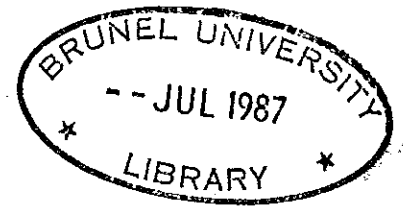


2-85.



THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT

BEING THE RECOLLECTIONS AND REMINISCECES OF

EDNA BOLD

## F O R E W O R D

This book is made for my grand-nieces and nephews. The anecdotes are chosen because I best remember them or because they most attract me.

If they are of sufficient interest, they are too short. If they are tedious, sketchy or superficial, they are too long.

Either way, there can be no mending of the matter. It will be too late.

"HAPPY AND GLORIOUS"

I remember I remember  
The house where I was born,  
The windows where the sun  
Came peeping in at dawn.

If Thomas Hood's sun ever shone, it certainly never peeped, nor his roses, violets and lily cups grow near the smoke-blackened walls of our house. Not a blade of grass, not a tree grew anywhere in the district. Rows of terraced houses, factories, cotton mills, engineering works, belching chimneys made a Lowryesque townscape for our beginning over a baker's shop not far from the centre of Manchester.

When we were very young it was at once a terrible, beautiful, exciting place. My twin brother and I had no sense of deprivation as we roamed and played in the labyrinth of mean, intricate streets.

The sounds of trams rattling and clanging into the town, the clog-irons striking hard pavements as shawled figures raced headlong and unheeding to the mills, the ear-shattering bellow of hooters urging the hurrying figures to a final burst of speed, were our earliest recollections.

Every morning we heard these sounds as we lay in the warm, dark security of our beds. They were as evocative as Thomas Hood's sun, roses, lilies, for they touched our tiny hearts and minds to life.

### THE ROAD

We lived on the main road that ran like an artery through the district of Beswick and wound one way to the centre of Manchester and the other way to the residential quarter of Clayton and the small industrial town of Ashton-under-Lyne beyond.

It was a safe road where vans, lorries, cabs drawn by horses of every size, colour and description rolled incessantly over the sets. It was possible to cross between this steady stream of traffic with ease and comfort. There was never any report or tell of accidents in the whole of the district.

The 'Road' was a social centre where everyone met, shopped, talked, walked. The butcher, the baker, the grocer, the milliner, the draper, the barber, the greengrocer, the pawnbroker, the undertaker were friends, confidants and mines of information. All needs from birth to death could be supplied from these little shops. As soon as arms and legs were strong enough, every child joined the 'club' that supported these small businesses, for every child was obliged to run errands for mothers, relations, neighbours.

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Of all the many resentments that every child harboured in its exuberant heart, this running of errands was the chief. It interfered with and subtracted from the play-way of the beautiful, long intoxicating excitement of the day.

Every morning, a little before nine, doors were unbarred, latches lifted, blinds raised and the shops 'opened'. Every morning a small hand-van pulled by a thin pale-faced boy would stop before our own front door, and tray after tray would be off-loaded from the van and carried on the head of the boy into the shop. This done, and his van empty, he would close and latch the doors, stand between the shafts and set off rick-shaw fashion, back to the bakehouse to pick up his next load.

In the meantime the white loaves, brown loaves, tin loaves, box loaves, cottage loaves, banjos and brunswicks would be stacked on to shelves by the pert, diminutive Florrie who worked in the shop. She cleaned, she polished, she arranged, she served, she gossiped to the shawled customers. Everyone wore shawls. They were warm, convenient, comforting, secretive.

Intermittently, throughout the morning, the straw-haired youth appeared. As the day advanced, his pace slowed, his tread became cat-like, his arms and shoulders sensitised to the delicate pastries he carried in the van. To his great credit the heady aroma escaping from the van neither induced him to an unseemly trot nor a poaching raid on the delicacies inside. The custard

tarts, the fruit pies, the vanilla slices, the macaroons, the eccles cakes, the chelsea buns arrived with a bloom of freshness second to none.

He was never complimented on his skill, never recognised as a balancing artist of promise. He was a 'casual', likely to be sacked at the drop of a hat. There were plenty of other boys ready to take his place. What became of him, where he went, what he did I never knew nor thought to enquire. I never even knew his name.

### BREAD

When we were old enough we were taken by our young maid of all work, Hannah, to see the bakehouse, a couple of converted cottages in one of the most squalid streets in the district. This street contrasted sharply with the fantasy in white we knew as the bakehouse. Flour dust lay like scatterings of snow on every object including the arms, faces and clothes of the frenetic figures that punched and thumped the huge mounds of dough.

After such violence, the mixing was allowed to 'rest' and recover. Then the mountain of dough was slashed and sliced and the resulting 'gobbets' weighed, rolled, moulded and slapped into tins which were arranged on trays and carried to provers to rise and balloon once more before baking began.

The speed with which my father and his foreman manipulated these trays into the 'maw' of the oven was quicker than the eye could follow. The foreman 'fed' the oven mouth, my father manoeuvred the trays with a long-handled peel into the inaccessible interior. When the two decks were filled the baking would begin. The heat, the timing were exact, calculated to produce perfect crusty, golden loaves. (Overbaked bread, burnt bread was a disaster).

The baking over, the doors were opened. The peel with its iron tongue would shoot in and out of the oven with incredible speed. The clatter of falling tins was deafening. The smell of freshly baked bread beautiful. Our nostrils twitched, our mouths salivated.

A young apprentice with hessian rags for mitts, untinned the loaves and off-loaded them to a side table. Here they cooled till ready for loading on to wooden trays or 'boards' which were then carried to the small hand-van which has already appeared in this story.

#### OLD BENNETT

No one spoke to us or noticed us as we watched the mixing, the kneading, and the moulding of the dough. We had to keep out of the way and watch and dodge the flailing arms and elbows of the men. It seemed safer to stand beside the pretty young woman who worked at

a side table made of slate. Only her round, white arms and flying fingers moved as she bent over her work. She sieved flour, rubbed in fat, filled small tins with pastry linings, boiled fruit, vanilla or custard on a small gas ring, prepared complicated mixtures for fruit, sponge and madeira cakes. A young boy waited on her, fetching and carrying and taking away. When he was not scurrying about, he was watching and learning. He was friendly, cheerful, willing, quick as a needle. His name was Jackie Bennett. We liked his name and we liked him.

We had no chance to develop any serious friendship with Jackie for he was as inarticulate as the rest of the busy, working crew in the place. He was old before his time. It is doubtful if he had ever known a 'play-stage'. Children like Jackie had to make themselves useful as soon as they could walk. He had a younger brother, Jimmy, and a younger sister, Lucy. Jimmy was strong enough to carry bags of flour and sugar, boxes of fruit and tubs of fat from the store room above. Lucy was 'stand in' for her mother when one of her frequent pregnancies made her 'unfit for duty'. Mrs. Bennett swept and cleaned the place as best she could.

Mr. Bennett was rarely in work. He was rarely inside the bakehouse. The sight of work frightened him. My father did not approve of him. He would say, "Old Bennett should take precautions", and we imagined this related to the mortal sin of idleness. It was



years before we understood that the sweet-natured, generous-hearted Mrs. Bennett, together with her numerous progeny, died before their time because Old Bennett would not take 'precautions'. My father had advised the old sinner on the ways and means available. All he could get from the incorrigible ignoramus was "Oh, let her take them. It's her business".

#### HADDON STREET

The bakehouse was in Haddon Street. We could walk there if we didn't dawdle, within five minutes, that is if Hannah accompanied us.

We sensed rather than knew there was something wrong with Haddon Street, for here we saw children with unwashed clothes, lank uncombed hair and red, bare feet. We were not encouraged to ask questions, to pass remarks or intrude on our betters and elders, so we never knew why this state of affairs disturbed and frightened us. We were hurried to and from the street and were never sorry to be out of it.

As we grew older my father would speak of the brawls and fights that occurred, of screaming women running from the savagery of drunken husbands and of infants scalded and burnt by lazy sluts.

My father rendered first aid to every hurt and needy child, fed the hungry families and subsidised penniless widows and orphans. My father never came to any harm in this terrible slum

street. His premises were never robbed nor his small working staff molested. He was as safe in his mean, cramped property as if he had been in Haddon Hall itself with its spreading green acres.

#### PEAS AND BEANS

To dig up the dirt between the nicks of pavement flags was every town child's impulse and the next to grow something. Peas and beans were always forthcoming from kitchen cupboards, being part of the staple diet in every household. They were planted with such loving care, watched over hourly and willed to life and being.

That they grew with startling rapidity and as rapidly wilted and died was no discouragement. Nothing in all nature could ever transcend the miraculous appearance of tender, green shoots sprouting between grey flagstones in one's own backyard. Trembling we would crouch, trembling we would lie on the cold flags peering through the translucent green of the tiny leaflets. Nothing in the streets, nothing in the house seemed to match these tiny plants. They were different, suggesting a different order of things to which we were not accustomed. Revelation creates hunger and nature in her own way has a mysterious and inexhaustible supply for every need. It was not long before we discovered the incredible and different order of things we had begun to sense as the peas and beans struggled to grow in their inadequate, unlikely seed beds.

BUTTERCUP MEADOW

When we were four or five and my younger brother Harold, a babe in arms, we went to stay at a farm in the countryside behind Bispham.

One sunny afternoon my father sat in the middle of the buttercup meadow that stretched in front of the house. In his arms he held the child. Monstrous animals with lowering heads and menacing horns and disgusting, dribbling muzzles streamed through the field on their way to the farm.

I could not cry out. I could not move. The sickening creatures were going to kill my father and the sleeping child. I was never surer of anything in my life. My father continued to sit, smiling and unconcerned as I agonised, transfixed and paralyzed. I passed into oblivion, and the next thing I knew we were walking in a lane that skirted the meadow. How we got there I do not remember. We were 'just there' as we are 'just there' in dreams. My father and the baby were going ahead. My mother and my brother, Stanley, were following behind.

The thick, white branches of hawthorn, the overpowering scent of blossom, the hum of insects and the unfamiliar softness of earth beneath our feet were too much for my excitable nature. Another fainting fit threatened. But walking precludes any sudden rush of blood away from either extremity. The moment passed unremarked. In some secret recess, hidden deeper than

deep, lay the knowledge of some celestial state of affairs that were reflected in the beautiful lane and the buttercup meadow.

### SHIRE HORSES

The cow frightened us. The horse fascinated us and added to the entertainment of the busy main road. The horses worked day-long for their living. They trotted, walked or lumbered over the sets pulling carts, lorries, waggons, traps, cabs. They came in every size, weight and style from the heavy shires to the light-weight flying ponies that sped with fanatical speed between the shafts of high two-wheeled traps. These light, delicate vehicles carried the morning and evening editions of the newspapers. The large, spinning wheels, the catapulting bundles of newspapers cascading to the waiting boys below seemed the most exciting event of the day. We would contrive to be at the side of the road to see the traps race by. Still palpating and dizzy from the sight and sound of spinning wheels, we would cross the road, run into a back street and reach a stable yard where we could take a more leisurely view of the horse. A different kind of horse. Here were stabled the shires. We knew the time of their arrival home for the night and could watch the ritual of their stabling any day of the week. Released from their carts or lorries, held by their bridles, they would be 'backed in', their manes tossing, their eyes rolling, their large teeth champing, their legs plunging and thrashing, their hooves clanging.

They terrified and shocked. Nevertheless, we would return again and again to enjoy the spectacle and the cursing and swearing of the men. Despite all the evidence of eye and ear, we knew ourselves to be safe, we knew a moment of unimaginable silence would descend. The horses had been stabled and we knew watering and feeding were proceeding out of sight of our prying eyes.

The silence, the sight of cocks and hens picking corn in the yard, the smell of manure brought a sense of anti-climax. We would amble off to a timber yard to sniff the odour of wood stacks, or stroll into the open doorway of a small rug factory whose stifling, dust-laden atmosphere choked the breath from our lungs and sent us scurrying to a small, adjacent croft which we loved and where we most often chose to play.

#### FREE PLAY

As soon as we could walk and talk and be trusted out alone, we played on the main road or in the streets adjacent where our Grandfather, Grandmother, Uncles, Aunts, Cousins, friends lived. We loved the short terraces of black, brick houses, whose doorsteps and window sills were yellow-stoned, buttercup bright, whose lace curtains hung like white or cream veils to hide the small, trim parlours inside. We loved the smooth, grey flags where we walked, ran, skipped or danced to a barrel organ. We played with 'bobbers and kibs', whips and tops,

shuttlecocks and paddles, hoops and sticks, balls, ropes, dolls and prams, tricycles and scooters. We played a variety of racing, catching games, ring games, singing games. The older children taught the younger the art and skill of tent making that occurred in the summer. Hessian, old blankets, old rugs, clothes horses, poles, ropes were begged, borrowed or stolen. The crude, bedouin-like tents were hitched against the wall of a house, the 'wigwams' were built with great difficulty on the hard, dirt floor of thecroft.

There was little in all life that ever rivalled the moment of ecstasy as we crawled into the confined, stuffy, smelly interior of these tents. There each one would sit like a diminutive grand turk, cross-legged and inscrutable, munching stale buns and biscuits. The sun would pour down. The heat become insufferable, but no child would leave his beautiful shelter till shrill voices called the little sultans home to bed where the day's play would be recreated again in dreams.

#### NIGHTMARE

I loved my dreaming life. I loved my waking life. The one was undoubtedly a reflection of the other. With one exception. In sleeping, dreaming, came the nightmare and the discovery of a fear unknown in our happy, protected life-style. There was no 'feed in' from any source apparently.

If the horror film had been invented, it was not yet our 'scene'. The pantomime was the thing. Each year we had the choice of Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, Jack and the Bean Stalk, The Three Bears, Goody Two Shoes, Puss in Boots, Mother Goose, Robinson Crusoe, etc., etc. We were allowed one pantomime, sometimes two. With the exception of Robinson Crusoe, the magic and splendour of these spectacles brought glamorous dreams, but in the case of Robinson the very epitome of horror filtered through into my first nightmare.

At the back of our house was a small bedroom with a small casement window. It was through this window that the cannibals with frightful yells and spears and knobkerries came bursting in to slaughter the whole household. They were more real, more terrifying than any of the blacked-up stage versions I had seen in the footlight's glare of an afternoon performance.

It was never possible to sleep for many years in an unlighted room or sleep alone in any house. From this time, when I was no more than five or six, fear permeated the tangible and the intangible. The fear was driven deep. Communication with our elders was not encouraged. Psychology had not been invented.

Mercifully the old cliché that "Time cures most ills" seems to work for me. Age with its "change and decay" killed the phantoms of the night, stone dead.

BACK BENCHER

Not all the hours of the day and night were directed to entertainment and play and dreaming. There were the hours of school, state school. A timid, 'good' child could qualify as a 'back-bencher'. The truculent, ebullient, strong children were mustered on the front rows of the very hard, long benches under the watchful eye and within close reach of the strong right arm of the teacher.

I remember little of the school room with its high bare walls, its high small windows and grey light. The sun never shone on the greens, greys and browns of that featureless, colourless room in which we were 'incarcerated' morning and afternoon.

The backless rows of benches ran the length of the room. Little boys and girls sat close together, side by side with their arms folded across their chests or clasped behind their backs. They never moved or turned their heads or spoke except to chant in unison or write on squares of slate with thin slate pencils.

The teacher in a black, shiny apron, yellowing, celluloid cuffs, a high-necked blouse and long sweeping skirt, stood beside a large blackboard, a stick in one hand, a piece of chalk in the other. Both these instruments of her trade were used to such good effect that by the time I left this room I could read, write and spell. Everyone could read, write and spell.

How this miracle came about, or where I had been during these lesson times, I have no idea. Not a sound echoes, not an



image flashes on that 'inward eye', all is blank save the memory of a goldfish that swam in a bowl of crystal clear water. But not for long could the creature withstand such confinement and the dust-laden atmosphere of the place. The goldfish disappeared with the suddenness of a snuffed-out candle flame. No other distraction ever impinged on the margin of our eyes. Visually, aurally mentally stultified, the days passed, featureless and painless.

