door-to-door, from the wholesalers.

These were all in big towns and cities, and he had to show ~~W~~ his Pedlers Licence to get supplies at wholesale price.

The cards of buttons etc which he hawked from door-to-door were rather cheap and tawdry, and known as "Swag". The wholesale shops where he bought them were called "Swag Shops", and the pedler was called a "Swag Hawker".

Inevitably the "Old Dossers'" clothing became verminous, and most other travelers, even spike wallah's avoided them. Lice were "Chats" and anyone lousy was said to be "Chatty".

Washing ones clothes could be done in a kip if one stayed a night or two, usually in a bucket or the sink under the tap.

Out on the road in suitable weather I often washed my shirt and hung it over a hedge to dry while I drummed up and had a meal. I mended my boots often at the roadside by pushing a big pebble or a piece of stone inside to act as a last. Then using another hard pebble as a hammer I held the boot between my knees to nail on the leather.

Boot mending was called "snobbing" and a boot and shoe repairers shop was "The Snob Shop", the shopkeeper (or cobbler) being the "snob". By pitching the fork at a snobshop one could get a few boot rivets (or "Brads" as they were called) and on one occasion in Northampton a "snob" gave me a pair of second hand Army boots which had not been reclaimed after mending!

By using the vocabulary of the road travelers could hold a conversation that would be unintelligible to anyone else. This was even more so when "Rhyming Slang" was also used in the conversation as well.

Inevitably one found people who had been in jail for various offences (Often they could not get a job for that reason) and anybody who had "Done Time" or "Been In Stir" (been in prison) was an object of suspicion, besides being suspicious of others.

All travellers would "Have No Truck" (talk to) a "Coppers Mark" (an informer to Police).

In fact an unwritten law of the road was that no-one told what one knew about anyone else to anyone else.

When anyone was singing in the street(that is on a main street)for coppers(some towns didn't allow this),he was said to be "Gridling". If he walked along side streets cap-in-hand singing as he walked,he was said to be "Chanting".

Inevitably when traveling along the roads one met a gipsy family on the move. They traveled on main roads only when going from town-to-town,and made camp on side side roads and green lanes out-of-town.

Nowadays people call the folk who live on sites in or near a town,living by dealing in scrap metal and rags etc "Gipsies", but the fact is that the real Gipsy,the true Romany is now a person of the past.

At that time motor traffic even on main roads wasn't very plentiful,and certainly nothing like it's present volume anywhere. The working horse was the farmers means of carting,plo-ughing,cultivation,and all farm work.

For that reason the gipsy together with his family and horse drawn caravan traveled from-fair-to-fair,trading horses,while the women folk toured the neighbourhood hawking clothes-pegs,artificial flowers etc.

The true gipsy brownskinned and black haired,with his living vans and wagons,and always followed by a string of horses,would not have pitched camp on the same land as the present-day motor caravan dweller. Horses and the open country were his life,and he never mixed with folk in houses.

Like the old-time navvy,the Gipsy with his Romany independ-ant nomadic way of life has gone for ever,and the English countryside is much poorer for his passing.

For myself I "Got On" well enough with most of the other folk that I came in contact with. They accepted me, and I in turn accepted them as part of my nomadic way of life, at face value as fellow travelers.

The abolition of the old Board of Guardians and the Victorian Workhouse in 1930 was the end of the "Spike Wallah", then later the advent of the Welfare State ended the twilight world of the other tramps and wayfarers.

Yet by a strange anomaly the very "Drop-outs" that they despised are still to be found around most big towns and cities.

In my own case during my nomadic ~~six~~ years I learned more about human nature and the way other people lived than I could have learned in a lifetime static in one place with one job.

It would be impossible to follow such a way of life now because the march of progress has mechanised agriculture to the extent that whereas the farmer relied on casual labour in doing most jobs by hand, machinery does the work instead.

Likewise the fast motorways have superceded the open country roads with their hedges and old world villages. There is no place on main roads for the foot traveler now.

XX

Chapter.I8.

Self Help-With Luck.

So now I had established a way that could allow me to travel as an "Odd Job Man"when casual work outdoors was possible and in the winter the boats provided a few shillings and shelter when away from home.

As must be obvious,one got the full force of bad weather up and down the Humber,and when working the boats in a canal.

Even so a shelter for the night meant that I didn't need to pay for a bed in a "Kip House",and as the boatman also provided a drink of tea and something to eat en route,the few shillings were profit to me.

I did use the "Kip" in Blanket Row between purchase jobs, and I got to know the regulars there and they knew me,as one of them also. It's being convenient to the Markets meant I could get the materials for a "Shackle Up"or a "Fry Up" in the kip quite easily.

Another source of food was on Old Harbour Side where a boat known as the Grimsby Market Boat called every week carrying miscellaneous goods from and to Grimsby. It often carried crates of herrings and small haddocks,and it was not difficult to abstract two or three and wrap them in paper before putting them in my pocket.

In passing let me relate one incident that typifies the boatmens standards. An unwritten law of the waterway was that a boatman did not carry "Passengers".

In effect this meant that one had to do some job of work to justify ones being on the boat it being a "Working"boat.

Yet if one did any small service such as coiling ropes or washing the decks this meant that one wasn't a "passenger"!

On this occasion I had helped George(not my old friend of the Sand Boat but another George a keelman)to unload his cargo at Leeds. So as he was going back to Hull light(empty)I went with him down the river.

Boatmen always refered to the Humber as "The River". It was better for me because many more boats left Hull loaded, than came downriver loaded,so it was easier to get a purchase job at Hull than either Goole or Keadby.

In fact I only remember taking the train from Hull to Leeds, and once, by bus Leeds to Hull, ^{once.} In this instance we arrived in Hull at midday and after "Tying Up"(mooring)in Princes Dock we walked along Mytongate together.

At a shop which sold tripe and cow heel(the bovine equivalent of trotters)George went in and bought the three cow heels in the shop window, then handing me one he put the other one in his pocket, and together we walked on eating as we walked until reached Queen Street. Then George went on to the agents office, and I turned left to go to Blanket Row.

When I became known on the Hull waterfront I sometimes got a purchase mates job up the River Trent, or up the Ouse to Selby or York, but I was better known to the Leeds/Goole and Hull boatmen. On one occasion I went under sail from Roundwood pit(River Don)with a keel loaded with coal to Beverley up the River Hull.

Yet in spite of the obvious advantages of being afloat I was always happy when I could go back to the road again. On the other hand to steer a boat along a tidal river, even behind a steam tug had a feeling of freedom which one never felt in a workshop, or a gang of men.

From March onwards it was possible to find odd jobs garden-
ing such as mowing lawns or digging for instance. On the farms
outdoor work would be getting under way for the coming Spring
and Summer crops.

During the growing season farmers relied to a great extent
on casual labour for potatoe "Setting"(planting)etc,and hoe-
ing among the arable crops. In this way one could combine both
being a traveling handyman with a wandering life from place
to place as well.

In this way I traveled over most of Britain from the South
and West of England to the Grampians in Scotland.

As one might expect,in my search for jobs I got a mixed re-
ception from the folk that I asked. In some cases I was greet-
ed(if that is the right word)with open hostility by householders.
On other occasions I might have to dodge a really aggress-
ive dog,although most farm dogs were well disciplined.

On the whole by dint of being frugal and "Pitching The Fork"
and often sleeping under the stars at "Mother Greenfields",~~my~~
life wasn't too bad even if the social side of it was limited.

On the other hand I met with many good natured folk,who when
I asked for jobs to do,or for hot water to mash tea,might give
me something to eat as well. Sometimes if they didn't want a
job doing they might give me a few pence after talking to me.

The almost impossible thing was to get a regular job at wh-
ich I could settle down in one place to stay there.

Quite understandably even a householder who did take in lod-
gers was reluctant to take someone in from a Common Lodging
House with not even hand luggage,or a reference from a pre-
vious landlady,or an employer.

On a navvying job where a person could be literaly "Here to

-day and gone tomorrow"the possibility of getting "Private Digs"depended very much on the size of the job,and the willingness of a landlady to "Take a Chance".