### THE SUPERINTENDENT

By contrast the time we spent in Sunday School was distressing and miserable.

Each Sunday afternoon we would go through the unnaturally quiet streets to a large, barn-like hall with a platform at one end and rows of benches immediately below. The 'Superintendent' stood on the platform behind a wooden table. A decanter of water and a tiny, shiny bell were its sole furnishing.

The Superintendent towered on high. His thin figure, his pale, narrow face, his thin, drooping moustache, his small, narrow eyes surveyed his flock with severity and distaste.

The children would sit mute, their eyes glazed, their fat legs dangling listlessly and flabbily, expressing a paralyzing boredom.

There was singing, praying, reading from THE BOOK, lessons, more singing, more praying and a sudden release from restraint into the street outside.

There the little boys teased the little girls. The girls attacked the boys, beating and thwacking with their Sunday best umbrellas. This was the only likeable, telling thing of the afternoon. The Superintendent had done his best, the teachers had done their best and in my case had succeeded in producing an agnostic. I was fourteen.

I left the establishment, never to return, ready to obliterate the unpleasant incidence of 'Sunday School' from my mind for ever. But the memory of the boring little man who stood on a platform nearer to God than anyone I knew in our narrow little circle remained indelibly imprinted. To this day I cannot pass any non-conformist chapel without a sense of great unease and gloom.

#### SUPERMAN

The superman wore a bowler hat, carried a black bag and rode a bicycle. He wore a well-cut suit, hand made shoes and soft, kid gloves. He was handsome beyond belief, was well spoken, smooth mannered, charming. He came when birth or death were imminent or when the baby had the croup or Grandma had bronchitis.

One January morning we were wakened by my father. A strange woman bustled to and fro, upstairs and downstairs.

"Mama isn't very well", said father. "Mrs. Ward has come to look after her, the doctor will come soon. Hurry and get your breakfast and go to school. You, Edna, can go and see Mama".

My mother sat, uncommonly fat, white as a ghost.

"Mama, Mama", was all I could say as she held me in her arms. She uttered no word, no sound came from her dry lips. Mrs. Ward guided me down the stairs and into the street. I walked without touching ground through the cold of the morning. The remnants of a pale moon hung low in the sky. Streaks of light cut through the gold of the sky. The day was Tuesday. The morning session at school was spent with 'Cookie Taylor' in a cookery session at the top of the building, the afternoon hours, with French and history lessons. Not a single verb, not one historical fact penetrated my bemused brain. All day I speculated on the birth of a child, praying God to send a girl child.

The tram ride home from school was cruelly slow, but from the moment of touchdown from the car I moved with the speed of light. Again my feet failed to touch ground till I was at my mother's bedside looking down on two bald heads, two crumpled faces and two sleeping babes. My mother had done it again. She had produced her second pair of twins. How clever I thought her to provide a boy and a girl each time and how wonderful to provide a much longed for sister at last. Now we were five, three boys and two girls. My younger brother Harold was a loner. He had arrived unaccompanied, and from my point of view was always a different kind of child.

My mother survived the ordeal well, and at the end of the month the 'strange woman' who seemed to have taken over the running of the house, departed. We were not sorry to see Mrs. Ward go.

Now the superman came at regular intervals. No doubt he deemed a second pair of twins merited some little extra attention. He would come into our living room and take up one child after the other and pronounce it fit and well, look carefully at my mother and advise a suitable 'pick me up' and depart. Then and only then would I emerge from the back kitchen where I had hidden my unworthy self and stand on the spot where he had stood and breathe the air that he had breathed. The days of untutored, matchless adoration had arrived. They were to follow me like the Lord's 'Goodness and Mercy', all the days of my life.

#### MY COUSIN DOROTHY

My cousin Dorothy was more like my sister than my cousin. Born a month after I was conceived, we reckoned ourselves to be the same age. She was a much finer, much handsomer edition of myself. My ever watchful Aunt Maggie made the matter plain to me, for I listened to the gossip between my aunt and my self-effacing, long-suffering mother. I soon gathered that only the finest soap ever touched my cousin Dorothy's skin, the softest bristle ever touch her black, curling hair, the best draper provide her wardrobe, and the finest quality flour, fat, sugar, fruit, meat, bread and butter nurture her fine, rosy complexion. My aunt told all over a matter of days, months, years, and everyone accepted without question that Dorothy was best. There was never any comment or denial of the fact. My red-haired, fiery-tempered Aunt Maggie, and my pretty mild-mannered cousin Dorothy were top of the pecking order in our

family. Now, despite this established superiority and my undoubted inferiority, my cousin and I were as close and loving and inseparable as identical twins. We walked to school together, played together, Sunday schooled, picnicked, performed in concerts, walked in processions, decked in white, inhaled the perfume of the glorious flowers we carried in baskets, celebrated May days with our self-chosen queens and at the turning of each year shared our Grandparents, Aunts and Uncles' parties and celebrations. We shared the detestable waiting for 'the second sitting' as we lounged in the parlours, whilst the feast, in a packed overheated kitchen, moved slowly to conclusion. There was always waiting, eating, washing up and interminable singing round a superannuated piano.

On New Year's Eve, without any signal I could ever discover, this singing would come to a stop and a strange quiet descend, tension gather and my handsome, raven-haired Uncle Harry don his coat and bowler and leave the house without a backward look. A door banging, footsteps walking in the night, a hammer beat of the heart, and then the shattering noise of hooters and whistles and sirens filled all space in and out of the house. The New Year had come, and with it the knock on the door and the re-entrance of our beloved Uncle Harry with his muffled "Happy New Year" in the dark of the lobby outside the parlour. Round he went, shaking hands with the men, kissing the women and children, and everyone was showered with handshakes and kisses till the trays of ginger wine disentangled sisters from brothers, husbands from wives, children from grown ups.

Then we were hatted and coated, muffed and furred and taken home through the gloriously late-night dark of the streets. We had such a little way to go. One family to the house next door, my cousin Dorothy round the corner a hundred yards or so down the street, and we to our house across the main road.

'SEKS'

We were as innocent as Adam and Eve walking in the garden. My twin brother and I knew we were different. The ritual Friday bath night in front of the kitchen fire brought the matter to mind. We had no interest, no curiosity and paid little attention to the phenomenon. Neither did we pay any attention to the marked difference in our appearance. My tall, blue-eyed, fair-haired brother established his Saxon blood. My short stature, dark brown hair, brown eyes, advertised some far off Celtic origin.

As we grew and developed, the difference in temperament was obvious. It went unnoticed and unremarked. Self consciousness was not encouraged. We were never allowed to put ourselves forward, to attract notice or speak out of turn. I had to stand with my feet together, sit with my knees together and never, under any circumstances, lift my skirts. I wore a serge top skirt, a cotton petticoat and a flannelette petticoat. Beneath these I wore an unmentionable garment that never went on display on the washing line, but was hung on a rack near the ceiling amongst other articles of washing.

Vaguely, slowly, haphazardly I sensed the layers of petticoats that hung down like drawn blinds had a significance I did not yet comprehend. Revelation came one summer afternoon as we walked to school. We had to go part of the way along a high wall that divided the street from the railway. It was along this length of black, brick wall that a child overtook us and said, without introduction or preamble, "Do you know where babies come from?". "No", we said, neither knowing or caring. Whereupon streamed out from the lips of the soft young mouth such a torrent of obscenity that we stood transfixed, unable to proceed. We were late for school.

The fear and revulsion of 'Seks' crippled and stunted our natural appetite till affairs of the heart shed a more credible and acceptable meaning to a dark and terrible business.

In the meantime, my cousin Dorothy, who had shared this traumatic experience, unearthed a large medical book from the highest shelf of a kitchen bookcase. Whenever we were left alone in the house she would climb up and secure the book, and together we would continue our education. At the same time, she would extract a volume of the Fox's Book of Martyrs. Childbirth and martyrdom were synonymous. We suffered the torments of the damned. Neither my cousin Dorothy nor myself ever underwent such physical torture as we discovered in those two hideous books. We never 'reproduced'. On this score she went unrepentant to the grave as I shall go to mine.

RECORDING ANGELS

I could never bring myself to frighten my close friend and confidant with the 'facts of life'. They were too shocking for tender ears and Jessie Mills was a shy, sensitive child. She lived with a widowed mother, an uncle, an aunt and a terrible Grandmother. No child would come within range of the sour old woman. She kept a pawnbroker's shop and a screaming parrot that hung in a cage outside the shop on fine days. It struck me as odd that such a gentle child should belong to such a household, and odder still when she declared one day, "My uncle is practising Beethoven, Mozart and Mendelssohn". The pawnshop, the parrot and Messrs. B. M. and B. did not belong together. I had not heard of surrealism.

"Could I have a piece by Beethoven, Mozart or Mendelssohn?", I asked my music teacher. "They are beyond you", she said, and marked the scales, exercises and pieces like Blue Bells of Scotland and Robin's Return that I was to continue practising. I knew I was going home to practise NOTHING.

It was impossible to spell out how I knew Beethoven, Mozart and Mendelssohn and their kind were more than mere mortals. They were the recording angels of the profound, the sublime, the mysterious.

It was not until I went to the secondary school that I heard their music. We were taken to concerts, recitals and operas in the town. Visiting celebrities came after hours to



the school music society. I became familiar with the music of Brahms, Bach, Handel, Rossini, Elgar, Debussy, Schumann, Schubert, Delius, etc., etc. I began to play from the simpler extracts of their music and if my technical ability did not match my understanding, at least I knew I was struggling to interpret 'Something'.

### STREET MUSIC

In the beginning, music was 'for free'. In the streets there was an orchestration of clogs clattering, trams rattling, hooves beating, barrel organs gurgling, temperance bands blarting and buskers serenading.

On Saturday afternoons when the pavements were thronged with shoppers, a blind old woman stood on the edge of the pavement opposite our shop. She stood singing, with a stick in one hand, a tin can in the other. Except for 'Abide with Me' I remember nothing of her repertoire. The tapping of her stick, the tinkling of coins in her mug were the sounds I best remember, and the sight of her short, stout figure dressed in black, and her black sailor hat topping a tight grey bun of hair.

Further along the pavement a hollow-cheeked man blew a medley of popular songs on a cornet. As a finale he played 'Take a Pair of Sparkling Eyes' and then took off his cap and 'collected'.

Beyond him, standing in the gutter, a thin, under-nourished man, cap in hand, sang sad and mournful songs. 'Thora'

and 'If those Lips could only Speak' never failed to extract the coin from thinly lined pockets.

In the side streets the barrel organs literally bombarded the air with 'Yip I Addy I Ay', 'Ta-Ra-Ra Boom-de Ay', 'Yankee Doodle, 'Oh I do like to be beside the Seaside', 'All the Nice Girls love a Sailor'. All the little girls danced and I danced with them. "She should have lessons", said my father and shocked my puritanical mother.

Weekdays and Saturdays bands marched up the road and down the road, trumpets blaring, drums banging. The noise was terrifying, insufferable. I would run indoors and hide under the kitchen table. All kitchen tables had chenille or plush cloths that hung almost to the floor. Once under the table every child was safe from thunder, lightning, storm and any wrath to come.

#### EDWARD

The wrath to come was epitomised by my father's violent temper, yet I loved my father more than I loved God. If I was ever to love the Deity it would be because I knew how to love my father.

Like so many fiery-tempered people, he had virtues in excess of his faults. He had the warmest heart and the quickest imaginable response to need. His hand would drop to his pocket like a reflex action.

He was the first person I consciously recognised. Sitting on his knee he sang a medley of pop songs. He seemed to prefer sad ballads, for he always began with "Goodbye Dolly, I must leave you", "I am sitting on the style, Mary", "Robin Adair", before he began on "Daisy, Daisy", "The Lily of Laguna" etc. At the change of mood he would jog his knee, take my hand in his and whistle for very joy.

Where was my mother? Where was my brother? Where were we sitting? What was the time of day? I don't remember. Some deep content, some extraordinary rapport blanketed non-essential details from memory.

I was more curious about my father than anyone else. Gradually I collected his 'dossier'.

He was the next but youngest of six children. He was puny, high spirited and irrepressible. He invariably lost the fights with other boys. The beatings and punishment seemed only to toughen him, and as he grew older he grew stronger, self willed and independant. He left school before the official leaving age and got a job in a nail factory in Angel Meadow. The work scarred and cut his hands. He moved to a firm of book binders in Swan Street not far from Smithfield Market. Here he swept and cleaned and brought pails of water for the men and women who stitched and glued and bound the books. He was astonished to find how much water the craftsmen used. He was kept very busy but not too busy to indulge in mischief. In the workshop stood a large press and a large guillotine, and by the guillotine a

large box where the shavings from the books could fall. It was the custom for the women in the room to wash their hands in the pails and then dry them on the shavings.

One day the boy, still a child and of slight stature, crept into the shavings box, covered himself with shavings and waited. As a woman dried her hands, he jumped up with outstretched arms, and threw the unfortunate, unsuspecting victim into a fainting fit.

Why the foreman bookbinder did not sack him on the spot he never knew. He was admonished and given another chance.

There seems to have been no further misconduct till one day he was requested to bring the bands or 'slips' that were used to keep envelopes in bundles of twenty five. "Go for the slips", said his superior. "Slip yourself", said the rascal, with a fine play on words. The foreman bookbinder overheard the saucy remark and taking the boy by the ear said "Now lad, slip off home and mind not to come back".

For a time he helped the milkman on his daily rounds and learnt to drive the milk float. On Saturday afternoons he helped to sell puppies and rabbits in Tib Street near the market, but finally he returned to school to finish his time, for he was not yet reached the school leaving age.

Now his father apprenticed him like his two older brothers to the engineering firm of Heatherington's in Pollard Street. But the boy was short sighted, could not apply himself,

and after three years, much to the disappointment of his father, a long established foreman engineer in the firm, was released from his contract.

He was now apprenticed to a step-uncle who was a master baker. He was given three months to prove himself. If he failed, he was to be sent packing.

It was with his Uncle and Aunt Bromley that the boy found a different life style. There was a degree of opulence and self indulgence completely foreign to the puritanical harsh, penny pinching household at home. Cigars, whisky, cards, theatres, cabs, frock coats, tall hats, fine calf shoes, elegant neckties, furred umbrellas, fine linen, delicate china, music, books fascinated and intrigued the young recruit who was allowed to penetrate the living quarters of the household at suitable times. Uncle Bromley led a life of leisure. His step-son, Jack, merely supervised and kept his eye on things, but my father took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, bent his back and commenced to work. He became a baker, a good baker. His uncle commended him, his family respected him and at last conceded there might be 'something in him'.

As indeed there was for when his Aunt Bromley remarked one day that one of the newly opened bakeries to which he had been directed did not pay, my father 'resigned'. His dream of gracious living, Bromley wise, was at an end.

He was next engaged as a pastry cook by the excellent Mr. and Mrs. Smalley who kept a restaurant in Brown Street.

in the centre of Manchester. He was to work in the kitchen, help the chef in the carving bar. He was neither to bring in or carry out parcels. He was to pay threepence a week 'pot' money and receive eighteen shillings in wages.

My father was happy and interested. Pastry making is a varied and delicate art. During this time with the Smalleys he perfected his skill. But he did not earn enough to set up house. He had fallen in love with my mother. He was twenty six and my mother twenty two.

Never lacking in confidence, my father decided to set up for himself, and with help from his father, who gave him a small sum of money, he converted two small cottages into a bakehouse. When he had baked, he hawked his goods in a basket from door to door. It was a testing time. Some friends affected not to know him. He persisted, worked all the hours God sent, married and then opened the shop where, within a few months, we were born. Nothing ever seems to have 'floored' my father, for a delicate wife and twins to support at the outset of a business life might have daunted a lesser man.