However when one is a teenager it is easy to see only the present and the near future without much thought of later days or even the possibility of bad health or injury. In which respect I was lucky in that apart from a common cold I never ailed very much.

When I was working on a pipe-laying job in Oxfordshire,because it was too far from a town to go to a "Kip" I had to "Do a Skipper"(rough it)in an empty cow shed. Because of this I caught a throat infection.

This resulted in my going into the Workhouse Infirmary at Chipping Norton. After a week in hospital I was once more back on the road,and that was the only time that I had to go "Inside" in all the six nomadic years.

In fact in spite of so much exposure to the unpredictable English weather,or perhaps because of it,transmittable ailments even colds were not very common among the folk travelling on the roads,or the waterways.

In my travels I found many curious things about places and the people in general. Not least among these were the "Kip" houses in the different towns.

An outstanding one was in Market Harborough. Here when the kip was full(it was a "Padding Can"taking both sexes)anyone could have a "Fourpenny Sit Up"in the kitchen.

In effect this meant that instead of going to bed,for which the charge was tenpence a night,one paid fourpence to sit in the kitchen until morning.

At the "Model"at Doncaster by the Mill Bridge,the charge was one shilling per night.

Most of the lodgers worked locally, it was quite a large place and for the benefit of early risers the deputy rang a handbell on the landing every half-hour after 5.A.M, at the same time calling out the state of the weather.

His voice (a loud one) called "Half past five and a fine soft morning". Or if otherwise he would say so, and this was repeated until 7 o'clock which was the last call.

At another one at Loughborough the landlady also had a shop a little way up the street where one could buy food and a mashing of tea and sugar. In a small paper bag one got a half-penny worth of liquid milk! in a small p Holding the bag of while walking back to the "Kip" was rather chancey especially on a windy day!

Yet another, which I found in Bristol had been made by making two cottage houses into one. Here again the proprietor was a woman, and although she took both couples as well as single men and women, the women had to use one kitchen while men used the other.

She said the reason was to prevent any trouble between men and women who both wanted to cook at the same time!

It was only the larger "Model" lodging houses that provided enamel mugs, plates, and basins. At one such "Model" in Stirling all these utensils were marked in the enamel "Lapsley's Home Stolen" to prevent pilfering.

A Law which applied to all common lodging houses required the manager or proprietor to keep register of everybody who lodged there with their name and the date.

The Police had a right to visit at any time to see the register and also interview any of the lodgers, particularly any strangers from a distant place.

To return briefly to the "Spikes", like many other road travelers who were not "Spike Wallahs" I did sometimes use a casual ward when no other shelter for the night was available in bad weather.

I found one such Spike at a small market town in Dorset on wet night. Each casual had a separate cell and slept on a wire mattress with two blankets.

It was a clean place, unlike some which left much to be desired in that respect, because no-one bothered much.

The old inmate who acted as "Tramp Major" (literally the porters assistant) for which duty he would get some small concession such as an ounce of tobacco per week, came along the passage at 6 A.M. waking everyone.

As he unbolted each cell door and pushed it open, he repeated in a sing-song voice "Fold up yer blankets empty all yer chamber pots!"

Chandlers Ford was only a small place in a thinly populated area mostly agricultural. It was what the dossers called a "Day-In Shop", which is to say that a casual was not discharged until the second morning after admission.

I remember that my task was digging in the workhouse garden and I didn't mind that, because I had extra potatoes at 12 o'clock with my bread and cheese besides "Cock Broth".

Being in all day gave me a chance to wash my shirt and socks because of the hot water in the bath room, and there was plenty of time for them to dry before the next morning.

Most tramps and navvies never wore socks, but simply wrapped their feet in strips of cloth known as "Toe Rags". In fact most of the "Horse Marines" who hauled the canal boats also used toe rags as well. For myself I preferred to wear socks.

For the benefit of my readers I will explain that some spikes varied from others in their treatment of casuals. Because of this they were described differently by those who used them.

I have already described a "Day In Shop", to this was attached another condition that was not popular with a regular dosser.

Sunday was a day when no tasks were allotted, so any casual who booked in on a Saturday evening had to stay until Tuesday morning before being discharged.

An "Eleven o'clock Shop" was one that only allotted three hour tasks until eleven o'clock. Then all casuals were given a voucher and discharged. This usually happened where the accommodation was not sufficient for everyone to stay two nights.

A "Strict Search" was a spike where the porter searched all pockets etc in clothing where matches, tobacco, or knives might be hidden and confiscated any that were found.

A "Home Ruler" was one where a casual could take almost anything in with him, and discipline was very slack.

Many of the casuals booked in under a false name, possibly more than half did so, and the same applied in "Kips" as well, but for whatever reason the unwritten rule of "No questions asked and none answered" was observed by all.

In fact the general attitude was "Let the Law do the questioning, it's their job!" Nobody wanted to be branded as a "Nark".

Usually the strictest spikes were the cleanest ones, the easy-going ones and "Home Ruler's" were often almost "scruffy".

In my case I knew that to keep clean and reasonably tidy paid off when knocking at doors and looking for jobs, and in fact at any time, even when entering a shop.

Quite a few young men in their early twenties and late teens were now coming onto the "Road", mostly for the same reasons as myself.

Like myself they had opted out of a situation that offered no hope for the future. In the case of older ones, they had found it impossible to pay for board and lodging on the single mans dole of 15 shillings(75p)per week. Let alone buy clothing and other necessities.

On a small drain laying job in Bedfordshire I met up with two more such youths, one from the North West and the other a Londoner of 23. There was no town near the job and thereffor no lodging house, so we had to sleep rough and "Drum Up" in the open air.

As it was Summer time this didn't matter too much for two or three weeks, because we could buy food at a village shop a mile or so further on the road.

We all left the job together and decided to go down to London. I think that at some time most people have wanted to see our capital city, and for myself and "Lanc" as we called the lad from Lancashire, this seemed a good opportunity.

At Stevenage we had a rather bizarre experience which could hardly happen at the present day.

Fifty years ago Stevenage was only a village of one main street and a few scattered houses, certainly nothing like the present township of the 70's, a dormitory suburb of London.

At about eight o'clock in the morning we sat by the roadside at the far end of Stevenage to eat our breakfast near a small copse from which a small spring trickled.

On going through a break in the hedge we found that a sizeable pool had been dug out of the clay subsoil and the spring diverted into it. The water was clean and clear so we all washed our shirts, and then hanging them on the hedge in the warm sunshine, we undressed and had a bath in the pool.

We had just come out of the water to get dressed when we heard voices on the road and three boys and an equal number of girls all about 12 or 13 years old came through the hole in the hedge and proceeded to undress and get into the pool.

None of them were in any way embarrassed by our presence, and the fact that everyone was in the nude went completely unnoticed. As they splashed about in the water and chattered to us they seemed to think that it was a perfectly normal thing for all of us to "Mixed Bathe" nude at mid-morning!

The next night we spent in a hostel on the outskirts of London, and then went on into the city, to which "Cock" as we called the London youth, acted as guide.

The other two called me "Yorcky", and in fact that was the "Handle" I usually got in my travels.

On the following night "Cock" found us a kiphouse on the south side of Blackfriars Bridge. It was^a fairly big place and to my surprise it stayed open all night.

The charge was 1 shilling per night, and the reason for staying open was because it catered for people who worked what are now called "Unsocial Hours". That meant that lodgers were going in or out at all hours, but as a man once said to me "Half o' London doesn't get up until the other 'alf goes to bed".

It was with this in mind that "Cock" took us to that lodging house, because it gave us a chance to see some of London's night life. The only stipulation being that when we returned we must show our "Bed Ticket" to the man in the office.

After a meal and a tidy up we went back across the bridge and strolled by a devious route up to the Strand, then after seeing what that area had to show from the outside we went via side streets down to the Embankment.

Although much (even then) had been said and written about Victoria Embankment, the Thames, and Cleopatra's Needle, when actually there the reality was far from being either romantic or wonderful. Late at night it was no credit to the London of the 1920's when I first saw it.