#### ANNIE FAT.

Most marriages were arranged within the close-knit community of our district. Couples paired off at the mills, factories, chapels or churches.

My father, who overdid things in almost every particular, attended the two local chapels and the nearby Christ Church, C.of E.

He flirted shamelessly with the prettiest girls, but secretly admired a modest, self-effacing young woman he had met at the Beswick Wesleyan Chapel.

He gave no indication of his preference, but quietly observed his 'chosen' at Sunday School socials, concerts and outings, and finally contrived an introduction to her home. His elder brother was courting his chosen's elder sister.

What the girl sensed, what the family thought was never made clear to me for I had only my father's confidences. He made no bones of the fact that he was slow to declare himself. He was today's equivalent of a young raver. He adored the pretty girls, the 'butterfly' girls and had every inclination to 'dally' but never to marry any 'light o' love'. Steadiness and common sense he valued more than physical charm.

"Wasn't my mother attractive then?" I would ask.

"Oh, yes" he would say, but she was too shy, too retiring and rather plump. The boys didn't 'go' for her. They called her 'Annie Fat', which offended me for 'Annie Fat' as I knew her was slim and tall with fine features, a pale, delicate skin and large, doe-like eyes, and lustrous black curling hair. Though no one in our family knew it, least of all my father, she more resembled an Italian renaissance painting than a Lancashire working girl. (In common with most other girls, she was a weaver). She was as good as she was beautiful, and looked as fine with her sleeves rolled up and a wrapper apron round her waist as she knelt to scrub or scour, as when dressed in her Sunday best.

"Did you often see her scrubbing and scouring?"

I would ask, pursuing the point, for I had never seen this phenomenon. Once married, the menial tasks of my mother's life came to an end. She had other work to do.

"Oh, yes" my father would say. "I would call when I was not expected and there could be no chance of false impressions. It was these times that convinced me beyond all doubt that I had chosen right".

"How did you propose?"

Here my father grew reticent and I never learnt the mechanics of the affair. All he would volunteer was his father's comment on the prospective bride. A severe man of few words, my grandfather said "Your girl is not strong. She is delicate. There is a huskiness in her voice I don't like to hear. You will have trouble with her".

My father married his 'sensible' girl and within the space of a year he had to support a delicate wife, puny twins, a maid of all work, a shop girl, a dog and a cat.

He worked round the clock. He worked in heat and dust with sweat running from every pore. He worked till he reeled like a drunken man. He worked till he collapsed and could work no more. He sold out, bought a house in Whalley Range, and lived on the proceeds he had received from the sale of the business.

It was some time before my father could make a come back. In the meantime, most of his small capital had drained away. The baby boy born of the second pair of twins had died and my mother



was in an institution in Lancaster, suffering a severe mental breakdown.

My father sold his pretty suburban house and with the proceeds started a small run-down bakery business in Gorton, and quartered his young family with an obliging widowed aunt, back in Beswick.

My father supervised the miserable shop and bakehouse in Gorton, and with the help of my brother, Stanley, and a strong, young apprentice, began to make a meagre living.

I continued at school. My brother, Harold, continued at school, and the younger twin, my sister Winifred, thrived and grew, despite the somewhat erratic care of my brittle, unpredictable Aunt Lizzie.

My Aunt Lizzie was a thorn in the flesh of her entire family. Everything about her was sharp - her nose, her elbows, her temper, her tongue, her movements. She moved with the speed of light. Sparks seemed to fly, her house seemed to flash with a brightness that had to be seen to be believed. Not a stain, a grain of soot, a scattering of dust was tolerated for a fraction of a second. She lived completely by impulse and it was as if the good Lord had forgotten to supply her with any mind at all. Everyone endeavoured to keep clear of her sharp, biting tongue and ready right hand.

Despite the fear we had of our strange Aunt Lizzie, and the deprivation we suffered from the absence of our beloved mother, we were happy in our togetherness and the company of our cousins, Frank and Ethel.

Day followed day, easily, mindlessly, for we children. We kept scrupulously to the prescribed routine and were careful not to fall foul of our overworked aunt and our harrassed, financially embarrassed father.

There were moments of sheer bliss when I would slip next door into my Grandmother's house and sit in the high, wooden rocking chair before the huge kitchen fire. Where my Grandmother would be, or what she was doing, I do not remember. I recollect only the peace and quiet, the blazing fire, the ticking clock and the bliss of idleness. I escaped from the fraught world where every moment seemed to be crammed with activity.

I never lost the habit of day dreaming or the sense of 'otherness' that began in my Grandmother's kitchen. That complete isolation with its miraculous momentary awareness would be broken as she came bustling from her little scullery where she had been busy preparing the evening meal. She would suggest I return home to the tender mercy of my Aunt Lizzie. It was necessary that my absence should not be noticed. Sometimes, when she judged the conditions to be 'right' I was allowed to stay and wait for my two uncles and aunt to come in from work. The news of the day from the offices where they worked entertained my Grandmother, but I waited for the discussions on the concerts they had heard, the plays they had seen, the books they had read and were currently reading.

"Please, God" I would pray, as I left the table, "let me be invited soon again for stewed apple and custard, potato cakes and scones and home made bread". This was the part of the meal

I loved the most, together with the conversation that flowed free as honey from a hive.

ONE THING LEADS TO ANOTHER

With hindsight I realise that the direction of my life began in my Grandmother's kitchen. It was here we would meet Jack and Belle Corlett, friends of my Uncle Joe. They had a mutual interest in politics and music. They supported the Labour party and belonged to the Gorton Male Voice Choir. Jack was a lively, noisy extrovert, Belle was quiet, reflective, wiser than wise. "Now, Jack", she would say, when his voice rose in argument or his teasing went too far, and that was quite enough for Jack, who would go back into his shell for the time being. Irrepressible and high spirited, he would soon be on top note again, pontificating and arguing. The younger end of the company switched off as he held forth, but one day I heard him boom "Let her teach". Since I was the only girl in the kitchen I knew the utterance referred to me.

I glanced at my father, who gave little or no reaction to the remark. Nor did he ever speak directly to me on the matter. The subject was between my mother and himself. Somehow it was understood that I should go to college and become a teacher, and be like Jack and Belle. They were both at one time in the teaching profession. Belle retired to rear her two children, Jack became an organiser for the N.U.T. and finally entered Parliament as M.P. for York.

I went to college. I qualified and was appointed to a school in Ardwick where I met Alice Booth, head of a Junior and Infant Department. She was a dynamic, firebrand of a woman, champion of equal rights, equal pay, equal opportunity. She 'mothered' the children, mothered the members of her staff, and in her turn nudged me, albeit unwittingly, further along the road that had been chosen for me in my Grandmother's kitchen.

One day, as we were taking stock, making the annual count of rulers, pen holders, scissors, paint brushes, palettes, chairs, desks, tables, books and so forth, Roland Sudren from the senior school looked into the hall where we were working. He looked with distaste on the dog-eared, dingy text books. Seeking to divert his attention from the shabby collection, Alice enquired about the art classes he attended in town. "Take her with you next time you go", she said, nodding in my direction.

A suggestion from Alice Booth was as good as a command, and whether he would or no, Roland took me to the Technical School in Sackville Street, and there enrolled me in Charles Peachment's life class. I met Terry and Ida McGlynn, who were responsible for providing models. I saw John Bold posing in smock and cap. I made a feeble pencil and wash sketch, and being at the back of the lecture room, removed from Charles' vigilance, I evaded all attention. I was not yet ready for the kindest and mildest criticism. At home I looked at the sketch, little realising I was looking down on an impression of the man who was to be my future husband.

## EDUCATION

"Let her teach", said Jack Corlett. "Take her to your Art Class", said Alice Booth. More than a decade was to elapse between the two dictums. The first world war had to be fought and won, and the routine of school and college fill the space between.

One of the most bloody and terrible wars made little impact on the children of our family. Our elders with the exception of my Uncle Frank (Joe's younger brother) were never conscripted into the army. Our elders were in reserved occupations or unfit for service, the children too young to be involved. My father was called before military tribunals. The days of the Tribunal, when his case for exemption would be considered, were days of fear and apprehension for the family. Various physical defects and his profession invariably swung the case in his favour. He would come home smiling and exempted.

With our father safe and secure at home, the war ceased to exist for us. The discomforts of shortages, rationings and queueings made little impact. The terrible battles of the Somme and the Dardenelles registered themselves in an oblique way. The horror stories of atrocities perpetrated by the Hun in Belgium gave us an irrational hatred of the very word 'German'. Everything about the war seemed fictional, spurious, compared with the reality of the 'grind' at school and home, for we now had twins to care and tend. I say 'we' because as a child of twelve, I was a useful nursemaid and help to my mother. How I loved the twins in the

beginning! How I disliked them when the novelty of 'mothering' had worn thin and I was kept from play and the companionship of friends. School, homework, baby minding were the daily 'slog' with a little housework and shop work to add variety at weekends.

✓ From this time my father and mother and myself began to travel different roads. They accepted the puritanical reverence of work that was performed without love or real pleasure or satisfaction. Most of their work was a means to an end and only the beginning to the true business of living. I believed with Robert Stephenson that "A man's true life for which he consents to live, lie altogether in the field of fancy. There is no exemption from the quest for truth nor from the drudgery imposed by the acceptance of the accidental conditions to which it has pleased God to call us".

I was considered lucky when I began secondary school in the centre of Manchester, yet the idyllic, true world of childhood was over. The child forgot itself being swamped with learning that bore no relation either to itself or life. Dry as dust knowledge was literally poured into colander-like craniums, and any wretched, under-par child was expected to absorb that which refused to be contained. Its self-respect, its confidence, its love of life was eroded. To love life, to live life was not the prime function of EDUCATION, though out-of-school interests in music and literature gave a nod to culture and a liberalising influence on academic policy.

Nor did the curricula take into account that one day the young adolescents would grow into husbands and wives, fathers and mothers. For six years one thought, behaved, proceeded as if one's body did not exist. Authority was terrible, powerful. It could stifle all instinct, all natural impulses. The more enterprising found sweethearts, real and imaginary. The timid and less resourceful tried to do a deal with God. They went regularly to church. prayed, sang hymns and in the main took God for granted in an unquestioning kind of way, and having failed to contact the Deity used the church or chapel as a convenience where boy could meet girl. A little 'Further Education' enlarged and enlightened the timid and immature alike.

#### MARJORIE LOUISE

I was not able to enjoy any part of this 'Further Education'. For one thing I had left the church and for another it was understood, and very well understood there were to be no boy friends. I was too timid to engage in any illicit relationship. Without exception all my friends were girls, school girls. Casually, imperceptibly I drifted into a particular friendship with Marjorie Louise Jenkins, merely because I sat next to her in class. Gradually her industry, her solemnity, her air of self possession began to impress themselves. They contrasted strangely with the high animal spirits of the naughty girls of my third year form. I overcame the initial distaste and irritation I felt for the grave young miss who sat by me and worked so conscientiously

day by day, and gradually, oh, so gradually, I found myself spending all the free breaks of the day with Marjorie Louise. The friendship developed and thrived through countless visits I made to stay with the family in Gee Cross in Hyde. Possibly these visits were the best part of my education during the whole of the time I spent at the Secondary School.

We would leave after Friday school and return first thing Monday morning.

I loved the Gee Cross weekends. Another addition to that amiable household made little difference to its smooth running. Marjorie's mother ruled her brood with the competence of a good school ma'am. She never raised her voice, never indulged in a show of anger. She remained cool, calm and collected in all circumstances. Her voice seemed to start just behind her teeth and issue between thin lips, and was neither high nor low. Her hair was black and piled in mounds, front to back, and side to side. Her cheeks were red, too red even to uncritical eyes. Her figure was tightly-knit and 'curvaceous' as an egg timer. Her statuesque authoritative presence made her what was called in our day a 'fine figure of a woman'. She held whist drives in her beautiful drawing room, she sang in the chapel choir, she went country walks with her husband, Edgar, and seemed to enjoy a life independent of her children. She seemed always to be at leisure, yet she managed the household with the aid of one daily help and the tasks she delegated to the children.



All meals were served in the breakfast room (kitchen to me) over which she presided in solitary state for Edgar was never in attendance, and when and where he took his meals I never discovered. Fires were lit in the dining room and drawing room, and both were used as sitting rooms. We had the free use of the drawing room mornings and afternoons, but the dining room was reserved for the use of mother and father. There we never intruded unless invited, when we would find Mr. Jenkins sitting in his leather armchair holding a philosophical or religious tome in his hands. He would peer at us over the top of his spectacles, his horizontal, waxed moustache adding to the severity of his face, and underlining the magnitude of his erudition. If I felt I had to keep a wary eye on Marjorie's mother and remember always to be polite, in Mr. Jenkin's formidable presence I was obliged to drop my head and avert my eyes. Only the boldest child would look at such a man. Only once did I speak to him on the urgent and troublesome matter of religion.

At the first opening gambit in which I questioned the existence of God, his large, grey eyes lighted with dangerous fire and shrivelled my already shrinking ego to ash. The hoped for debate never began.

Neither Marjorie nor her sister, Dorothy, nor her brothers, Hubert and Cyril, ever spoke of God or their father. Both were omnipotent, though in the case of Mr. Jenkins, for all his authority, he served under God as a mere local preacher and under the local authority in Hyde as Borough Treasurer.

Grandma Page was a regular visitor and she sat in the dining room at the dining table playing patience or writing innumerable letters to 'friends in Worcester', her home town. We knew better than to interrupt her flow of thought as she concentrated on the page before her. As she wrote, we watched the incline of her head, the delicate features and the fine skin lined with age. The petite figure radiated 'presence'. She was beautiful and adorable. The overlay of age could not hide her everlasting youthfulness. Her letter writing finished, she would walk with us in the garden or take tea with us in the drawing room. She was kind, understanding and very much in tune with children, seemingly able to share their enthusiasms, their hopes, their dreams.

On fine days we spent much time out of doors. We walked through meadows, farmyards, lanes and streams over by Werneth Low. We talked to farmers and their families. We drank buttermilk, lemonade and dandelion and burdock. At home we lolled in the garden, made tea in the summer house, pretended to read, played cards, gossiped, imagined the future. On Sunday nights we rushed through homework, made piles of sandwiches for Monday lunch, washed necks, faces, arms, braided long plaits, packed leather satchels, said our prayers, slept in feather beds with brass-nobbed iron bedsteads to head and foot, and so prepared ourselves for the scramble back to school the following morning.

So close, so casual, so uncritical were we children that we never noticed our growing up. One by one we each left

school and I made fewer and fewer visits to the house in Blenaine Road. In turn, each child married and left the town. Grandmother, father and mother followed one after the other to the hereafter and finally only the annual Christmas letter from Devonshire brings me news of Marjorie Louise, her sister, Dorothy, and her brothers, Cecil and Hubert.

'FEED IN'

My consciousness of the English family, the English countryside was acute. I adored my own family, my Grandmother's family and Marjorie Louise's family.

I adored the countryside, feeling myself far more comfortable there than in the town. I began to discover that there were places quite different, set apart from all others. Certain meadows, certain hillsides, certain graveyards, certain glades, induced a sense of bliss and euphoria, a sense of space and timelessness that was difficult to explain.

What hangs in the air for instance around the meadows approaching Valle Crusis Abbey in Wales, or above the turf of Deerhurst Churchyard, a mile or so from Tewkesbury, or above the grave of Prince Llewellyn's dog in Bedgellert graveyard? It is impossible to know with five restricted senses. In such places, for me at least, a change of consciousness seems to occur and the natural order of things seems to move on to something 'other', something intangible and indefinable.