After strolling along the Embankment where the dossers were already occupying the seats to spend the night on, we decided to go and see what it was like under Charing Cross arches.

The famous pair Flanagan & Allan in their song "Underneath the Arches" painted a picture than glamourised them, but the only true words were those about the cobblestones.

I was more or less hardened to slums and other squalid scenes, and also city dropouts, but what I saw that night sickened me. Disgust was too fine a word to describe it.

In the age of steam trains all railway arches were damp and cold, and Charing Cross arches were no exception. Add to that the mingled smells of exhaust steam condensed into dripping water, urination, unwashed bodies, and methylated ^{spirits} spirits.

When a match was struck the light shone on faces scarcely recognisable as human of both sexes. They sat or laid on newspapers and rags, some were muttering and shouting either obscenities or unintelligible gibberish.

While we were there the Police pushed two or three more dropouts into that arch. We looked into the other open arches.

In our rough clothes we probably looked like down-and-outs in the semi darkness of the street gas lamps. At half past two we came back to the Embankment again to the coffee stall under the bridge, for a small tea (A half pint mug) and a crust and marmalade 1½ pence (Three halfpence).

Leaving there we returned to our kip. After what we had seen

in the side streets, the Embankment, and under the Arches it seemed almost luxurious.

On the third day after we had wandered around London's riverside areas, we split up. "Cock" stayed in "The Smoke", myself and "Lanc" together went Westwards via Kingston, both of us were agreed that although neither of us expected to find either fame or fortune in London, the reality was nothing like the image built up by writers and others.

As regards food one could live cheaply enough if one knew where to go. For instance in the food shops of the working class areas East and South of the river with their local markets, prices were the same or a little cheaper than in Leeds.

On the other hand the coffee-shops and eating houses put on meals quite cheaply. The many "Drop Outs" and others of "No Fixed" took advantage of this and the various charities and convents etc where a handout could be obtained.

By going the "Round" of them they could scrounge a living without going outside London. Instead of "Pitching The Fork" at shops they would go to certain kitchen doors after lunch time for "Tuppenceworth of Left-over", and one not far from the Strand known as "The Drum" was good for "Tupence Worth of Suet Duff and Treacle"!

In general I think that "Cock" summed it up in a remark as he left us to go his way. "You'll get noffing for noffing in London and not much anywhere else eiver Mate".

The money that we had earned while working was by now spent except for a few shillings between us. On the other hand we had bought such second hand items as a shirt, socks, trousers.

On the other hand again none of us smoked or drank beer, otherwise our money would not have lasted a week as it had done.

"Lanc"and I only stayed together for another two "stages". A stage was the term used on the road for a days journey, usually about 14 or 15 miles (or the distance between one town and the one) then we both went different ways.

When looking for odd jobs one was much better to be alone, unless it was a job like harvesting or haymaking, when more than one might be needed. Beside that when two or three shared there was always a difference of opinion.

A fellow traveler on the road once said to me, "The best mates on the Toby are none at all". Perhaps that was a rather sweeping statement, but just as in every other walk of life not everybody that one came in contact with was trustworthy.

I was to know how true this was a few months later, when once again I had two mates.

One was a Glaswegian, and the other a young Welshman from the Rhonda. He had lost his father in the Senghenydd pit disaster of 1913. Older by five years than myself, he was thick set and a typical mining type I took to him because we both had much in common in our backgrounds.

"Jock" was about the same age as "Taffy" but of a more pessimistic disposition. We were together for two or three weeks in the Midlands and all went well until one day after doing a garden digging job for a clergyman.

After being paid we shared our money, bought food and spent that night in roadside barn. We awoke next morning to find it raining, and it was a wet day, so after a discussion we decided that with only half-a-crown between us it would be best to go to the nearest "Spike", put the half-crown in with the "Property" which would be handed in by one of us.

It was arranged that the one who handed it in would keep the ticket to reclaim it when we came out again.

Taffy had a small canvas bag with a draw-string which he carried on one shoulder, so we put all our odds and ends into it.

The drum, the tin with the needle and cotton and our half crown, my scissors, and my knife and spoon. In like manner Taffy added his "Property", then Jock put his own in, and when we booked in he handed it in and took the ticket for it.

It was a large Casual Ward, and we were separated to do different tasks in different parts of the "Spike". Taffy and myself were given a full days task, and we both thought that Jock had also got a "Day In".

However when the cell doors were opened next morning Jock was not to be seen. It transpired that his task had finished at eleven o'clock on the previous day, and he had taken the bag of "property" and gone his way.

To say that Taffy and I were furious is an understatement, but there was nothing that we could do, he had a full day's start and we had no idea which way he had gone!

Taffy said, "If I every see the Scotch tyke again I, ll knock the daylight's out of him the rat!"

The next two or three days were pretty grim because we had no drum or even a knife and spoon between us, but by a stroke of good fortune I still had my watch which I had kept in my pocket and the porter had not looked there.

Apart from that we were now even worse off than regular "Sp-ike Wallah" without even a drum and "Ammunition" (tea and sugar).

We did succeed in getting these essential items together at the end of a few days, and the two of us turned Northwards. Myself because the Autumn was once more closing in, and Taffy because he thought that with his mining background he might do better in the North of England.

It was several months later and I was once again on my way, Northwards this time, when once again Taffy and I met in the kiphouse in Bolton. We exchanged any news that we had in the usual way, and he asked me if I had seen anything of Jock.

I said no, and what was more I didn't want to because of what he had done, it was better if I never saw him again (I never did).

Then Taffy told me that he had caught up with Jock a few weeks before in Stockport with the result that there was a fight.

To use his own words he said "I told you that men meet before mountains, and when I did meet him again I would make him remember the day he robbed his mates! Well I did that I took it out of his ribs boyo, and his face as well, the long skinny rat!"

Knowing Taffy I could well believe him, it would be a fight with no punches pulled back, and only stopping when one dropped his hands in surrender.

I went another two stages with him as far as Lancaster where our ways parted. It was between Garstang and Lancaster that we had a both amazing and amusing encounter en route.

As we walked along the road side-by-side we were both singing "Men of Harlech". It was a nice Spring day and we had no good reason not to be happy.

We were passing a cottage by the roadside, a middle-aged woman rushed out of the gate in front of us and gave us a florin (a two-shilling piece (10p) each, at the same time saying that that it was years since she had heard Welsh voices singing, and it sounded lovely!

She must have thought that we were both Welsh, but although Taffy had been singing in Welsh, my version of "Men of Harlech" had been mainly English gibberish!

So to give her her money's worth, we sang a verse of "Gwm Rhonda" and "Oh Land of My Fathers", (I knew this in Welsh).

We went our separate ways from Lancaster. Taffy went towards Durham and I went North via Kirby Lonsdale, and that was the last I saw of Taffy.

Taken by and large, the rough with the smooth, although life on the road was rough and chancey I don't think that I did too bad. Although there were times when I went to sleep with no idea of where my breakfast might be found, the mere fact that I could always "Give In" and go back home and stay there, made me determined not to do so.

Indeed whenever I did go home, the sight of young men (apart from older ones) standing in groups at street corners, poorly dressed, looking ill fed and listless convinced me that such an existence was not for me.

Add to that the "Dole queue" at the Labour Exchange with its hopeless, shuffling queue of men going to the counter. Here the clerks monotonous voice greeted each man who handed him his yellow card, "Have you worked since you signed last? Sign here, Next", like an endless chant.

Occasionally the clerk would give someone a green card to go for a job (not very often), then a murmur would run along the double line of men with hands in trouser pockets, then once more shuffling silence.

But my semi-nomad way of life can't have had such a bad effect on my general health, because people around my home often said that I looked as if I had just spent a month at the seaside. I suppose wind and weather caused that.

Yet in spite of some hardship and loss of social life (which was inevitable) in general I certainly broadened my outlook on life, and my valuation of my fellow men in a way that would not have been possible anchored in one place.

One thing that I did learn in my travels was the fact that the most understanding and helpfull folk, were those working class folk who had themselves had to "Make Ends Meet". Not that some "Better Off"folk didn't show an interest, and often after giving me a job to do, also gave me such things as a shirt, a pair of socks, or a discarded jacket.