In the meantime, between these mind expanding moments

of true living, there was the 'feed in' of information from every quarter, from school in particular. The more distinguished people in Manchester gave talks during school, after school, in school and out of school. Stanley Jast spoke on the 'Fascination of the Dictionary', Sir Daniel McCabe on the 'Significance of Manchester in our Time', Miss Mercer on 'More's Utopia', Spurley Hay on 'The Education Bill', Mrs. <sup>B</sup> Brodsky on 'Russia before the Revolution', Mr. Heward on the 'Appreciation of Art', Mr. Guppy on 'Ryland's Library', Mr. Dawson on 'The World of Art', Lady Barlow on 'Modern Women', Miss Johnson on 'Rome', Lady Porter on 'The duties of a Lady Mayoress' and Rawdon Briggs on 'Music and Matter'. Rawdon Briggs had a natural rapport with children. He illustrated form and composition with violin pieces any child could understand and enjoy. He whetted our appetites for the Tuesday Midday concerts at the Houldsworth Hall. A whole form of girls would behave like angels to hear violin, piano, lieder recitals. We heard so many soloists but I remember best the piano playing of Jo Lamb, Dorothy Crews, Lucy Pearce, the violin playing of Rawdon Briggs and the piano playing of Hamilton Harty as he accompanied his wife, Agnes Nichols.

At home we made our own music. Everyone sang, parents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, cousins. Our aunt Harriet accompanied. If she were not available, I accompanied, and if I were not available my cousin Dorothy accompanied. We 'burbled' through a repertoire of English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish folk tunes, and the popular ballads of the day. We never seemed to

tire of The Gentle Maiden, Linden Lea, Believe me if all those Endearing Young Charms, O Hush thee my Baby, Paasing By, Have you not heard my Lady, Sweet and Low, etc., etc.

As soon as we were old enough to sit in the pit or the gallery of the Opera House, our Aunt Harriet took us to the D'Oyley Carte operas. Red-cheeked and palpitating with excitement we would arrive at the theatre at regular intervals, till the whole repertoire of Gilbert and Sullivan was exhausted. Then we would go to our favourite operas ad nauseam. They were the 'pop' of our adolescence. We worshipped Henry Lytton, Bertha Lewis, Leo Sheffield, Darell Fancourt, Derek Oldham, Sylvia Cecil, the stars of the company. It is my belief to this day that no succeeding company ever equalled its brilliance and excellence.

Grand Opera had no need to 'come' to Manchester. In our day it was already rooted here, or so we liked to think. In 1916 Sir Thomas Beecham, with the help of Arthur Lomas, formed an operatic chorus, and subsequently an operatic company which gave star billing to such artists as Edna Thornton, Muriel Brunskill, Miriam Lycette, Foster Richardson, Frederick Austin, Frederick Ranalow, Frank Mullings, Desiree Ellinger. Aida, Carmen, Tosca, Parsifal, The Valkerie, Rigoletta, The Magic Flute, Il Seraglio, The Marriage of Figaro, were included in the repertoire and sung in English.

The Mancunians supported Sir Thomas to a man. The performances played to packed houses. (These were the days of theatre queues and standing room only). We were taken from school

to Wednesday matinees. We were taken in the evenings by our discerning Aunt Harriet, who so far had ignored the O'Mara and Carl Rosa touring companies which gave regular seasons. We owe so much to Harriet who loved life, loved music and her nieces and nephews. She never married. She never wasted energy regretting the fact. My mother noticed her faults and failings and deplored her pleasure-loving nature, but my father admired her unreservedly and fell under the spell of her charm and unquenchable 'joie de vivre' as did his children. It was never clear to me why, in the first place, he had not married the girl himself.

#### THE ANCOATS BROTHERHOOD

We could not induce our Aunt Harriet to include us in the party which attended the Sunday afternoon meetings at the Ancoats Brotherhood. It was a fraternity of like minded people. We had to be content with the account that she and her two brothers gave as they mulled over the contents of the meetings. Gradually, over a period of time, we gleaned something of the history of the Brotherhood.

It was started it seems about 1880 by the serious minded and public spirited Charles Rowley, a city councillor, who gathered around him a group who would support him in his social welfare and cultural activities.

Rowley promoted extension lectures at Owen's College and exhibitions of pictures in public galleries. He commissioned Frederick Shields and Ford Madox Brown to paint the great hall of

the Town Hall with murals. He brought music to the great outdoors. Bands played in the parks.

His main preoccupation was to help and benefit the working class, and to this end he began his boldest experiment and inaugurated a series of Sunday afternoon meetings in Ancoats. He invited writers, artists, socialists, clerics. Walter Crane, Ford Madox Brown, G.K. Chesterton, Arnold Forster, Oliver Lodge, G.B. Shaw, William Morris lectured in the drab, cold hall in New Islington. Shaw wrote "Rowley is the only man alive who could induce any sane man to come to Manchester unless he had urgently lucrative business there..... No matter what spot of the world you might happen to be, you are never safe from a summons to go to Ancoats to speak for the Brotherhood, or sing for the Brotherhood, or fiddle for the Brotherhood, or do something equally exhausting".

Near at home he induced Sir Charles Halle to direct his musical programmes. Alfred Barker, Bertha Guthrie, Brodsky, Isaacs, Catterall, Fuchs, Dorothy Crews, John Bridge, Rawdon Briggs, Lucy Pearce, to mention but a few, gave recitals.

The fortunate Aunt Harriet, Joe and Frank, so splendidly regaled on Sunday afternoons, could fill my Grandmother's kitchen with pulsating excitement and delight that could well outlast the week. If John Corlett happened to descend on the house with his gales of sound and flappings of arms, the very structure of the walls and roof would seem to shake and roar till John could be persuaded to give a tune in his light, sweet tenor in the parlour. The sentimental ballads he sang to the restrained playing of

Harriet invariably calmed the household and reduced it to common sense and sanity.

### GRANDFATHER

In the midst of these unprecedented uproars and heart-stirring commotions sat the quiet, smiling figure of our Grandfather, a simple, silent man. He was illiterate and could neither read nor write. He had been born and bred in Cheshire near the village of Tarporley, and had worked as a farm labourer from the age of nine. He moved to the city and began a small haulage business. His work was his pleasure for his love and care of the shire horses he used in the business seemed the one reason for existence. He had an inborn love of music and he it was who took the young Harriet to the Metropole Theatre in Openshaw to see the O'Mara and the Carl Rosa Opera companies. He bought a parlour piano and saw to it that Harriet was tutored to play sufficiently well at the Batchelor's concerts in the Free Trade Hall. By my time the Metropole Theatre was as dowdy and second rate as the visiting companies. I was never in the theatre more than twice.

I had little or no real communication with my Grandfather. He was too inarticulate. In which case it was so much easier to concentrate on <sup>his</sup> great physical beauty. He had a well shaped head, a mop of curly black hair, a luxurious red beard, a high white forehead, large expressive brown eyes and a fine, delicate nose. How such a finely modelled head came to sit on the shoulders of a farm labouring boy became an increasing mystery to me as I grew



older and reflected on this extraordinarily, handsome man. It figured that the good looking gentle-natured, good humoured, one time youth, had captured the heart of our beloved Grandmother who was neither an illiterate nor a peasant.

#### GRANDMOTHER

Children have the faculty to know before they begin to think or discriminate. Therefore I realised my Grandmother was different from the rest of her family. She had an invisible aura that kept everyone at a respectful distance. No-one exercised any degree of familiarity or expressed any degree of coarseness in her presence. On her part she never obtruded her personality nor drew attention to her poise and dignity. Yet she had a natural sympathy, free from all trace of sentimentality. She treated her Grandchildren with the respect and attention she gave to adults.

She was neither plain nor handsome. Her eyes were unremarkable but her mouth was beautifully shaped and slightly pursed. It was a seductive mouth that could polish any word or phrase that came through the pale, thin lips. We would watch her fascinated, rarely following the gist of her utterance but watching the mouth and the sound that came out so softly, so gently.

She wore Victorian black, tight-bodied and long skirted. The skirt had a deep pocket hidden in its folds. The skirt was hidden by a shiny black apron. All the grandchildren had a compulsive interest in the pocket. They would wait for the long, white fingers to lift the corner of the apron and the hand sink out

of sight into the folds of the skirt and then emerge with a small, worn purse. A penny would be extracted, carefully, slowly, and passed to a little hand that had somehow to express reluctance to take yet gratitude to accept. No mean feat for an under ten year old.

My cousin Frank, who had a passion for the cinema, and who was not content with the weekly visit on a Saturday afternoon, would contrive an extra visit by borrowing a penny from our Grandmother. He was supposed to repay the debt and would honourably present himself on settling day when he received his spends on Saturday. "That's all right, Frank", our Grandmother would say, and Frank would pocket the coin and take himself off to the matinee.

"Ma", said my Auntie Lizzie one day, "When Frank comes to give back his penny, take it. Let's see what happens".

Came the day of settlement and my Grandmother accepted the penny.

It is possible my cousin Frank was marred for life. The shock he received to his nervous system sent him home roaring and sobbing and all he could gasp to his mother was "She took it, she took it" and for him, our gentle, understanding Grandmother was never the same woman again.

#### IDOLATOR

Neither my brothers nor my cousins had any love of the old gentleman in the sky who sat on a throne with his feet resting on cotton wool clouds. He was too severe. Fortunately, he was

a long way off and it was easy to forget him most of the time.

My cousin Frank alone showed any curiosity about him. He had an insatiable curiosity about the Almighty's beard. It was as if the whole credibility of the Deity rested on the quality and nature of this trivial and quite irrelevant member.

No-one could satisfy the child. He lost heart, he lost interest and ceased to ask and speculate, and focused his attention on the stars of the silent screen whom he worshipped with the heat and passion of his volatile, intense nature. Charlie Chaplin, Fatty Arbuckle, Mary Pickford, Pearl White, Chester Conklin, Tom Mix were his Gods. They were every child's Gods. Every working class child worshipped them without restriction for the price of a penny a week.

Such infantile idolatry could not compete with the strong urges of adolescence. Boy met girl and a more satisfying, mature form of worship began.

For me divinity stood waiting on the quayside as we left the Mona's Isle ferry steamer in Douglas harbour. His tall red-haired wife stepped forward, obscuring her short, slight husband as she welcomed my Aunt Harriet and I ashore. The two embraced and then the one introduced me to the other.

Such civilities over, the polite, diminutive husband stepped forward to greet my Aunt with a handshake and a kiss, and with a quizzical smile and decorous incline of the head introduced himself to me.

I saw the long aesthetic face, the sharp chiselled

features, the keen sailor blue eyes, the soft curling hair and heard the incisive, lilting accents of a most unusual man.

They say blood turns to water in moments of fear, but I discovered, as I looked into a pair of lively, twinkling eyes, that blood can turn to water in moments of pleasure and love.

How did we reach the miniature train that runs across the island? How did we reach Peel with its screaming gulls and pungent drifts of air rising from the herring curing sheds? How? How? How? Transcendence draws a veil.

I woke in a small white room in a large white bed. The sun shone through the eyelet of a window set in thick walls. My Aunt Harriet was washing. Cold water splashed from the large porcelain bowl she was using.

I sat upright in the bed and said into the thin air "I love him". My Aunt Harriet caught the edge of the declaration through the folds of the towel she was using.

"Who", she asked.

"Apollyon", I said, disguising the identity of the new divinity.

My Aunt Harriet laughed a trifle too inordinately and a trifle too loudly. I sprang from the bed, dressed, splashed water on the tip of my nose and ran out into the street, disgusted and offended.

My Aunt came out. "Breakfast", she called, and went back inside. I followed and sat to eat a crust of bread, and take a cup of tea with the greatest impatience. The day was waiting,

Apollyon was waiting, the town was waiting, a whole new world was waiting. Rivers, valleys, strands, harbours, farms, fisheries, castles, churches were waiting to be explored.

On fine days we would go by South Barrule to Castletown in the south, or go north to Kirk Michael and Ballaclough, and on by way of Sulby to Snaefell summit, where we might see the Mourn Mountains to the west and the Mull of Galloway to the north across the Irish Sea.

On fine afternoons we would laze by the White Strand or the beach near the Lynague Caves, where Apollyon and I could swim and float like disembodied spirits. There were idyllic afternoons when we would cross the ferry in Peel Harbour and go no further than the side of Peel Hill, where my Aunt Harriet and Mrs. Apollyon would sit and knit, whilst divinity and I swam through the surf by the beautiful Fenella Beach.

In the evenings we would walk through the lanes, high hedged with fuschias and wild raspberry bushes to St. Johns, where we would climb Tynwald Hill, that circular man-made mound where each July the legislature meets to proclaim the law.

As Apollyon and I went ahead, we talked. We never went far before we were riding the same hobby horse, discussing the nature of God and the universe. I was sure he had an answer to the riddle that had so far eluded me. He spoke with authority on most subjects. So deeply rooted was his conviction of the existence of some omnipotent power, that I began to conclude he must have a direct line to the Almighty. The logic, the mathematical precision

of all observed phenomena presented overwhelming evidence to support his thesis. Only a fool would disclaim the evidence he said. He attacked the scientists and their theories and the Darwinian theory in particular.

"Where are the giant reptiles of prehistoric times who have disappeared from their forests and swamps?" he asked, as we huffed and puffed up hill and down dale. "Consider the ape, the dog, the cat" he directed. "What evidence is there to presuppose that in years to come they will evolve so that they will walk upright, talk or show any other human attributes? The mystery of the great leaps in so-called evolution are nowhere satisfactorily explained. One theory is no nearer the mark than another. The best that you and I can do is to rely on the expertise of others in whatever field most attracts us. Now I choose to call the operator of the absolute order and exquisite balance of a system that supports all created life, 'God'. What God is, what attributes are God like, I cannot tell you. You must invent those details for yourself. The human race has a superb faculty for such invention. Go ahead and enjoy yourself with God and for heaven's sake stop thinking about him. Thinking will get you nowhere".

It was many years before I began to realise that thinking alone would get me 'nowhere'. There had to be other methods of approach but they were so far ahead into the future that it is not in the bounds of possibility that they should stray into this narrative.

For the present, Apollyon had spoken like an oracle. For him the debate was over. He now larded his conversation with anecdotes and information about the island. He was proud of the island history and the fact that he was a true celt. The island had never been overrun by the invader as had the English. The Norsemen alone had that distinction. His tall, red-haired Nordic wife testified to the fact. The phlegmatic, practical, large-boned, blue-eyed Amazon was in complete and startling contrast to the mercurial leprechaun of a husband. What attraction, what relationship existed between them I could never discover. That there could be any romance between them was impossible. To me, at fifteen, they were incredibly old. Beyond all hope. And yet, and yet, - my infatuation with Apollyon curtailed these uncomfortable facts, made him accessory to my harmless and innocent fancy.

The island, he told me, though beautiful, was neglected and unproductive. It depended on the herring fisheries and contraband trade. Gradually in the middle of the eighteenth century, things began to change. Farming was introduced and the land made productive. Prospectors discovered silver, copper and lead and mining became one of the island industries. Trade began to flourish. Corn, fish, cattle, metals, cloth, rope, canvas and linen were exported. As the economy thrived, amenities in the towns and villages improved, and a tourist industry began to emerge, and a more sophisticated pattern of social life establish itself. Yet, despite a healthy, robust people, the island seems to have produced few men of literary, political or scientific distinction.

Even Sir William Hilary, who built the first lifeboat station in the world and founded the lifeboat institution, was an Englishman. He lived in Douglas overlooking the harbour. The storms and wrecks he witnessed from the security of his house inspired him to this noblest of foundations. The Tower of Refuge that he built in the waters of the bay are a memorial to his name as well as a necessary help to incoming vessels in distress. Apollyon paused to reflect and then went on "Nowadays the more ambitious Manxmen migrate to better themselves. The best of our heritage seems to drain away and the worst of others flow back in. But all this will bore you. Come on, I'll race you to the Tower".

Such dry talk and much amiable teasing cooled the temperature of infatuation. Only in dreams in the days that followed did I climb to Corin's Folly on the summit of Peel Hill and survey the 'Kingdom'. I could look down and see the River Neb flowing to the sea, the wavering ridge of white-washed cottages outlining Glenfaba Road above the river bank. I could see the ruined churches of St. Patrick and St. Germaine lying low, in a grey, smooth sea. Only in dreams did I feel such wind, sun and rain and smell the pure scent of gorse and heather as Apollyon and I raced to the top of Peel Hill.