Any of those items even second-hand would have made a considerable strain on my meagre budget to buy them.

When I left Taffy I kept on Northwards and back over the Border to travel through Scotland to Fort William where I worked on tunnel then under construction. After working there for a while I came down to Kinloch Rannoch to work on another tunnel job for the Grampian Power Scheme.

Apart from those two navvying jobs, on which like all the men I found it impossible to save money after paying my "Hut Money"(food and sleeping)one had to wash ones own clothes.

Boots and clothes could only be bought at the Camp Store run by the contractors, because there were no shops within miles.

There were very few casual jobs to be had, and on more than one occasion I found it necessary to go to the Inspector of Poor. Sometimes one got a "Line(a note)for the Shelter House, or if there were no night shelter he would give you a line for a shillings worth of food. In some of the larger towns and cities, one had a nights shelter and also oatmeal porrage and cold milk night and morning.

In general I found the Scottish folk both kind and understanding to a stranger, but owing to the fact that most of Scotland is unsuitable for arable farming, such casual work was very limited, so back South once more.

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Chapter.19.

Regular Work-And Frustration.

It was about this time-the later part of 1926 or '27 that I reluctantly parted with my faithfull old watch. On a wet night in the working class area of Nottingham I was studying whether to make the journey out of town to the "Spike"on the outskirts or try my luck to find a "rough 'un"somewhere.

Having made enquiries on my way I knew that I was not far from a "kiphouse"then. The problem was that although I had a bit of food,tea,and sugar,the kip charged a shilling per night and I had only tenpence!

Possibly I could have "pulled Up"or "Knocked"for the other two pennies,but as I pondered I found myself outside a small watchmakers shop,so in I went. It was a one-man business and he gave me half-a-crown for my watch.

That was half the price that I had paid for it three years previously in Hunslet,and I now had to ask the time if no public clock was in sight.

When walking from place to place on the road many "Out of the Ordinary"things happened to you,some were good,some were not,and ~~one~~ had allways to be prepared for the "Unexpected".

Once when calling at a house in a sizable village in the East Midlands I was greeted by a smiling young man who replied to my request for hot water by saying:_"Oh I never drink tea, I only drink water and eat a little bread and butter.the birds bring me cheese".

I got my tea mashed at what proved to be the back door of the village baker and confectioner. He gave me a fresh warm currant teacake to eat with my tea,and I told him about the man who said the birds brought him cheese.

"Oh", the baker laughed. "You've been to see "Bread-and-butter Wilfred". He's a bit religious, but he's harmless. But we know that his Mother gives him more than just bread and butter to eat, he's happy anyway Lad".

One night just as I approached a farm near Skipton I noticed what appeared to be a barn with an opening in the wall within easy reach of the ground. So crossing the small field I stepped over the narrow drainage ditch and climbed in.

It was in fact the loft over a milking parlour, with a wood floor and plenty of hay, so I slept well and only awoke as the cows were coming in for milking next morning.

I pulled on my boots, quickly donned my coat and dropped out of the window hole, but I forgot to jump clear of the ditch and I dropped straight into the slurry coming from the cows.

Fortunately I was not far from the canal where I washed my socks and trouser bottoms as I boiled water to make tea. Even in summer the air is cold so early in the morning, but I could not have gone to a house all splashed with cow slurry!

On another occasion not far from there, namely at Silsden on a Saturday night at eleven o'clock I walked up the main street to the canal bridge. I intended to go to the Gas Works for the night. It wasn't a cold night, but a patrolling Policeman might not like me wandering about in the small hours of Sunday.

There was a fried fish shop still open although even the pubs were now closed and the street deserted. I had bought sufficient bread etc to carry me over the next day, but by force of habit any possibility of "pitching the Fork" was not to be missed, a fish'n chip shop usually had scraps warm from the fish pan (children often asked for them).

So in I went offering two pennies for "Chips and Scraps".

The shopkeeper asked me if I was "On the Road" and when I said "Yes" he told me to keep my tuppence and have some fish and chips saying nobody else might come in that night! Eating my hot supper I walked along the canal bank to the gas works. After all those years I still remember how good they tasted.

In general I always found that if I kept out of town centres (they had enough problems with jobless folk) the mill workers of the West Riding textile area were both good natured and often gave me odd jobs for a shilling or two and a meal.

I think that as in many cases the woman was the chief breadwinner as well I got little jobs that she had no time to do after a long day in the mill.

On a Sunday afternoon in North Lancashire I found myself in a small village, and with a problem that was not unusual, except that in this case I had money, but no food.

The village had no shop or even a pub, and the only person in sight was an old man sat on his doorstep in the sunshine. So I went to him and asked if there was anywhere that I could get something to eat. Pointing up the road towards a large stone mansion with a tower like a castle he told me to go straight up the drive, and turn in at the gate marked "Tradesmen".

Thinking it must be some kind of "Guest House" I went and knocked at the kitchen door. It opened and big woman dressed like a cook opened it, stood there holding out her other hand.

Before I had a chance to speak she said, "Have you got a can" so I gave her the two pound snuff tin with a wire handle that I used for a "Drum". Taking it she shut the door again and I waited there/in surprise.

In a few minutes she again opened the door to hand me the drum full of hot sweet tea (it held two pints) and a brown paper

parcel. Taking it I had just time to say "Thank You" before the door closed again, so turning I went back to the roadside.

Sitting in the hedge bottom I opened the parcel after taking a drink of the tea. There was a loaf of bread from which perhaps two slices had been cut, a good piece of cheese, and a shoulder of mutton from which a few slices had been taken.

After making a good meal I wrapped it up again and put it in my "Peter". On the road if one carried a bag slung over the shoulder it was called a "Peter", usually a small jute or hessian bag folded down, with a piece of cord tied to one corner then round the mouth of the bag.

In farming districts a farm worker would have such a bag to carry his days requirements, as would also a Council roadman, especially when riding a bike.

As I went back down the village I spoke to the old man again and I asked him who lived at the big house. He said, "Why he's the head of all the Lancashire Police Force, and he's a very kind man, he does a lot for the village institute, and he tells his servants never to turn anyone away."

One night as I passed through Ackworth a lorry driver gave me a lift on top of the load in the back. At six o'clock the next morning he put me down in Grantham.

It was only then that I found that I had been riding on a load of sacks of soot! I called at a house and a man who had just come off night shift gave me a bucket of water to get a wash in his backyard.

It was in that same year that I got a regular job at Luton, but as I found out later not only was I a stranger in a strange place, but my wage put me on such a tight budget that I wasn't able to even buy necessities let alone save money.

It was on the estate of a titled lady, and I was told of it by a young man who was staying in the "Kip" at the same time as myself. He had worked there himself (he was a native of Luton), and he had left it because of the small wages.

He also gave me the address of a woman where I could go to lodge when I got a job. This seemed to be my chance to get off the road and settle down so I took the job.

It was a fifty hour week on the home farm from 7.A.M until 5.P.M with an hour for dinner at 12 noon, the week finished at 12 noon on Saturday. The wages were the basic county agricultural rate of £1-10shillings and sixpence (£1.52½p).

So having got the job I went to see my prospective landlady and it was agreed that I could move in there on the Sunday night ready to start work next morning.

It was one of a street of two bedroomed houses, with a wash-house in the back garden in which was a wash boiler and a sink.

There was one other lodger, a man who travelled for a firm that made window polish, and it was agreed that as we both shared the same bedroom we would each pay £1 per week.

There was no bath in the house, but I got over that difficulty by going to the public Baths on Saturday afternoons where I paid sixpence for a slipper bath with soap and towel, and changed into clean clothes at the same time.

The £1 per week covered food, lodging and washing, and taken all round it was the best lodging I ever had. There was one snag however, otherwise I might have settled down and stayed on at the Payne's,

The snag was that the landlady and her spouse were continually bickering at each other, and as all of us shared the one downstairs room (Mr. Payne was a tailor and the other room was his workroom) there was no way to avoid hearing the arguments.

During the good weather I could go out in the evening or on Sunday, but when the weather was bad there was little choice!

In the 1920's Luton was little more than a fair sized market town, and apart from two cinema's there was little to do at night except walk about.

Although the town itself was not large, it had some large works quite apart from the traditional hatmaking for which it was famous. There was the Vauxhall Motors (even then a large works), Commer Cars, and Laporte Chemicals, besides a small foundry and a boiler makers. However because of the fact that Luton was surrounded by farming country, these works drew much of their workforce from places like Dunstable, Hitchin, and even Bedford itself.

Obviously anyone single who worked at any of these firms and wanted lodgings, got lodgings in Luton in order to save the expense and traveling time. Furthermore as their wage rates almost doubled mine, they could afford to pay much more for "Digs" than I could.

Indeed I had tried to get work at all these places before I went to work on the estate, but the fact I was not a tradesman and that there was a surplus of unskilled labour, added to me not having a fixed address ruled me out!

Yet as usual I got on well with both the men that I worked with and the people that I came in contact with.

I finally decided that I should have to move out and find another place, because the constant arguing between Mr and Mrs Payne made me too uncomfortable.

After much searching I found another "Digs". It was a clean enough house and the landlady was very easygoing and friendly with everyone, but it was the strangest household that I was

Both the landlord and the landlady were never sober! Yet money did not seem scarce to them, and the woman who came in to clean and do the washing etc, said that they always paid her well besides letting her make any meal for herself.

Besides myself there were three women and two men lodging at the house, but although the pantry was always well stocked no meals were ever got ready for anyone! One just came in and helped oneself to anything and cooked it as required.

Everybody had literally the freedom of the house coming and going anytime so that the house was never quiet day or night.

We all had our own rooms which were always clean with beds well made, and she charged us (myself at any rate) £1.5 shillings (£1.25p) per week.

When I took my boots to be mended at the cobblers at the other end of the street, the cobbler remarked when I told him where I was staying, "Oh you're at James's are you? Well they're people with funny ways, and nobody seems to stop there long.

"But I'm in business and they're money's good!"

I stayed with the James's for three weeks, and then once again I moved, but I never did find out what actually did "Go On" there.

One thing was certain, whatever their source of income was, they were certainly not short of cash, and they seemed to do nothing else except drink sherry and and play records on the gramophone all day and at night also!

Next I moved to a "Bed-Sit" with the use of a gas cooker on the landing which all four lodgers shared, together with the use of one bathroom and a toilet.

Although now I could sleep at night without being awakened by folk going up and down the staircases, it was no pleasure to come home after a days work to prepare food and wash clothes etc .

so in the long run apart from having the privacy of ones own room, there was little advantage over the "Kiphouse". Added to this was the fact that it cost all my wages to pay expences.

Pride would not allow me to go back cap-in-hand to Mrs Payne so I finally decided to go back to the "Kip" once more.

I liked the work on the Estate, and I got on well with the men that I worked with. They were all married men and I was the only single man, with the exception of two teen-age lads who were the sons two of the farm workers.

The estate was a large one, and Her Ladyship was what would describe in present-day terms as "Stinking Rich" and owned the land for several miles around.

As was usual with landed gentry she took no active part in the running of the estate or the farm and it's livestock.

The administration of the estate was in the hands of her agent, and the farm was run by a Bailiff, a retired ex-army major who rode around the estate on a horse supervising the work.

He in his turn was answerable to the Agent for the running of the farm and everything appertaining to it. So like all the big landowners, she never came in contact with the workers at any time, her Agent handled all business.

Even so, if I could have found a settled place to live I might have settled down and stayed in Luton because I got on well with the people who were very friendly towards a stranger.

So after a few weeks living in the lodging house I gave up the unequal struggle. With my last weeks wage and the little that I had managed to save I took the "Rattler" (the train) back to Leeds and home again.

Which goes to prove how difficult it was to get regular full time employment when one had no fixed address, and also the di-

difficulty of getting suitable lodgings. The places that I did succeed in getting "Private Digs" were but a few of very many to which I went in Luton.

One can understand that a boss would not want to employ a person on a regular job who had fixed place to live, and any landlady would be reluctant to take somebody about whom she knew nothing, who had nothing beyond the clothes they were wearing at the time.

On the whole and taking the good with the bad I think that in general I rather liked my wandering life. With all its hardship, the freedom to go wherever I chose, plus the fact that I never knew what the next day might bring gave me the desire to carry on with it.

Although as I have said I have always been able to make friends and get on with folk all over England and wherever I went my own part of Yorkshire always had an attraction and a feeling of belonging there that I never felt anywhere else.

Whenever I approached West Yorkshire from the North West, the smells of wool and cloth when passing mills etc heralded my home ground once more. When I approached from the south, the sight of pit headgear and colliers, together with the acrid fumes from burning pit tips told me that I was not far away from home.

Even so, many things happened in my travels that have now passed into history, and I feel that I have been privileged to record them as I saw and experienced them.

For instance one day I found on the side of a main road, after all these years I am not sure now whether it was in Leicestershire or Warwickshire I came across a family clayworks.

The amazing thing about it was that the sole source of power was horses! The end product was red roof tiles and the red

flat bottomed earthenware pipes used for land drainage. These were entirely hand made by the members of the family.

The clay was dug in a pit and filled into small trucks or "Tubs" and these were hauled up the slope from the pit by a rope round a capstan which pulled one full tub up, and lowered an empty one down again.

A long wooden arm to which a horse was harnessed was fixed to the capstan, and the horse plodded steadily round and round.

Another horse provided the power in the same way for the pan in which the clay was ground ready for use in the shed where the other members of the family worked.

I was told that the tile and pipe business had ^{been} run by the same family in the same way for more than 100 years, and I am sure that the methods could have changed but little in centuries since the Middle Ages!

It was on what was known as the Galloway Coast of Scotland that I took a real step back in time. The contrast between it and the Border country, let alone the industrial part of Scotland was remarkable.

That time I had come back to Dumfries via the Border. Jedburgh, Selkirk, Hawick and Langholm. After staying the night at Drummonds "Kip" I crossed the Nith Bridge into Maxwelltown and Kirkcudbrightshire.

The south west corner of Scotland was entirely different to anything that I had experienced before, it was like turning life back 200 years from the time that I left Maxwelltown behind.

Even the names of the towns and villages had a different and unusual sound on the tongue. Such as Newtown Stewart, Kirkcudbright, Gatehouse-of-Fleet, Creetown, and Castle Douglas to name only a few of them.

It was at Greetown that I saw a gang of women unloading 200 tons of cement from a coaster at the rough stone and timber jetty. At Portpatrick a gang of women were discharging a cargo of grain under the supervision of a male stevedore and a male tally clerk!

Men, women, and children worked side by side in the fields, digging "Tatties" (potatoes) scything corn and tying the sheaves by hand in the same way they had done it for generations.

In fact Robert Burns would have found things little different to the time when he himself was farming.

They did not look on the itinerant wayfarer as a vagrant, but as an interesting person who because of his travelling, brought news of things elsewhere. Often they demonstrated this by treating any traveller as their equal. Certainly class distinction played no part in their philosophy.

There were very few odd jobs to be got, but the rough, homely hospitality of the folk made it unnecessary to have much money.

If no other lodging were available, although the farms were small and little more than "Crofts", a farmer would give a shelter in a barn or an outhouse. Where a "Kipp" could be found, invariably it was simply a householder who let a bed for the night to augment a meagre income.

One such lodging was at Castle Douglas where I shared a bed in the only bedroom with an accordion player also on the road, while the old woman whose house it was slept in the other bed with her small grandson!

Inhibitions were non-existent among these Coast people, who lived mainly on their own produce. Yet although a single Policeman had to cover several miles of country, there was little serious crime.

When I remarked about this to a fellow traveller he said simply, "Nae body has much worth stealing anyway, and everybody knows everybody else, ye ken"!

In the English towns and cities anyone playing an instrument was regarded as something of a nuisance, in fact some towns forbade it. Some Scottish towns did likewise, notably Edinburgh.