#### 'AFFAIR DE COEUR'

Not all love affairs are human. I began to sense this sounder, more enduring, more rewarding state of affairs when my serious involvement with Dance began.



I danced as naturally as I walked from my earliest years. I improvised (as did most other children) to the tunes churned out by the barrel organs or my father's gramophone.

My father aspired to send me to dancing class, but my puritanical mother would have none of it. The young men and women of her generation were obliged to make clandestine visits to dance halls and hide their dancing shoes in any 'safe' corner of the house.

But my father was 'light on his pins'. He sported a pair of patent leather dancing shoes and went often to Belle Vue Ballroom. It is my belief that he could dance like an angel and spin like a top. He was so light, slight and agile. When I knew him, his dancing days were over. There was no spare energy for such diversion after the long hours of work he did in the early years of his married life.

I was in the last year at the secondary school when my infatuation with the dance began. Madge Atkinson, together with her star pupils, came to demonstrate 'Natural Movement'. Her system, partly her own, was derivative. Isadora Duncan, Margaret Morris, Ruby Ginner were her forerunners.

Even to untutored minds, the Greek influence was obvious. The flowing lines of the movement followed the natural articulation of the skeletal system.

The school, having experimented with Eurythmics, then very much in fashion, now experimented with Natural Movement. Only the first and sixth forms were allowed to take part. They took to

the innovation like ducks to water.

By much contriving I added an extra session each week. I skipped the school journey that occurred on a certain morning on behalf of some project or other. What excuse I invented to absent myself from these visits is long since forgotten. As soon as the last girl in my class had left the building, I was out of the school uniform, out of shoes and stockings and into the loose tunic that was no more than two rectangular pieces of cloth sewn together and pouched at the waist with elastic. Madge Atkinson and her girls wore white silk. We wore green Manchester cotton.

Somehow it was pleasanter to dance with the younger children. They were more 'alive', responsive, less self-conscious than the older girls, and the thought of the extra share that came my way so easily was, in the words of the old song, Delectable, Desirable, Delicious.

It is impossible to describe the sensation created by dancing as it is to describe the flavour of strawberries. One feels a sensation different from any other. One 'feels' as the body cleaves the air. One 'feels' the quality of movement as it changes from slow to quick, from smooth to sharp, from light to heavy. One feels tension and release, but one cannot see, taste, smell, touch or hear any part of this activity. One knows that to watch dance is sublime. To anticipate, transcendental. The two are different as substance is from form.

Perhaps this discovery was one of the most important lessons of my school years, the only time I seemed to be truly

alive in the place, living in my natural element.

The sense of release and freedom I felt through this kind of movement brought such a revulsion to the hard, dry discipline of school, that I planned to leave, skip college and become a dancer. But qualified to enter college, with my Preliminary School Teacher's Certificate sealed, signed and delivered, and a place in Training College secured, I was on my way, too far on my way. I drifted, wasted time. I knew that as a dancer I would be second rate, never likely to reach professional standards. I kept on course, finished school and finally went through the college gates in Ripon to begin a two year course.

The separation from the 'Affair de Coeur' failed to cool this infatuation. As soon as I was free and 'my own man', I headed for the Madge Atkinson Studio in Deansgate, joined an evening class, and began working for the Imperial Society of Teacher's Certificate of Dancing. At the end of four years I qualified and was able to teach the Madge Atkinson Natural Movement to fee paying pupils. Characteristically, I made no use of the 'parchment' granted by the Imperial Society. I introduced Natural Movement for free at the elementary school as soon as I set foot in the place. I began as I meant to go on. The children danced, I danced, some of the teachers danced. We gave no concerts, displays, demonstrations. There was never any audience, except for one observer. J. W. R. would hear snatches of Bach, Beethoven, Brahms floating up to his room. Down he would come, take his stance at the side of the hall and watch. As suddenly and silently as he had appeared, he as

silently disappeared.

There are certain people in this world who seem to be compounded of innumerable personalities. It is as if they had lived several lifetimes, so complex, so inexhaustible do they seem. Such was J. W. R. When he looked on, a multitude looked on with seeing eyes, understanding and appreciating. On 'low' days it is only necessary to remember J. W. R. and remember that once upon a time, with my audience of one, I had my day.

I continued with the Natural Movement classes till the school was reorganised and a new head of school took over. I now specialised in drawing and painting and so transferred my feeling for line and movement into another medium.

#### THRU' GATES

In one lifetime we go through many gates, literally and metaphorically.

It was the second day of their arrival in Ripon that thirty-two young women went through the college gates to begin their first term. I was one of their number.

The college was C. of E. and the thirty-two who were non-conformist lived in hostel. To this day it remains a mystery why the non-conformists had to be housed in a separate quarter. Doubtless the Church Commissioners did not fund hostel students. Apart from sleeping, eating and worshipping, they were included in every activity, academic and social.

Activity proceeded without interruption throughout the

day from the rising bell in the morning to the silence bell of 'lights out' in the evening. Bells rang with such regularity and frequency that watches were superfluous. Each day was organised to the fraction of a second. Rules abounded as in the most unprogressive day school, rules that make strange reading today.

Hair had to be worn long and piled on top.

Skirts had to be long, not less than ten inches from the ground.

Woollen underwear encased the 'female form divine' from neck to knee.

Black woollen stockings were 'de rigour'.

Make-up was non-existent.

It was forbidden to speak to any male, except by written permission of the parent.

It was forbidden to leave the precincts unaccompanied.

Sex did not exist. The word did not exist. The facts of life were never mentioned or discussed.

It has to be said in defence of these peurile rules that reduced the status of young women to children that incidents between students and soldiers from a nearby camp during the 1914-18 war had made stringent rules necessary.

A healthy flow of expletives seemed to heal the scars and wounds inflicted by an unnatural repression on young women ready for adventures and experiences beyond the confines of the lecture room.

It is impossible that any student of today, with his

political and social awareness, his democratic aspirations should recognise him or herself in the restricted, sexless, voiceless counterpart of fifty years ago. Yet students of all times are much of a muchness. They enjoy the 'good life' in common. All is provided and by present day standards liberally so. Ideas, styles, institutions change, but basic things remain. Now, as then, the beautiful countryside, the summer meadows, the sharp winter days, the old town, the ancient cathedral create an ambience around the college shared by generation after generation.

MISS BUYS-Y-MAN

"Macavity, Macavity, there's no-one like Macavity" wrote T.S. Eliot, and might well have substituted Miss Buys-Y-Man, Miss Buys-Y-Man, there's no-one like Miss Buys-Y-Man, had he known Maud Buysman. No-one called her Maud. There are limits to irreverence, and as far as I could know, no-one ever called her into the garden. She was not that kind of woman. She 'queened' it for more than thirty years as Vice Principal of the college. It is impossible to recreate her personality in any media. If it were possible to take a pinch of Gilbert Harding, a Flora Robson, a Bernard Levin, a Michael Redgrave, a Marghanita Laski, etc. etc., her magnificent presence would still defy definition. It might well be that the personality of Peter Ustinov alone might convey the magnetism of this unusual woman. How did her colleagues regard her? How did men react? These questions never crossed our minds. She was omnipotence itself. Students quaked on the doormat outside her

door. Weaker spirits wove fantasies of love around her person. She lectured on English. Her magic and charm conjured the very spirits of Lear, Macbeth, Hamlet, Romeo, Richard II, Julius Caesar into the quiet and stillness of the lecture room.

Why did she <sup>teach</sup> teach, this superb actress, critic, illuminati? Did she 'waste her sweetness <sup>on</sup> of the desert air. Who can say? Certainly not Macavity.

'PORE TEETCHUR'

When the college gates closed behind us in '24, it was as if I, for one, had been cast into outer darkness where every misery and every imaginable difficulty lay in waiting.

The squalor of that part of Ardwick to which I was directed on my first appointment appalled and disgusted me.

The prospect of years on unending years working in such a place was terrifying. The children I was to teach seemed no less terrifying. Fifty, eight-year old boys and girls with irrepressible energy confronted me. To teach them was one thing, to discipline them another. Only the proverbial 'battleaxe' could have coped.

One survived the nightmare explosion of violence to natural feeling and began to 'hammer in' the processes of readin', writin' and 'rithmetic. All fifty could read, write and juggle with numbers before they were transferred to the next department. Whether they knew the names of the towns, rivers of the British Isles, or the names and dates of the kings of England, or the names of the flowers of the field, or could sew fine seams or rule straight lines was debatable. Phantoms of head mistresses and masters, phantoms of local inspectors, Government inspectors peered over one's shoulders to decide these issues. Badgered by the authorities, tormented by the children, the 'pore teetchur' somehow survived, but there was no doubt in my mind that I was obliged to teach for my sins. For a mere pittance, I endured because I must.

'Drill' in a large, draughty school yard, yard duty on



perishingly cold days amidst charging, screeching, energetic children, the endless reciting of 'tables', the groaners belting out the tonic sol-fa off key, the potty paper modelling with fifty wriggling, defiant little boys were refinements of torture dreamed up by some back room educationalist.

The mending of dog-eared, torn, disintegrating text books, the making of endless series of individual apparatus, the writing of records, the marking of near gibberish exercises that needed the agility of an interpreter, could have made a welcome relief from the embattled hours of actual teaching, but no space on the time tables was allotted to these tedious, repetitive tasks. Playtimes, lunch-times and hometimes were taken up by a never ending flow of paper work. Young, inspired women were turned into sorry hacks with flat voices and flat chests.

Mercifully, systems change. It was a bright day in the calendar when the school was reorganised. The senior school was lopped away and the Infant and Junior retained. I worked in the Junior school.

The routine continued as before until a new head of school with progressive ideas decided to experiment in specialisation. Apart from the basic three R's, each member of staff could develop his or her particular interest, and teach the chosen subject throughout the school. A complicated time table assured the smooth interchange of classes.

The classroom where I worked was transformed into an improvised studio. Materials, large drawing boards, large imperial

sheets of coloured paper, brushes, pencils, crayons, charcoal tempera paint were available in and out of school hours. The children could come and go at will in their free time.

There was to be no teaching in the accepted sense of the word. The idea the teacher 'up there' and the child 'down there' was to disappear. Both were to work on equal terms, working to discover the infinite variations of line, form and colour. Everyone was to release the subconscious impulses and hidden skills that underly all creative work.

Doubtless I had been influenced by Marion Richardson, Art Director to the L.C.C. She was responsible for the introduction of the Italic Script (one of the most beautiful forms of calligraphy) into schools.

I had heard her lecture in Manchester and met her less formally at Margaret Armitage's home in Didsbury Park. She was small and slight. Her face was pale and oval, her hair dark and thick, braided in a plait would round her head. She had the intense, intelligent eye of a Renaissance Italian. They were powerful, mournful, reflective eyes. Her dress was dark and nondescript emphasising the beauty of her face and hands, hands that moved imperceptibly in and out of the wide cuffs of her sleeves. When the hands were 'gone' we sensed she was relaxed and reassured.

For me she laid down a principle that could be applied to all teaching in primary school. "For", she said, "the truth is that Art cannot be taught, but in sympathy it can be shared. I see pictures. Will you show me how to paint them? It is this they

are saying. It is as though they knew that these mental images may die like empty dreams or live in joyful expression. No flower can more sweetly unfold or so sadly shrivel. With infinite care then and humility, we shall set about our task of teaching".

Now a two dimensional world of extreme clarity and brilliance began to emerge from the unsophisticated minds of children who came with all trust and confidence to record their stored-up impressions. Mothers shopping, baking, washing, children playing, swinging, climbing, going to school, going to the parks, going to the fairground, going to the pictures, going to town, playing in the school yard, playing at Blackpool; cars racing, buses lumbering, trains thundering, planes flying, boats sailing, liners steaming, boys fishing, girls dancing, dogs walking, cats sleeping dripped on to large sheets of sugar paper from large brushes of colour wash. Credible, authentic images leapt into life and being.

The children attracted the attention of a limited, selective 'public'. Inspectors, Art specialists, visiting teachers and heads of departments from Manchester schools came to 'pick up tips'.

After eight of the happiest years of my working life (and these included a part of the second world war) I moved to a school near home on the north side of the city. It was becoming necessary to cut out travelling time.

I transferred to Infant school. "Ah" said my critics, "demoted yourself, have you?". "Oh, yes," I would say, quite

cheerfully, and leave my questioner guessing. But I knew where I was going. My apprenticeship with the teaching of art had taught me more than the training college, the formal years of teaching and all the text books put together. I considered myself ready to live, work and play with children who had not been tailored to fit the system. There was one sovereign principle to guide, comfort and support any struggling teacher. It should be writ large in graffiti. There is a natural, organic growth, physical, intellectual, spiritual. Not one part must be exploited at the expense of the other. There must be balance, wholeness and completeness. Such vague, woolly minded verbiage would have no acceptance with the establishment. Yet for me, having realised to the full one broad guiding principle, the rest followed.

"Better they had never come to school, but stayed at home learning some natural skill with Mum" I once said in confidence to a colleague who was marching her 'dead end kids' to some insufferable class. Too shocked to speak, she signalled with her sharp brown eye, "Good Lord, what a 'nutter'!"

Which would have shocked the late lamented Alice Booth, the headmistress with whom I began when straight from college. One starts under false colours in early years.

#### ALICE BOOTH

It didn't seem possible that Alice Booth should ever die and lie in a six foot plot, and be reduced to nothing more than a name on a marble slab. This unlovely memorial revealed not a jot

or tittle of her flame-like, mercurial temperament and the good, practical common-sense mind.

She knew each of the three hundred and fifty children in her school. She knew their Mas and Pas, their home conditions, the decent and the insufferable. She dosed the needy and under-nourished with orange juice and cod liver oil at her own expense. She kitted out the under clad with second hand cast offs. She collected up all the backward children from each class and gave them extra coaching in the three R's.

She had a special liking for folk music and dancing. She held community sing songs in the school hall. Each child and each member of staff acquired an enormous repertoire. Even now I never hear The Three Gypsies, The Cuckoo, The Nightingale, The Tailor and the Mouse, Shenandoah, etc., etc., but she is there playing and singing with the whole of her intense, vibrant personality. I see her as May Day approaches, her black hair falling down, her face red with exasperation, literally pushing the children through the intricacies of a maypole dance to the tune of Come Lasses and Lads, The Double Plait, The Single Plait, The Spider's Web, haunted all our dreams and Alice Booth's hair continued to lose its pins and cascade in its ominous coil till May Day itself arrived, when all the agony of rehearsal was forgotten in the beautiful spectacle of a traditional English May Queen.

Out of school Alice travelled abroad, walked in the country at home, gardened, kept bees, attended concerts, lectures, theatres. She lived every minute of the day and enjoyed life to the full.

During the Christmas holiday before she died, we gathered as usual for the Christmas party, ate the turkey, beef and ham, the salads, chutneys, trifles, jellies, compotes, pastries, cakes and chocolates, drank the wine, ginger beer and mead. The menu was full and varied as ever and all home made to the last fondant and dragee.

As usual, the meal finished, the table cleared, the furniture moved, the small card tables arranged, the card games began. As usual the sing song round the piano brought the party to an end.

This year, Alice, a little thinner, her left arm in a sling (she had undergone mastectomy) gazed at each one of us long and intently at parting. We knew she was saying goodbye, not to a teaching staff, but to a united, close-knit family.

We went through the night too near tears to talk.

It was Spring when I next made my way to the solitary grey house in Denton. I was alone. The small, flagged garden that fronted the house was neglected. Struggling shrubs and rock plants were sharply etched against stone. I stood on the broad step before the broad green door, ill at ease, and apprehensive of my reception. I knew Alice to be very unwell. Finally I rang the bell and the white, pinched face of Alice's sister, Mary, appeared in the opening of the door. There was no welcome in her eyes. Her thin, flat voice invited me in. "A curate is visiting Alice", she said "wait in the dining room".