Here on the Galloway Coast anyone playing a fiddle, an accordion, a concertina, or even a Mouth-organ was welcome. Everyone seemed to see them as the traveling minstrels of old, and everyone would give a penny or two to a musician.

It was at Glenluce that I had an unusual experience. Like all the Coast villages Glenluce consisted of a long street and one or two scattered houses, with the road running alongside the beach.

The lodging house was the last house at the end of Glenluce behind a windswept headland on Luce Bay, and like all the other houses it had no piped water or sanitation.

The proprietor was a Sheffield man tall with a long white beard like a patriarch. He recognised me as soon as I spoke as a fellow Yorkshireman, and told me that he had bought the house with his saving after the War, and retired there.

He charged the usual shilling per night. That night which ~~was~~ was Saturday, myself and a fiddler were staying there and we had one room with a double bed, while he lived in the other.

None of these lodgings ever had a hotplate, obviously, but one had the use of the fire with the kettle and pans etc. The general attitude was that for that night at least, the lodger was one of the household.

That Saturday night a strong wind rose, and on the Sunday morning we found that the "Privvy" had blown away across a field.

In the traditional country fashion it was a "Bucket shop" in this case like a sentry-box with no floor, the receptacle standing on the ground. The doorway closed with sacking on a frame.

Jimmy the fiddler and myself with the assistance of our landlord carried it back to the garden, then myself and Jimmy heaped stones and boulders round it to anchor it.

For this service we were allowed to stay the Sunday night free of charge. The same kind of thing has only happened once again to me and that was on a navvying job in a Leeds street.

In that instance the wind blew the temporary edifice off the manhole over which it was placed, and into the backyard of a house. When we went to retrieve it the man of the house gave us his very precise opinion of the incident!

To return to the Galloway Coast once more, let me describe a night that I spent at Ballantrae, because it was typical of the folk around that South West corner.

The house was the ordinary Scottish "Abut an'Aben" type with only two rooms, one for sleeping, and the other the living room.

Access was through a single entrance with the outer door ~~off~~ into a porch, and an inner door opening into the living room.

When I went in to the customery "Come Ben, come ben" from the man they were just preparing for the evening meal, and I asked where I could buy bread etc for myself.

Immediately the old woman that I took to be the Grandmother said "Oh bide here, bide here - there's no need that you go tae a shop! It is no more wark tae cook for seven than it is for ~~six~~ six ye ken".

Accordingly I shared their evening meal sitting and eating at the same table. It was the kind of meal that was the usual thing with these plain down-to-earth folk.

First a large bowl of potatoes boiled in their jackets, then a dish of boiled salt herrings were placed in the middle of the bare wooden table. Then we sat down on wooden stools and took hot "tatties" which we peeled and ate with the herrings, taking salt as required from a wooden box on the table.

To finish the meal we had scones cooked over the wood fire on a flat "girdle" which hung from a hook. These scones buttered were as filling as two thick slices off a big loaf of bread, indeed white bread was considered to be a luxury.

Our meal finished I asked how much did I owe them, "If ye give us a shilling that'll dae fine" said the grandma.

With the shilling for my bed, this meant that I had food and shelter for the night for a total of two shillings, and this included porridge and milk for breakfast before going on my way to Stranraer!

As I said the large triangular scone took the place of bread and because of the very nature of the people, when one called at a house to get tea scalded, one would be given a scone and cheese or jam as well with the can of tea.

Another interesting point was the way they ordered their home life. The family at Ballantrae was a good example.

The man of the house brought in wood for the fire and water from the well etc. His wife took charge of the three children, while the other young woman (apparently unmarried) did the cooking etc. The grandmother, or "The Auldwife" as elderly women were called, took charge of all the family finances, she took my lodging money, in that case.

The quaint phraseology is worth a mention in passing. For example a "Wee Wane" was a small child, a young woman whether married or single would be called a "Young Wife", and any elderly woman was an "Auld Wife".

In Stranraer I found a genuine "Kiphouse" run on orthodox lines near the quayside, and I stayed there one night.

Being not only the terminal for the Belfast ferry, but also a port of call for herring drifters and coasters it was the largest town that I had passed through since Dumfries and Maxwelltown and the only town on the Mull of Galloway.

I remarked to one of the lodgers that everybody seemed to have an Irish accent. He replied that "The place is more Irish than Scottish anyway!"

Leaving Stranraer behind I continued following the coast to the Firth of Clyde via Mable, Girvan, Ayr, and on to Gourock.

Even then tourism was well established at the Clyde resorts and Ayr. Burns's birthplace was a Mecca for hundreds every year long before the second World War.

Then later with the coming of the motor coach, tarmac roads, and package tours, the Galloway Coast is now commercialised.

I was privileged to travel along it when there were no cinema's let alone, radio or even a possibility of Television. Even in towns like Kirkeudbright or Castle Douglas, a "Wireless Set" (rddô) with its outside aerial was looked on doubtfully.

Along the Coast the scene had changed but little in two hundred years, the internal combustion engine and the motor car has altered that and more's the pity, but that is progress, it is inexorable and irreversable.

Chapter.20.

Summing Up, and Watershed.

On the road things happened in the most unexpected way, and the last ride I ever had on a Wakefield tramcar was no exception to that rule. It was on a night in the Autumn of 1928 after a lorry driver had given me a lift from Burton-on-Trent to Newmillerdam near Wakefield.

It was fine and when I arrived in the centre of Wakefield I decided against staying the night in a kiphouse only eight miles from my home. So with that in mind I walked on through the town and along Leeds Road.

I knew that the last service tram had gone when I reached Wrenthorpe Pit, so I was surprised when a tram came rattling along from the direction of Wakefield. The indicator showed "Depot Only" and when it stopped to put a man down at the pit gates I stepped out into the road.

Boarding the tram I sat down near the door and as the conductor came in I offered a sixpence. At that time Wakefield trams had a Depot at Thwaite Gate, and I thought that was the trams destination, so I said "Thwaite Gate".

"Nay lad," said the conductor. "T'last man gets off at Robin Hood, we're t'staff car an' we turn back theer. We've no tickets anyway, so till we get ter Robin Hood tha's a workman".

So with that I had free ride on a West Riding tramcar to Robin Hood pit gates after hours as a passenger.

Yet it was typical of the times and the area that none of the other tramways staff on the tram took any notice of me in my rough clothes. They might possibly have been more interested if I had been well dressed in a suit with a collar and tie.

Like all the West Yorkshire folk, you were accepted at face

value, and as another person like themselves.

Alighting from the tram I turned into Thorpe Lane and paused a minute to watch the beam pump. It was a Boulton & Watt type and it had always fascinated me the way the great cast-iron beam dipped down incredibly slowly, to rise again equally slowly lifting a ton of water with each upstroke.

I little thought that night that it would be the last time time that I would ever see it working. Or that less than two years later Robin Hood Jane pit would close down for good.

Crossing the road I walked along the path beside the pit tip and took the path across the fields to the end of Town Street to avoid going through Middleton Old Village, then I turned down the Old Run to Middleton Coke Ovens.

It was now after midnight and although I could have walked home in twenty minutes I did not want to disturb Mother and father at that time, so I went down to the coke ovens cabin.

A man who lived near us and worked there was just going in for his supper and he showed me to an empty oven under repair and I stayed in there until he came with a drink of hot tea as he went off shift at six o'clock.

Drinking the tea I gave him his can back and thanked him, and as he hung it on his belt he said:—"We'll be signing on ourselves afore long, t' Brown Metal coal's finished, so t' plant 'll ev ter shut down when there's no coal."

The Coke and By Products plant did in fact close down two months later and never re-opened. In fact the writing was on the wall for many pits and other old established firms that closed for the last time in the following year.

Taking the cartroad up from the Old Belle Isle to Windy Hill and down the road through Hunslet Carr I was soon home again.

When we had had breakfast my father told me some good and rather surprising news. For a number of years he had been fighting a running battle with the Ministry of Pensions over a small Long Service pension.

In my absence the affair had been settled, and he had received a cheque for £186 for the back payments due to him.