When Alice had gone back upstairs I slipped out into the

large, walled garden at the back of the house. It had been a luxurious, untidy garden, never properly tamed. Like its owner, it had too much 'verve'. Now the lawns, the herbaceous borders, the kitchen garden had the tumbled look of the drunk and disorderly. Even the cobbled paths that Alice had laid throughout the years, were beginning to rattle their loose stones underfoot. It was insufferably cool. I shivered and went back into the house.

The sound of voices murmured on the stairs. Mary and the clergyman went through the hall. The door opened and the clergyman departed.

Alice's voice called huskily, waveringly, "Come up now, Edna". I flew up the stairs before Mary had finished speeding the visitor on his way.

Alice was sitting in a comfortable chair before a bright fire. She seemed incredibly small inside her thick, woollen dressing gown. Her arm was still in a sling. She had fallen and broken her wrist some weeks previously. The hand that protruded was swollen, white and 'glassy'.

She smiled in greeting and said simply "I'm not very well this last two weeks. How are you? How are your Mother and Father? What have you been doing?".

As I gossiped, I noticed the yellow, drawn face, the dry lips that were open as if eager for every breath of air and the large burning eyes that were consumed with weariness.

"The doctor says he will cure me, he still says he will cure me, but I wonder whether he is telling the truth" she continued as if my gossip had not intervened.

Mary came back into the room. She sat in a low chair to rest her aching back. She explained how much better Alice had been in Coronation week, how much stronger she seemed and how she seemed to have rounded a bend. Then one morning the invalid was very sick, and from that time she had taken nothing but a little milk, and that with difficulty.

"Sometimes", said Alice, "I think I will give up".

"You can never do that", I said, "It isn't in your nature. Did you listen to the Coronation ceremony?" I asked, seeking to change the subject.

"No", said Mary, "We were too tired".

Alice asked for water. Pointing to her mouth, she said "This lady is always so thirsty".

Mary handed her a cup, and Alice took a sip, relishing the beauty of the water in every corner of her dry parched mouth. She took another long, slow sip, lingering over the one comfort of her life. She returned the cup to Mary's hand. A smile of unearthly beauty lit her features and I knew her time on earth was to be shorter than any of us supposed. Such a smile I had never seen before, nor was ever privileged to see again.

She sat on in the sunlit room after I left. I see her bent figure, the dark braided plait falling over her shoulder, her sharp profile turned towards the sky outside.

She battled on till June when the broken spirit and anguished heart gave up and conceded the fight to the final enemy.

Eunice Jones, Margaret Tucker, Nellie Rothwell and



myself walked behind the string of funeral coaches to the cemetery in Denton where she was buried in the family grave.

#### FATALITY

An increasing number die peacefully of old age in their beds, but a greater proportion suffer the savagery of disease or the butchery of lethal accidents. Alice Booth died of the one, my brother, Stanley, of the other.

One February night in the winter of '57, he went out as usual for his pint at the local and was scooped up on the bonnet of a fast moving police car. He was carried several yards before the vehicle came to a stop. He was mutilated and injured past recovery, and ten days after the accident he was dead.

The coroner exonerated the unfortunate policeman, but my poor brother was well and truly castigated as a public nuisance by virtue of his deafness and absent mindedness. The coroner was something of a wit. "No-one", he said "could expect a combustion engine to rear up its front wheels in the manner of a horse in an effort to avoid its unfortunate victim". (Manchester Evening News '57).

It is fortunate that the coroner, whose name I do not remember, was not deaf or absent minded as my brother. He was buried in St. Margaret's churchyard during a snow storm. His wife Edith and I shared a sense of insupportable grief and fear. I wept, resolving through the unrestrained bitterness of tears, that I would examine and investigate, and discount nothing that gave some

explanation to the absurdity of death and the far greater absurdity of living.

One had to wait. I waited.

### HYSTERIA

In the Spring of '59, my sister, Winifred, her husband, Bob, and their daughter, Susan, came to visit us.

Old dogs teach younger dogs tricks, some good, some bad and some merely amusing. One Sunday evening, to amuse the child, we played the ouija-glass game, <sup>we</sup> we had played when we were young and dismissed it as idle, useless and quite inexplicable. We did not connect it with any form of psychic phenomenon.

Now, years later, the up-turned glass rushed and swirled round the table at such speed that it had to be 'fielded' and saved from toppling on to the floor.

We fell about laughing at the quaint 'comedian'. Here we were, four adults and a young girl, not knowing what we were doing or how we were doing it. The excited cavorting drinking glass seemed to steady up and settle itself into a series of finely controlled pirouettes round the table searching for letters arranged round its edge. Words began to form. Simple sentences, trivial and banal emerged. We were not impressed, and the game was abandoned and never used again. Except by me. The extraordinary power of propulsion that had caused a heavy tumbler to fling itself of its own volition over the edge of the table had impressed me. I experimented. The ouija glass flew about in response to one

finger and innumerable conversations in the form of question and answer began. The process was slow and clumsy. I have no natural patience and after a month of practising with pad and pencil, scrawls, scribbles, abstract patterns gradually flowed into a cursive English script. The facility to 'write' automatically gushed into an ever increasing momentum, filling page after page. The 'flow' was awash with spirit guides and entities. They prepared the way for a guide identified as Boniface. I awaited his arrival with curiosity and impatience. "You must have patience", advised the script. "Boniface cannot come to you now. He is away at the end of our universe..... You have much to unlearn. You cannot have all our advice unstintingly..... You must do as you think practical in regard to spiritual information. Hear the voice of your conscience. It can do much wise, intelligent guidance. Wait on events. Boniface cannot come to you till you ask Almighty God to give him consent. He is a wonderful spirit. He dwells with Almighty God in VORM. We cannot write that name as we cannot translate. We cannot do any other (name). It is not a name at all. It is no more finite to your understanding than the way of heaven is to the world of darkness. It is a way of love, life and development which has no earthly counterpart. It is a way of enlightenment and development and downright thought which cannot be understood with your finite intelligence. You cannot have information and knowledge of heaven, and you cannot hope to have the information you yearn to discover till we are disciples of your good and enlightened heart.... It needs all the

space of eternity and all our good Lord's blessed mercy to keep us advised. You must have patience and do our spirit commands as you think the wisest and most sensible way. You will have no further communication with evil spirits.... You are well and very well advised in the wisdom and love of our Almighty Father..... You will not do your important work till your own spirit guide takes over and relieves us of all this work".

Boniface made his debut five days later in the evening of July 2nd, '59.

"Now I am your guide Boniface....I will inform our spirits to leave all their writing in my enlightened care. Now you can develop your psychic understanding..... Now you may know. You will not live to see the death and destruction which is to be inflicted in your own day and age. You will not have long to discover all the truths you yearn to discover.... You cannot have a lot of advice immediately. You will learn gradually the mysterious conditions of our universe. You cannot have any hope or concept of how you will escape the peril of your own day and age..... As you know, you have to think out many things for yourself..... You know how it is going to be in your world. It will have to give more thought and more care in all its ways unless it chooses to give Satan all power and majesty. He waits to overpower all God's spirits. He waits to devour all our infinite universe. He waits and watches. He is an evil and incredible demon who waits to give all spirits to Hell. He waits and prays to Damon, a devil of darkness who dwells at the uttermost end of

our universe. He will destroy all our universe at one stroke if we do not do our divine work. He is a powerful demon. He cannot overcome us as we watch always and have faith and love at our divine Father's disposal. You will find all this writing in your own bible. You will find it in the Book of Isaiah who was given the power and inspiration to give all God's ideas and divine inspiration. You should have your bible to elucidate all this automatic writing. You will find all you cannot know. Any other information leads always to your bible. It was written always in contact with heavenly devotion to God's almighty will. You should keep all these things in your heart. You will have a lot of things to discover when you are accustomed and attuned and comfortable with the idea of God's loving care. It will be difficult and troublesome and unpleasant at first....."

I would have preferred to destroy the scripts. The matter was at variance with my conscious, agnostic thinking.

I had no explanation of the phenomenon nor was it possible to communicate the sensation experienced during the process of this activity.

I supposed that by accident I had activated some mechanism of the nervous system hitherto undiscovered. The automatic nervous system once having discovered the 'knack' soon expressed its versatility through drawing, painting, speaking and moving. My arms would rotate and move in large, swinging gestures, like the sails of a windmill and the exercise end with vibratory shaking of the hands. This, explained the scripts subsequently, was a form

of exorcism to be used to expel undesirable influences. However, this extraordinary activity might be interpreted, certain it was that I was able to locate various items of my dead brother in the numerous places in his house, including some sweetmeats in a metal box whose existence was unknown to my sister-in-law, Edith.

Lacking rational explanation, I began to suspect that the whole business was a clear case of hysteria. Hysterics become paralysed, deaf, blind, hallucinated. Fr. Reginald Omez in his book on *Psychical Phenomenon* says "The word hysteria is commonly used to indicate a very special kind of psychological or moral deviation; a capacity for more or less conscious pretence or the untotally unconscious deception which destroys all faith in the evidence, the attitudes or the actions of these patients, of whom one can cheerfully say that lying comes as naturally to them as breathing..... In its origin, we shall find a powerful invasion of the unconscious and the subconscious, bringing their irrational forces constantly to bear upon the conscious and willed activities of the normal self, to such a degree that the patient may suffer from complete dissociation, and secondary personality may come into play".

"Above all we observe a raging egocentricity, with an intensification of feelings, emotions and passions and a sort of irresistible craving to make oneself interesting, to attract attention, to be talked about, to be blamed and condemned just as much as to be admired and praised".

The jargon of Fr. Omez made little impact. Though I

could not truthfully say that I was 'my own man' and felt more like a receiving station through which thoughts and impulses flowed in and out again from some unspecified source, I seemed not to fit into his definition of an hysteric. I had no raging sense of egocentricity, no wish to draw attention and impress. Quite the reverse. The subject in hand was suspect and not too respectable. With secrecy and discretion I concealed my investigations. Not even the script relating to the Queen's third child has ever seen the light of day. It read:- "Your Elizabeth and Queen has nothing to fear this night the eighteenth of February. Her child is coming to obtain her queenly reigning, manifold and mindful omnipotence. Paysanship invests Elizabeth's courageous heart and spirit. Quintessential entities bear his soul and mind and heart of her baby's unborn flesh. She will produce a son and have quintessential happiness tomorrow, the nineteenth day in the year and month February, nineteen hundred and sixty. In the afternoon of the following day the baby was born. His name was to be Andrew.

The 'activity' swept like a torrent in flood. During this time I was careful to do no reading or talking on the matter. I wanted no extra 'feed in' to the subconscious. When finally I began to read, I collected little or no explanation of the psi or X factor. I decided that the pundits investigating from the outside would never discover the truth and those who 'knew' and had experience could not explain. At best they could describe and be observed. Nothing explained why in my case, the scripts

were confined to one consistent set of ideas foreign to my conscious way of thinking. They in no way related to the surrealistic content of dreams. The dreams were not as consistent nor as logical nor as informative as the scripts. Time and age persuade me to be less sceptical of the 'Powers that Be' of which we know comparatively little.

#### Automatic Scripts

Book 3 pp 21-23

Book 3 pp 24-25

Book 5 pp 4 9

#### For Further Reading on E. S. P.

Colin Wilson, 'The Occult', Hodder and Stoughton

C.G. Jung, 'Memories and Dreams', Keegan Paul

G.N.B. Tyrell, 'The Personality of Man', Pelican

Aldous Huxley, 'The Doors of Perception', Penguin

T.C. Lethbridge, 'Ghost and Ghoul', Routledge and Keegan Paul

T.C. Routledge, 'Ghost and Divining Rod', Routledge and Keegan

Raynor Johnson, 'The Imprisoned Splendour', Hodder and Stoughton

J.O. Wilcox, M.A. Radions - Hubert Jenkins

Gordon Ambrose, 'Hypnosis in Health and Sickness', Staple Press, London.

Peter Underwood, 'Gazateer of British Ghosts', Souvenir Press

Alexander David Neel, 'With the Mys and Magicians of Tibet', Souvenir Press.

Beverley Nichols, 'The Powers that Be', Jonathan Cape

Rasa Gurtaitis, 'Turning On', Waidenfield Nicholson

Fr. Reginald Omez, 'Psychical Phenomena', Burns Oates

Lyall Watson, 'Super Nature', Hodder and Stoughton



MAHARISHI MAHESH YOGI

Though giving credence to the existence of Extra Sensory Perception, The Maharishi Mahesh Yogi made little or no reference to the phenomena in his discourses and dialogues. Neither did he make any reference to his personal history. Gradually, mostly through the media of press and television, a sketchy background of this strange, controversial figure began to emerge.

The Maharishi was born in Jobbulpore in Central India, the son of a minor official in the civil service. He was educated at Allahabad University where he graduated in science. At some point in his career he met the Swami Bramananda Sarwati Maraj Shankerazharya of Jyotirmath, one of the four primates of all India. He donned dhoti and sandals, followed his guru to Rishikesh in the foothills of the Himalayas and began the arduous and rigorous training of the devotee. He spent thirteen years in seclusion. The Master died and Maharishi left for Southern India to begin his mission. Disappointed with the reception and the hostility he received, he decided to introduce his system of Transcendental Meditation in the west. He went to California, then on to New York, and finally came to London.

He stayed in a less fashionable part of the city. It is told that a woman living on the opposite side of the street where he lodged, noticed his lonely, bizarre figure as he walked out. She became acquainted and established a friendship. She shopped, washed and cooked for him and in return he taught her his method of Transcendental Meditation. In a very simple, natural, homely

way, the movement in this country 'got off the ground'.

Slowly he gathered followers. He travelled to the provinces, lecturing and initiating anyone who would invest a few shillings in a new and novel 'enterprise'.

A woman of my acquaintance who met him at this time (1960) could recall little of the gist of his lecture but everything of his presence. She was impressed by the sense of weightlessness he seemed to possess. She would extend her hand as if she held him there and say "He was as light as a feather, as light as a feather".

Now this presence is quite something. It is transcendental. Mrs. Averill Mollison speaking in the Eye Witness, B.B.C. Sept. 1967, described Archbishop Makarios at the Monastery of K'kko in Cyprus, in these terms. "His presence transcended the trappings of his triple crown, his gorgeous vestments, his glorious magnificent jewels". 'Such a presence exists in a state of isolation surrounded by an invisible barrier through which one cannot pass'. (So wrote Fr. Curtiss of the English Saint, William of Glasshampton.) Despite this 'presence', the flame-like, quick-silver mind, the virtuosity of his reasoning, there was little response to the good news of 'Spiritual Regeneration' in the provinces and the Maharishi returned to London.

There, a group of middle-class, professional people, disappointed or at variance with the doctrines of Oupensky and Gurdieff, found a more positive approach to self realisation in the theory and practice of the Maharishi's teaching. These people, headed by John Allison, Vincent Snell and John Holmes became an

establishment who worked tirelessly and anonymously to popularise the movement.

A discussion between the Abbot of Downside, Robert Kee and the Maharishi was broadcast on the B.B.C. 1 Meeting Point on July 5th, 1964.

It was at this point that I decided I would join the movement but it was not until the winter of '66, when I was initiated by John Holmes in the Queens Hotel in Manchester, that I became a participant.

This involved a gift of fruit, flowers, handkerchief and a week's salary. (By this time the price of entry had inflated to a remarkable degree). In return I received instruction in Meditation. I received a mantra, a sound that had never to be spoken out loud, and went home to practice. I felt I had achieved a very great deal, little knowing that there was much to follow that was exhilarating, invigorating. I meditated, but never seemed to achieve transcendence. Others knew it, tried to describe it, failed, and gave up trying to make me 'know'. I began to feel like the child in the Emperor's New Clothes who failed to see because there was nothing to see. But, and this is the nub of the matter, I understood the principle of the technique, subscribed to the Maharishi's philosophy and teaching, and after attending summer courses in turn at Camarthen, Bangor and Keele, knew that life for me could never be quite the same again.

THE BEATLES

"The Beatles are coming.

"NO!"

"The Beatles are coming!"

"They can't be!"

"The Beatles are coming!"

"Impossible!"

The report breezed through the college till every head must have buzzed with the near parody of "The Campbells are coming".

They came to the college in the wake of the Maharishi after hearing him speak at the London Hilton the previous evening.

The Maharishi preceded the group by a few seconds. He stood in the courtyard receiving the greetings of his admirers as they piled his arms high with flowers.

A black limousine glided into the yard. The fabulous four in their colourful gear, their arms flower-laden, emerged and stood at a respectful distance, the centre of all eyes. Only the cries and yells of the fans outside the locked gates broke the silence.

"Where is the lecture room?" asked the Maharishi.

With some difficulty he was guided through the crowd to the John Phillips Lecture Hall. There he took his place on the platform, sitting cross-legged on a dais with the Beatles to his right and Henry Neiberg, John Allison and Peter Mlezko to his left. The audience and pressmen took their places in the body of the hall. The session had begun with the usual opening gambit.

"Any questions?", asked the Maharishi. Someone asked the usual inaudible question and the reply followed. The questions were short, the answers long, clever dissertations, delivered spontaneously without reference to notes.

The Beatles listened, the audience listened and looked, fascinated equally by the Maharishi and the four Beatles. In their hippy clothes, their shoulder length hair, their casual manner, their informality, they suggested naturalness and simplicity. It didn't seem possible to equate these slight, pale young men as the 'golden' boys of fame and fortune, ballyboo, hysteria, commercialism and exploitation. They had moved in without a word, a sound, a note. For the moment they were objects of restrained, polite curiosity to an audience that was not at all sure that their presence at Bangor was 'quite nice'.

"Pure consciousness, what is that?". The Maharishi was reiterating one of the inaudible questions before launching into one of his long, spell-binding expositions. Which exposition I shall not attempt. Second hand versions are no substitute for the original. I will leave the Beatles to listen and learn whilst I postulate what Transcendental Meditation is not.

It is not a new religion.

It is not a new and novel system invented by the Maharishi. It is a practice stemming from a long and ancient Hindu tradition.

It is not a convenient escape hatch to some imaginary cloud cuckoo land.

It is not a withdrawal from, nor a severance with

practical, everyday living.

It is not a patch to be stuck on to any frayed or shrinking ego.

It is a silent, unexpressed thing.

It is a part of totality.

It is like the spaces between form.

It is like the silences between sound.

It is like the static hub of the vortex.

Yet it is none of these things.

It is not the 'sound' or the Mantra, which is the technique of practice.

It is not the Maharishi's philosophy and thinking.

It is itself and has to be experienced to be known.

Which is why it would seem a waste of time to write or talk about it.

Nevertheless, a word here, a hint there, can indicate something of the teaching which underlies the practice of T. M. which in simple terms relates to the outer and inner aspect of Being. Or in the western jargon of today, to the conscious and subconscious aspect of the mind. The one is complementary to the other, and both are fundamental to Being. The conscious mind may be said to experience in breadth. It 'splays' out, travelling on the surface awareness. It travels horizontally. The subconscious takes a different route, preferring a depth that neither time, change nor limitation of any kind can influence. It is here, asserts the Maharishi, that all thoughts 'bubble and boil' before they rise to the surface awareness. The deeper you go and the oftener you take

the 'trip' the better it will be for you. If you haven't discovered the 'knack' of getting there, 'meditate'. It is natural and proper that a man should withdraw to the source of his Being, for from Being springs thought, and from thought springs action. This, in my own vernacular, is the Maharishi's premise.

I believe and have always believed that most men take this downward plunge. Those who have the facility to plunge deepest, supply ample evidence of their dexterity. The saints, prophets, painters, musicians, poets, scientists, bear witness to these dolphin like acrobatics. The greater depth manifested in their output, the more satisfying, the more enduring does it remain. It is never discarded. It is like infinity, inexhaustible.

Doubtless the Beatles would give their own interpretation of Transcendental Meditation to a waiting world when they were better informed.

"What did the Beatles think of the Maharishi?" asked a reporter during this particular session.

"I don't know", said John Lennon in the distinctive Liverpool drawl, "I'm just listenin' and try'n to find out what he's talkin' about", and that was all he would volunteer.

"What do you think of the Beatle music?" asked another reporter of the Maharishi.

"I cannot say", said the Maharishi, "I haven't heard their music, but I'm sure it must be graceful and give delight to thousands of people. Which, of course, was the understatement of the evening.

There were several questions from the reporters, flashing

and clicking of cameras and a suppressed state of tension. There was a general feeling of relief when the Maharishi, the Beatles, the officials and the pressmen left the hall.

The following day the Guru and the Beatles were incommunicado. There was no evidence of their presence, except at meal times, when they went unnoticed and undisturbed. A rash of newsprint covered the side tables in the common rooms. There were banner headlines in the Dailies.

'THE OFF BEAT BEATLES FOLLOW YOGI TO SEASIDE' (DAILY EXPRESS)

'THE OFF BEAT BEATLES TAKE A BACK SEAT' (DAILY MIRROR)

'MICK, MARRIANE AND THE BEATLES GO TO COLLEGE' (DAILY MAIL)

'THE BEATLES MOVE IN FOR A QUIET WEEKEND' (LIVERPOOL POST)

'MUSIC HATH CHARMS FOR MICK, MARRIANE AND THE FLOWER PEOPLE'  
(BANGOR CHRONICLE)

etc., etc., to quote but a few of the headlines. Every kind of daily seemed to have reported the event. The Maharishi had become an overnight celebrity.

The lecture series might have proceeded to its conclusion with the several pop stars continuing to the end, but for the tragic death of Brian Epstein in the early hours of Sunday morning, the day he proposed to travel to Bangor to take part in the course.

The Beatles left immediately they received the news. Few saw them go. The course proceeded without further incident till the Maharishi departed for London a few days later.

A rising tide of newsprint reported every trivial item regarding the events in Bangor. The weeklies and monthlies took over when the dailies had exhausted the subject. Comedians, radio



panellists took to the air. Malcolm Muggeridge pontificated on the B.B.C. and David Frost on I.T.V. Later, at the turn of the year, the Maharishi was given a spot in 'The Review of the Year' on B.B.C.1 and spoke for himself, nationwide.

Transcendental Meditation had had a good airing and a fair mauling. Favourable and adverse criticism alike are good for publicity. The movement gathered momentum and literally gathered thousands of adherents to the cult.

The already established members regarded the advent of the Beatles with dismay and distaste. They criticised the Maharishi who appeared to have jumped on some monstrous band-waggon. They criticised the Beatles. The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Reverend Michael Ramsay, was more charitable.

The Sunday Times reporting, quoted him as follows:-

".....The searching for spiritual truth which people like the Beatles are doing has a place in the Church today..... Older generations were trained to think that plain Christian devotion is the thing that everyone should grasp, but that mysticism is something very queer and abnormal, and better left to the experts, and the last thing to talk about and practice. I think this is radically untrue, and the opposite should apply".

Both the Maharishi and the Archbishop had a panacea to cure all ills. 'Meditate' exhorted the Maharishi. "Love one another, love one another, love one another", implored Michael Ramsay in impassioned tones at his induction as the Primate of all England, "for the times are urgent and evil is in the world". For

as his words rang like the bells of heaven, which in the main went unheeded and unremarked by the general public.

The Beatles followed the Maharishi to the ashram in Rishikesh for instruction and training that would qualify them to teach the system and spread the movement further and further afield.

Whether the training was too demanding or the discipline too rigorous for their unprepared minds, they decided that identification with the Maharishi was not for them. They left India and resumed their life style as the Kings of Pop. They thought of themselves "as famous and influential as Jesus" (John Lennon). "As good as Mozart any day" (Paul McCartney).

The press, quoting the Maharishi, said "They were too unstable and they weren't prepared to end their Beatledom for Meditation."

Within the next decade the four did their best to justify the Maharishi's criticism.

#### THE WHOLE SCENE GOING

The more I skimmed the 'fat' from the Pop Magazines, the more fascinated, intrigued, not to say charmed I became with the 'Whole Scene Going'. It seemed a new idiom of creative living in an ever expanding industry. Armies of faceless men slaved to create the 'Scene', the 'gear', the language, the groups, the sound.

In the snazzy, sound tormented interiors of boutiques like Pigland, Target, Tuffin, Pot and Paraphernalia, Take Six, Glory Hole, Granny takes a Trip, Teale and Tuffin, Hat Gear, to name but

a few, tills clashed and tinkled as the new rich, the teenagers of the early sixties spent their pennies. Plastic flowers and Jewellery; bangles, beads and bells; medallions, chains and rings, joss sticks, pot pourri, candles; purses, pouches, bags; sandals, mocassins, boots; tunics, caftans, shirts; regency suits, frills, flares an' all; shift dresses, mini skirts, blouses; capes, ponchos, shawls; cottons, velvets, plastics, furs, feathers, skins cascaded from floor to ceiling in the boutiques in Carnaby Street in Soho and the Kings Road in Chelsea. The 'gear' was all, a language in itself. It indicated the groovy, the trendy, the hippie, the fresbies, the screamers, the ravers, the pop pickers, the drop-outs, the freak-outs, the sparked off, the switched on, the hooked on. To be adolescent was to be a swinging chick and 'dig the scene'. They followed the 'Beat' and crammed the stadiums to hear their idols. The Troggs, The Move, The Moby Grape, The Marmalade, The Animals, The Who, The Syn, The Cream, The Beach Boys, The Mamas and the Papas, The Vanilla Fudge, The Rolling Stones, The Pink Floyd, The Bee Gees, The Hans, The Flower Pot Men, The Monkees, The Loot, The Hounds, The Small Faces, The Grateful Dead, The Tremeloes, The Koobas, etc., etc., worked to stay in the Top Twenty till they were ready to 'drop dead'.

The richest and more successful groups retired and went to live according to 'Happy Jack' of Top Pops, behind Plantations of rhododendrons where third class people could live in first class stock broker houses.

How the strange names of the groups came to be invented

was never disclosed by the Beatle Book, Rave, Nova, Fabulous, The Flower Scene, Top Pops, Time, the magazines of the sixties. Every kind of trivia was included in their columns. Ringo Starr in Rome, being coached to acquire a Mexican accent for a small part in a film, or Ringo eating Fettucinni with a gold spoon and fork reserved only for Very Important Customers, was a scoop for some hack.

The extraordinary fascination of Flower Power was rooted in fear, confusion and disgust of the joyless, uncertainty of a technological, dangerous age. A way of preserving the age of innocence into adolescence and beyond had to be found. And the young, rebelling against authority and conformity, experimented with drugs that were mind bending and mind expanding. Trips and kicks were the 'in' thing.

The teutonic ugliness of the well turned out young man disappeared. The prim, artificial, bend-box Miss melted into the soft, caftan clad, barefoot nymph of antiquity. Long hair floated like manes, gear scintillated, bells tinkled, bangles jangled, beads rippled, and flowers radiated glory. James Pike, Bishop of California, saw 'there was something about the temper of these people that was quiet and interesting and GOOD'. Alan Ginsberg philosophised and wrote about the communes. Timothy Leary, the apostle of New Thought lived every word, syllable, comma and full stop of his doctrine.

Flowers fade. Flower Power began to fade. When the opportunists and exploiters moved in, the genuine hippies moved out

and Hollywood and Haight Ashbury more resembled a zoo than a beautiful garden. Hoards of sightseers travelled from far and near to see the phoney drop-outs who persisted and thrived close to the largest arsenal of ballistic missiles in the world. The fact that California was No. 1 target for nuclear attack in the event of war was no 'cause for concern'.

Nor did they give any credence to Edgar Casey's prediction of seismic disturbance due to occur in '99 in California.

Alistair Cook, referring to the famous medium and the migrating hippies, in his Letter From America in '67, averred that a section of the hippies had their ears to the ground, knew of Casey's prediction and accordingly began to move away well in advance of the disaster to come.

Whether they moved instinctively in the direction of the poppy fields of the Golden Triangle (Thailand, Laos, Burma) where the cultivation of the weed was basic to the economy of the hill tribes, was and remains a moot point, but between the sixties and seventies Katmandu in Nepal was the gravitational centre of hippidom.

The drug scene, synonymous with Flower Power and 'Pop' gained ascendancy. The resulting crime and obscenities were a global problem. Racketeers thrived on the necessity of the peasant population of the Triangle, who produced a third of the world's opium output.

As Flower Power appeared to wane, the pop scene failed to make headlines. No pop group succeeded in popularity and fame as had the Beatles who had disbanded and gone their separate ways.

Their live performances, their one night stands, their exhausting tours were ready for interment. In a symbolic gesture they created the Sergeant Pepper L.P. record. The satirical photomontage on the sleeve illustrated the melancholy event. The streaming, vibrating texture of sound in major and minor keys on the disc kept the ear alerted for inventions that were pleasant and tuneful enough for any butcher's boy to whistle.

But there were no butcher's boys and by this time the intellectuals, the musicians, the psychiatrists were beginning to take the Beatles and their music seriously. At last 'Pop' seemed to be going somewhere. But not, as yet, for me, despite the charm of Lucy in the Sky, Within You, Without You, When I am Sixty-Four, etc., that occur in Sergeant Pepper. Nor for Anthony Burgess who, writing in the September issue of Punch on 'The Weasels of Pop' and Pop music in general, wrote "When such mean and cheap janglings are 'great' what term do we reserve for Tristan and the Choral Symphonies."

What indeed! Burgess could not say. Nadia Boulanger, one of the great exponents of musicianship, would not attempt to say, but she could define better than anyone what a composition ought to be. In effect, she said to her students in a Master Class, broadcast on B.B.C. "The details must not show off. They must disappear into the structure of the whole. Attention must be given to every detail so that nothing discordant or imperfect disturbs the equilibrium of the whole. The inner must influence the outer. The feeling engendered must be impersonal and not sentimental. The inner love, the inner flame can take no account of technique. Technique will

evolve and flow from love....."

All great work in whatever medium 'glows' with this inner fire and when we sense it, as sense it we must by the illumination which inform it, we know we are come to a great mystery on which we are wise to keep our little mouths shut. Which is not to discount Nadia Boulanger's stricture which should be printed in large type over every typewriter, easel, music score from now till Kingdom come.

#### THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

"At nine o'clock this morning James Ling is in his study, dictating to his secretary, who has been summoned from home. Dorothy, my wife, who's a compassionate liberal, she's sorry for my secretary having to work. But we got to do it to reach the goal, that's the way it is".

Why had James Ling got to do it to reach the goal?

"BeCause", he asserted to James Jewell, reporting for the Sunday Times in '66 on the American tycoons, Ling, McClough, Diabold and Price, "what I do is creative like an art artist, that's my satisfaction".

This, I thought, the very antithesis of Flower Power thinking, was the other side of a strange, new twentieth century coin, or 'Men' as Jane McLoughlin preferred to call the super men fast emerging with hearts of computer components and the brains of calculators. They are invincible and may be taking over the world.

It was against this frightening new breed that the

effete and feeble Flower Power and the present day cruel and ruthless terrorists sought to bring resistance.

How did James, a one time out of work drop-out, build his empire? Derek Jewell explained in his report.

Ling studied the military stratagems of Field Marshall Rommel. He realised that the quick strike of war could apply to the commercial field.

He employed his native nerve, judgment and imagination in the small deals with which he began and the larger ones with which he expanded.

He took regular sabbaticals to recharge his 'batteries' and make further studies of the commercial world.

He began with a few hundred dollars in '47 and three years later was worth a couple of million.