In the way that was typical of my father he didn't save it for the future, but instead spent it on buying clothing etc for themselves, plus food and some "Good Living".

He had also set aside a sum to buy me a new suit of clothes plus shirts and socks, so for the first time in many years I was once again well dressed.

A year or two later he rented an acre of land from Middleton Colliery Co opposite the Broom Pit yard. Because at nearly sixty years of age, he had no chance of getting work.

For myself I carried on as before doing purchase jobs on the boats out of Hull up either Ouse or Trent, then returning to the road again in Spring.

I carried on with my wandering way of life for two more years until I finally decided that to quote the words of leading public figure at the time of the General Strike in 1926, "It was useless to continue the struggle further".

However before that happened I had made the mistake that my father had warned me about years before. When in the Spring of 1929 I was again ready to "Take to the Road" again I had no ready cash in my pocket.

So on the spur of the moment one sunny Monday morning I parcelled up my suit and took it to the Pawnbroker. I got the loan of 15 shillings (75p) which was almost a third of the value of the suit when bought six months earlier.

Armed with this capital and my first (and last) pawn ticket I once again set out southwards, and once again found myself in the kiphouse in Luton.

I had managed to get three weeks casual work on a new sewer for new housing estate on the outskirts of the town, and out of my first weeks wage I sent a £1 note to my mother to redeem my suit from the sign of the "Three Brass Balls".

When I did eventually arrive back home I got a "Telling Off" from Father over the matter.

He said, "If you'd opened yer mouth we'd have lent yer a few shillin's, but like me you're too damned independant to ask.

So it's cost you five bob more than yer borrowed for keepin' yer mouth shut".

For the record that sewerage job was the only job that I was ever sacked from in the six nomadic years, and it came about because I would not "sub" on my wages!

As I explained in a previous chapter, because of his way of life the itinerant navvy was accustomed to "sub" almost every day because he literally lived from day-to-day.

So on the Friday of the third week the ganger brought me my wages, my cards, and gave me a hours notice.

He explained to me why. "You don't take a sub, and the others wont work with ~~you~~ if you wont sub! I've no grumble with you're work pincher, but I can't have a whole gang "Railroadin' "me (walking off the job) for the sake of one man". So once again, I/moved on again to what next?

This was the philosophy of the navvies and indeed of all the travelling folk. The general attitude was "well if he can do without me, I can do without him, and there's another day tomorrow! None of us knew what the next day might bring.

Every day was what might be called a gamble, and some of the jobs that one got left much to be desired.

An example of this was at home in Lincolnshire. As I was passing I saw a "Horse" on which timber was sawn by hand. Not wishing to lose an opportunity to earn money I went and asked if they wanted any firewood cutting up.

Using a crosscut saw I worked well into the afternoon from a mid-morning start sawing two eight foot long railway sleepers into six-inch lengths for chopping. That made a total of 32 blocks in all, it was hard work.

At mid-day she gave me a cup of tea and two biscuits, and when I finished sawing she gave me the agreed five shillings. As she did so she said that she hoped that I would spend it carefully and not take it into a public house!

I could never understand where people got the idea from that everyone on the road was of drunken habits. Certainly there was little evidence in lodging houses, and certainly never in a spike (casual ward).

Admittedly the navvies did like a few pints of beer, but as a general rule they kept to their own company and caused little bother to other people.

This left only the "Meths" drinkers, and as they were always to be found hanging about towns and cities where they existed as "Drop-outs" looked down upon by even tramps and "Spike Wallah's" the general public saw little of them.

Yet by one of those strange anomalies that occur, these social misfits and aimless dropouts are still to be found hanging around the back streets of all big towns wherever a "Handout" can be obtained by cadging.

Even the "Welfare State" that has eradicated and driven off

all the traditional wanderers from the roads, has not removed them, their problem is a social one.

By 1930 the position on the road had reached a point where the number of unemployed going "On the Road" was such that on any main road between two towns, one could meet with twenty or more "New Tramps".

They were mostly single men of all ages who had either no "Dole", or who were unable to pay for lodgings on 15 shillings (75p) per week in "Private Digs".

Added to this was the fact that as times were harder, more folk did their own "Odd Jobs", and in order to find work for the unemployed men, most Council work was let to contractors with the clause that local labour must be used on the job.

This all added up meant that I found it increasingly harder to find casual jobs at all.

The same applied to getting purchase jobs on the boats. Because of the fall in imports and exports most boatmen were only getting one round trip from Hull to Leeds (or wherever) and back to Hull more often than not returning "Light" (empty).

Indeed some were obliged to draw on money saved for a "Rainy Day", or possibly to buy their own boat, which was always a boatman's ambition.

At the rate of one round trip a week with freight rates cut to the minimum, they found it difficult to make a living. Let alone save money.

Those boatmen who worked for a firm on a fixed weekly wage had a much more secure income, such as the Leeds Co-op grain boats which carried corn from the Jilo at Hull, to the flour mill at Leeds. Obviously those boatmen never left that kind of job until they retired however much they grumbled.

Equally obviously, because such boats (including tank barges carrying oil etc) all had a mate also on a weekly wage, they did not need a purchase mate.

Yet ironically it was at this time when the depression was at it's worst, that Government decided that something should be ~~done~~ done about the Poor Law and Casual Poor.

About 1929 the "Hurry Up Van" came into being in London. It's function was to collect all the "Dropouts" from the Thames Embankment and The Arches. The police accompanied it and bundled all the human flotsam into it, then they were taken willy-nilly to any of the Metropolitan Asylums Boards Workhouses that could give them shelter and a clean up!

In 1930 the old Victorian Board of Guardians system was abolished and replaced by the Public Assistance Committee.

This in itself recognised that because so many folk were homeless they were not all "Rogues and Vagabonds". At the least it did away with the old unvarying diet, and the system of tasks that even criminals in gaols did not do, such as stone breaking and picking oakum (Teasing out tarred hemp rope for cauking wooden boats).

Although I (and let it be said) many more folk did not realise it at the time, the winter of 1930/31 was the watershed. It marked the end of the old way of life. That was now gone for ever into past history.

The way ahead was not easy, gradually after a period of seemingly hopeless depression I did eventually get a regular job which lasted for three years.

But that would have to be another story, and in any event my own experiences after 1931 were just like those of thousands of other folk in the next eight years before 1939.

So now as I look back on those past years, it seems that in spite of a slum boyhood with it's unpromising future, not everything was on the debit side.

What I lost socially in not having either a regular job or a settled way of life I gained in experience. Not only with regard to the traveling fraternity of the road, but also of Britain.

Add to these the fact that I was also conversant with the old way of life and living, and I think that I am quite justified in saying that I consider myself as a link between the past and the present eras.

Starting from the morning that I crossed the Solway Bridge to literally enter Scotland by the "Back Door", many things happened which could not happen nowadays. In the case of the Solway Bridge, it was demolished in 1935 after a very ill fated and unprofitable life of sixty five years. The Solway Junction Railway was opened on September 13th 1869.

On August 8th 1870 a passenger service was started. It ran from West Cumberland to it's junction with the Caledonian Railway in Dumfrieshire.

The original intention was to carry the rich Haematite Iron-ore from the West Cumberland mines to the Scottish ironworks, but in the event this trade never materialised.

The line did however remain in business until 1921. for goods and mineral traffic. It also carried some passenger traffic as well (mostly market trains).

The bridge which was 1940 yards long was designed and it's construction supervised by the company's engineer Mr. James Brunlees. In January 1881 the pressure of ice floes on the piers of the bridge cause 45 of them to collapse.

The bridge was out of use for three years, during which time much trade was lost before it was re-opened in 1884.

Another link with the former way of life on the land was in working on the old steam driven threshing machine. I also saw land cultivated and ploughed by the Fowler steam traction engines with their wire rope drums underneath them.

Also there cannot be many men who can honestly say that they got "The Cold Shoulder" from a County police chief on Sunday afternoon at the kitchen door!

Not only did I when necessary experience the doubtful hospitality of the Poor Law board of Guardians in the casual wards in England, but I also on occasion went to the "Kind Man" as the Inspector of Poor was dubbed in Scotland.

So between the English "Spike", and the Scottish "Shelter House" I knew how to go for a night's shelter in both countries.

Add to all these the many natural and man-made sights of the British countryside which tourists and other folk spend a lot of money to visit, and I can say that I saw most of them gratis and for nothing in the course of my travels.

These ranged from the sights of London and South Coast resorts to the Grampians and the Western Highlands of Scotland. To the Caledonian Canal, the great bulk of Ben Nevis, the historic Pass of Killiecrankie and the Road to The Isles.

From the Hop Gardens of Kent and the cider orchards of Devonshire. I saw many of the countries famous Abbey's and Castles, and the great Clifton suspension bridge at Bristol.

The Yorkshire Dales and the Pennine Chain were no strangers to me either. Nor were the East Coast resorts, although there was little for an odd job man at such places, because of the seasonal nature of their trade.

As a grocer in one of the Yorkshire seaside towns remarked to me in his shop. "In the holiday season there aren't enough hours in a day, and we're run off our feet. In winter we're forgotten 'til the next Spring and Summer".

I passed through Edinburgh ("Auld Reekie") and walked the length of the famous Princes Street, and in Glasgow as I sheltered in a doorway I was taken into custody!

It was on a wet night on the Barrhead Road that I stood in the doorway of an empty shop. A Police Sergeant came across the road to me and asked what I was doing there.

When I told him and said that I had intended going to the Fireclay works further along the road, where upon he took me to the Police Station a little further along the road.

I was put into a cell with a couple of blankets and a pint of hot cocoa. Next morning at six o'clock the door was unlocked I was given a pint of tea and a slice of thick bread and margarine and sent on my way.

That was a city, but the part of Scotland that appealed to me most, and for which I am pleased to have seen it before so called "progress" caught up with it was the Burns country.

From Dumfries round to Burns's native Ayr via Maxwelltown I lived among the folk and shared their lifestyle in a way that could never be done in any other way. Burns would have found everything the same in his own day.

The words of Scotland's national poet described them perfectly
"What though on hamely fare we dine, wear hoddens grey and a' that
that; It's pith o' sense and pride o' warth, a man's a man
for a' that!

Another way in which I consider myself as link with the past concerns my having seen so much of the last days of the

steam engine. That is the reciprocating piston engine. For although the internal combustion engine now reigns supreme, the steam piston engine gave reliable power on every stroke.

It is not only the Railway enthusiast who misses the sense of power that was the steam locomotives tractive effort, the steam marine engine had the same unhurried yet powerful pushing of a vessel through the water.

As one steered a boat behind a steam tug in tidal water, one had a sense of reliability or dependability that the Diesel engine did not have, yet this is progress and without progress the result would be stagnation.

Even so I still have a nostalgic memory of the tall funnels with their plumes of smoke preceeding the boat that I was on up and down the Humber, to slip our tow-rope at our destination.

In retrospect I don't think that had I had to make the same decisions again I would have opted for anything different.

Certainly in the way that I chose I had to accept cold, hardship and uncertainty in my daily life style. Yet even so I liked to travel, and if there had been any opportunity for me to emigrate to either Canada or New Zealand in 1930 I would have done so willingly.

There were however no assisted passage schemes when I was in my twenties, and the impossibility of saving 80 or 100 pounds made such a thing only a dream.

When the Spring of 1931 came around I decided to stay at home and take my chance of finding work in my own area.

Inevitably I went to "Sign On", the procedure had not altered. "Have you worked since you signed last? - Sign Hear" "Next".

I also saw many faces that I knew, men who had given up the effort, who were stuck in the rut without hope. They were sim-

ply grumbling, listless robots taking part in a twice weekly shuffle from the door of the Labour Exchange in the appropriate queue two-deep to the counter.

Then after signing back to the door and out into the street again to return to the home street-corner again. Whatever happened I was determined that I would not get into that mindless and hopeless routine!

There were other young men who like myself had left home to find work elsewhere, and some did so and never returned to their native town.

I met one such young man with whom I had been at school. It was in the Lodging House in Rotherham that I met him, and he told me that he was working a three day week down Silverwood pit. He had been in "Private Digs" and would return there when his landlady returned from hospital to run the house again.

As for myself in the out of work spells between such jobs as I got I helped my father on his piece of land, gardening and looking after the poultry which he kept. It gave us little profit, and our takings were always required to cover expences, replacement of stock etc.

Even at that it gave us an occupation, something to do and somewhere to go. Ironically by spending his time there, my father who had refused to allow me to work down any pit, spent the last years of his life in full view of Middleton Broom Colliery.

As for myself (once again) may I say that because I liked walking I never had any inclination to hang about on street corners. The "Corner Boys" had no line of conversation anyway!

That way the first twenty-three years of my life ended, yet I still don't think that those six years were wasted.

Apart from any other experiences that I had I learned more

about human nature, and the attitudes of people to a stranger in a strange place than I could ever have learned at home.

Quite apart from ^{the} opportunity to see my country as it was before mechanisation and the motorways carved it up, and fast ~~the~~ traffic made walking on main roads a hazard, it gave me an insight to the ways of life of the different communities that made up the British population at "Grass Roots".

At that time except if and when one went to another area on holiday or business, there was little contact between for instance an agricultural area and a mining area.

As one might expect iron, steel, and mining did tend to work side by side. In a predominantly rural area however where generation after generation had got their living from the land, the villagers had little or no idea of what life was like in mill town or a steel town.

Farm hands were still hired at seasonal "Hirings" when they stood at a certain part of the Market Place of a market town and a farmer would look them over very much like horses.

In fact then the Market day was the day that everyone went to town not only buying and selling produce etc, it was also the day for meeting friends and having a social get-together with not a little ale drinking after business.

Even in the big towns and city's folk did the families shopping for the whole week in and around the markets.

During the rest of the week any daily requirements were purchased locally or at the ubiquitous "Corner Shop".

The advent of the Supermarkets has driven most of these traditional dealers out of existence.

In a like manner mechanical progress on the land has made it impossible to earn money by doing seasonal casual work for

farmers. In the harvest field to name but one instance of this the corn was cut and tied in sheaves by a "Self Binder" pulled by a pair of horses.

The sheaves were then gathered together and "stooked" in rows to be carted away and stacked until required for threshing.

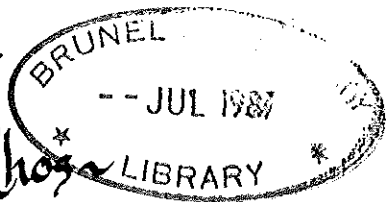
Then after the gang and the machine had done their work, the straw had to be stacked again until required for use. The same could be said for most of the other work on a farm at that time.

Even in gardening power driven tools have meant that many jobs (such as lawn mowing for instance), are now done with power driven mowers. Hedge trimming and tree lopping likewise use power saws and cutters, so these things among others have meant there is now no place for the traveling handyman.

Yet I do not regret those six years. I did what I thought was the right thing to do. To quote the words of the well known song, "And what is more-I did it My way".

Finis

XX



In the distant past the village of Rhos
 Uanerchrugog, as its name implies, was
 a village with a church on a heathery moor.
 With the advent of the Industrial Revolut-
 ion the coal, outcropping in some places
 less than a spade's depth, attracted
 colliers in their hundreds to mine on the
 Ponkey Banks and in the deeper,
 more professionally operated pits of
 Vauxhall, Masod, Bersham & Gressford
 in the plain below.

All round the Ponkey Banks houses
 were hastily put up, their one redeeming
 feature architecturally being that they were
 constructed of the local Ruabon red brick
 which has the rare property of appearing
 to glow a more vivid colour with the
 onset of rain.

In spite of its growth it had retained the
 character of a village, People were known &
 appreciated & were essentially identifiable.
 This is what the script is about ~ it is a
 story of people who are individuals.

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Hand Stands/ 1914	3.
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Penkey Banks/Band of Hope/IOGT	7 8.
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→ B/B/B Radio

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