He turned his contracting business into a public company. He bought an electric company on the west coast, merged the two and so began a series of mergers. At forty-five he ran an enormous conglomerate empire known as the Ling, Tempo, Vaught whose annual sales were 3,000 million dollars. The ultimate aim was to rocket the modest millions to ten billion.

The high school drop-out of thirty years back had other aspirations. 'I have a duty to build my enterprise and a duty to my wealth - to endow universities and to create beautiful things. This is my simple, personal exposure or what I believe and people can shoot me down in flames if they want to'.

I have seen no further reports of J.L. Ling and I shall



never know whether he was shot down in flames or reached his ten billion dollar target. It is the tycoons of industry in Europe who are shot down, kidnapped and murdered in cold blood at regular and ever increasing intervals and make banner headlines in the press as I revise these anecdotes.

\* Jane McLoughlin Guardian, May 12th, '68.

#### NODDING ACQUAINTANCE

If John and I were never to meet a millionaire, though we were not to know in the beginning <sup>at least</sup> we were <sup>to</sup> keep company with a famous man.

John and Lowry, who were at art school together, never lost touch. They had a liking for Manchester streets, Manchester galleries and Manchester tea shops, where they could exchange news and views in comfort. Sissons, Meng and Eckers, fullers served delicious pastries. Each had a sweet tooth.

By the time I knew Lowry the Midday Studio in Mosley Street had opened its doors and the 'recluse of Mottram' was accessible to the artists who gathered there as well as the public.

At this time Nicholas Horsfall was assistant director to the Arts Council in the North. He had interests in Manchester and interest in Liverpool. He was a member of the Sandon Club, the centre for professional writers, musicians and painters. Once a year members would meet at dinner in memory of Henry Carr who inaugurated the 'Goose Feast' near Christmas towards the end of the last century. Members were allowed to invite a limited number of

guests. Whether Nicholas discriminated or merely pulled the names out of a hat, we had no means of knowing, but in December of '48 Emmanuel Levy, his wife Ursula, Nicholas, Lowry, John and I found ourselves travelling to Liverpool through the green and saffron landscape of a very cold day. We were to attend an exhibition of paintings at the Sandon Club in the afternoon and the Goose Feast in the evening.

Though there were only six of us, we seemed a crowd. Possibly the thick, winter clothes, the exuberant, high spirits made the little party seem larger than life. The railway carriage seemed small, bursting at the seams. Emmanuel roared, Lowry bellowed, disputing on painters, painting, galleries and dealers in general. The train raced, time raced. Even so, we arrived late at the Sandon Club. A large crowd had gathered, the introductions <sup>and</sup> had speeches had begun. We were obliged to stand in a draughty corridor. Lowry, irritated and shivering, despite his two overcoats, signalled for departure, and we followed him to a nearby cafe where he presided, dispensing tea and toast with quick, decisive movements. He talked volubly on nothing in particular. Warmed and refreshed, we returned to the Blue Coat Building. The speeches were over, the crowd elbowing its way round the walls and screens of the packed room.

Painters have no taste for jostling and staring, and before we had seen one canvas we were out in the street again enjoying the festoons of lights in Church Street, the Christmas shoppers, and the magic moment of dusk that lifts day to another dimension. Separated,

lost in the crowds, we literally froze in the arctic wastes of the bitterly cold December afternoon. We regrouped for dinner, dined, wine and sat mutely through the after dinner speeches. Nicholas, happy in his cups spoke on behalf of the Manchester painters. He was the only one who spoke. His wit and elegance could be relied upon at all times under any circumstance.

Late, too late for Lowry, whose disappearance had not registered, we departed for Manchester, well after midnight. Nicholas planned parties, pageants and bachanalias, Ursula sang Leider in her native tongue, Jack and I hummed out of tune. Emmanuel sat silent, nursing a hangover and sucking Rennie's. We had forgotten Lowry. We had forgotten 'the exhibition that never was'.

All this happened long before Lowry departed from this 'vale of tears' by which time his name was a household word. Everybody knew him and very well too. For a while he was over exposed by the media. The plethora of information we imbibed on his decease, forced us to the conclusion that ours had been no more than 'a nodding acquaintance'.

#### SOLITARY MAN

'The Loneliness of L.S. Lowry' was the title of the '68 exhibition at the Crane Gallery in Brompton Road, S.W.3.

With two or three exceptions the canvases consisted of severe landscapes of town, sea and country. They expressed a desolation that contrasted sharply with the overcrowded, industrial scenes so closely associated with Lowry's work.

It is certain he never knew any of the innumerable figures he painted so compulsively. Lowry knew directors, curators, dealers, critics, patrons, painters. He knew the distinguished Clark, Casson, Rothenstein, Gombrich, Fitton, Herman, Weight, Levy, Read and the lesser known Kalman, Srutton, Shaw, Reid, Cotton, Levy (Emmanuel), Morris, McNay, Owens, Major, Bold, Fell, Bowles, Lowndes, Bradley, Smart, Valette, Horsefield, etc., etc.

He knew people like the Maitlands and the Warburtons with whom he stayed for indefinite periods. Such friends could have demolished the myth of Lowry's loneliness. Nevertheless, Lowry was a solitary man. Essentially so. To be lonely is an imposition. To be solitary is a matter of choice. Despite any seeming appearance most artists remain solitary. John is no exception.

If John had the power of words he would have written  
"One of the pleasantest things in the world is going a journey, but I like to go by myself. I can enjoy society in a room, but out of doors, nature is company enough for me. I am then never less alone than when alone.

"I cannot see the wit of walking and talking at the same time. When I am in the country I like to vegetate like the country. I am not for criticising hedgerows and black cattle. I go out of town in order to forget the town and all that is in it. There are those who for this purpose go to watering places and carry the metropolis with them. I like more elbow room, and fewer encumbrances. I like solitude, when I give myself up to it, for the sake of solitude; nor do I ask for a friend in my retreat".

"The soul of a journey is liberty, perfect liberty to think, feel, do just as one pleases. We go a journey chiefly to be free of all impediments and all inconveniences, to leave ourselves behind, much more than to be rid of others. It is because I want a little breathing space to muse on indifferent matters, where contemplation

+ 'May plume her feathers and let grow her wings,

That in the various bustle of resort

Were all too ruffled and sometimes impaired'

that I absent myself from the town..... Give me the clear blue sky overhead, the green turf beneath my feet, a winding road before me, and a three hour's march to dinner and then to thinking! It is hard if I cannot start some game on these lonely heaths. I laugh. I run. I leap. I sing for joy. From the point of yonder rolling cloud I plunge into my past being and revel there as the sunburnt Indian plunges headlong into the wave that wafts him to his native shore".

\* From the Selected Writing of William Hazlitt. Ed Christopher Selveson; Signet Classic

+ Comus pp. 387-80.

#### HOT CAKES

Every now and again someone will be inspired to beg, borrow or buy a painting. In the 30's and 40's this was a near miracle. The private galleries and dealers had not mushroomed. The Academy of Fine Arts used the Mosley Street gallery as shop window. The

Society of Modern Painters rented rooms in the Cotton Board or Kendal Milnes or any other accommodation convenient to the city centre.

The Ballet Club on Rosamund Street near All Saints fathered a rebellious off-spring when it opened its doors to established and aspiring painters.

Mathew Haygarth, Ernest Hewitt and Margo Ingham organised exhibitions in its Studio. The press reviews were kind. Elizabeth Partridge, founder of the Club in the thirties, was not impressed. She regarded her colleagues as conspirators, quarrelled, played God and threw them out. There was to be no art form other than Ballet in her book.

Margo departed to establish the Midday Studio in Mosley Street, Ernest joined the International Ballet and Mathew opened a restaurant in Prestbury.

It was Mathew who climbed the stairs to the high attic in Grosvenor Street to borrow a couple of paintings from John for the first Ballet Club exhibition.

It was Mathew who invited John to exhibit pictures when the restaurant was firmly established and patrons were beginning to spend their expense accounts with him.

It was Mathew who bought a series of John's paintings and hung them in a small permanent collection in a part of the restaurant. (The whole place had ~~was~~ all paintings of contemporary work, including Lowrys).

When Mathew retired he sold off a large part of his

collection and removed with his friend Brian Oldknow to an old farmhouse in Malta.

Though we do not see Mathew, we are never out of touch and it is from one of the Malta letters that I quote, since it appears relevant to this 'scrap' book.

".....I am interested to see that there is a full-scale 'Valette' Exhibition. Geoffrey Green bought up all the bits and pieces from the widow and presented them well and must have had more than a piece of cake, which was a very enterprising thing to do and I would think more profitable than Andre Calman's attempted 'gleaning' of the not very interesting French painters who in the late 1920s had a success with one or two works and of whom the rest of the work is not very interesting.

I remember the first Tib Lane 'Valette' show on a Sunday morning. "Vernissaju" and the rich art lovers bought the lot before the show opened. I have no doubt that they expected the value to rise three-fold in the next six weeks - just as those other 'hot cakes' from Salford are still very 'cold dough' and the only thing that rises in price is the price asked by the artist and not the price that would be fair in the open market in spite of the publicity by the Manchester Guardian and Granada Television.

Have you ever considered buying a Riley for your collection? I am pleased to see you are considering buying a G. Key. One day he will 'arrive'. It might be late in his life, but he is a very exciting artist. All his work is a manifestation of his attitude to his method of presenting the things that his eyes

N LOWEYS.

see. Just as J.B. does the same thing. He sees in a certain way and puts it down. Key sees shapes. J.B. sees 'light'. The other day of rain, Malta did a J.B. Clouds, grey and black piled up, and underneath were the towns and sea but still bathed in cold, clear light. It was so exciting to look at - but only because J.B. had taught me by his work to look at things like that through his eyes. In the article on Valette, pupils are named but only one, i.e. J.B., has followed in the 'impressionistic' style of Valette - of painting the effect of light. I saw the big Valette canvases from Queen's Park at the last Valette show and J.B.'s work was very much influenced by that half light of the smoke darkened Mancunian scene. In fact, I would say that J.B. was more conscious of the tricks light played - Valette put it down - but J.B. dramatises it and makes it an 'artistic' form and therefore more value aesthetically. I know he would say 'nonsense' but he would be the one who painted them - I was the one who acquired them - not as 'hot cakes' or as one of 'them' Lowries that go up in price, but because I could sit and enjoy the effects of the vision".

But enough of J.B.

*Between*  
THE GO BETWEEN OR THE RIGHT WAY TO BUY A PAINTING

Mathew was the unwitting go-between in the case of Michael Elliott and John.

When Michael came to Manchester to produce for the '69 Theatre Company at the University Theatre, he visited Prestbury. He saw John's paintings and decided he would like to meet the artist.



Arrangements were made and Michael arrived at Wilton Avenue one summer morning and introduced himself.

The conversation, centring on painting, the theatre and Aran where Michael had stayed prior to his production of Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* some years ago, was punctuated by the showing of canvases one after the other.

Refreshment, more conversation, and further consideration of the paintings gave Michael time to reach a decision. "I must have this one", he said, going over to a seascape of the Sound between Inishere and Inishman. "I don't buy paintings. I can't, but I must have this one. Keep it for me till I am back. I have to go home". Michael lived in London.

Some weeks later he returned, collected the painting and departed, promising to keep in touch.

From then on over a period of years he contrived a meeting whenever he was in town producing plays that were now accommodated in the nave of the Cathedral.

When the great hall in the Manchester Cotton Exchange was acquired for a permanent home for the '68 Company, Michael was appointed resident director. He moved house to Manchester and brought his wife, Rosalind, and their children, Marianne and Susannah.

During the months before the theatre opened, Michael had time to sit for a portrait drawing. When it was finished the face of the poet and visionary looked out from the white sea of cartridge paper. John had anticipated by a few months what Robin Thornber was to catch in words, for writing in the *Guardian* a few days before

the Gala Opening, he referred to Michael in the following terms:-  
"Elliott even looks like a dreamer. He has the quiet, academic manner of a slightly saddened philosopher rather than the braggadoccio of the show-biz potentate. And the project, the movement through his freemasonry, has become the regional repertory theatre of the North West, began as Michael Elliott's vision".

From "Modular Dream in a Marble Hall", Robin Thronber,  
September 11th, 1976

#### THE SOUND

It was early evening when we collected Colman Cohnelly and Otto Shaw from Pat Herson's bar on Inishmaan. The two men and their respective crews had whiled away the time talking and drinking.

Aran men 'walk tall' even in their cups and move with the loping gait that only men accustomed to wear the traditional pampooties can effect. There was little to indicate that they were drunk as we descended the bleak road to the shore.

Our curraghs were beached on the shingle. Colman stooped to right the craft, and saw a hole as large as a fist in its side. He straightened himself, turned on his heel and began the tedious ascent of the road again. At the first cottage he secured a live turf, carried it on a stick to the beach, cut a square of canvas from one of the several curraghs lying at his feet, and commenced the repair. He blew on the smouldering turf till it glowed red, melted the pitch round the edge of the canvas square, melted the

pitch round the frayed edges of the hole in the damaged curragh and welded the one with the other. He smoothed the patch with his strong, coarse fingers, waited for the graft to cool and harden, then signalled his crew to upend the boat. They carried it to the water's edge, bid us sit in the stern, pushed till we were afloat, jumped in and pulled a yard or two ahead, then they rested on their oars and waited for Otto's curragh to draw level. Each man of either crew stretched out an arm, grasped the gunwale of the opposite boat and locked the two together. Rowing with one free arm, the men pulled on their oars and the two curraghs rode as one.

All this time the befuddled men had spoken little. Now they began to sing. Gaelic singing can be spine chilling and wild. The 'fiery Jack' in their veins had not yet cooled.

The sky was darkening. Clouds raced and hurled their white, grey, black plumes of wavering, quavering vapour high into the heavens. Thunder boomed. The sea heaved in a swell black as treacle. Inishere looked like a thin, bleached bone in the distance. It would take an hour to cross the sound.

We lay back in the curragh, relaxed, exhilarated, quickened by the light of pure unreason. When we should have been most afraid we were not afraid. We had become part of the sky, the sea, the tossing boat and the strange, eerie song of the men in whose expertise we had complete trust.

Through the fading light and sheeting rain we made out huddled figures on the jetty as we neared Inishere. Wives, mothers and children had been watching the waters for an hour or more.

Cries and questions greeted the drenched crews and passengers as they clambered ashore. Chill had drained all colour from the watcher's cheeks. Anxiety flowed in every gesture, and it was not until the shelter of the houses was reached that some degree of calm was established.

Wet clothes were discarded, hot food and drink set in the front parlour of the house where Otto and his family and John and I were staying. Otto, an educationalist from Maidenhead, and a visitor like ourselves, recounted the story to his wife, Catherine, and their three children, Colman dried out before the kitchen fire recounting his version of the incident to his wife, Maura, and his sister, Kait. After this no-one referred to the affair and to this day we have no idea how the curragh came to be mutilated, nor how the frail patch held, save by the grace of God.

Many months later John made a seascape of this stretch of water. It is a topographical painting of a place, but it is more. It is a painting of the stillness before storm, the stillness that is the <sup>+</sup>eye of the cyclone, the static hub of the vortex, "the luminous stasis of aesthetic pleasure" \*, "the enchantment of the heart" +.

\* James Joyce        )  
                          )       Portrait of an Artist.  
+ Luigi Galvani     )

SONG OF THE SOUND

Translated by Colman's sister, Mary, the spine chilling song of the oarsmen as they crossed the treacherous water of the Sound,

turned out to be more in the genre of an English ballad than a ferocious celtic saga of 'daring do'. How the wild singing came to be 'married' to a narrative of an affair of the heart is not to be explained nor conveyed here.

Nothing can recapture that unearthly singing awash with 'fiery Jack' but in tribute to Mary who gave us the translation, and because I wish to preserve the words, which on paper seem as lifeless as pressed flowers, I am obliged to interrupt this narrative

1

As I roved out one evening,  
It being the blooming Spring,  
I heard a lovely maid complain  
And grievously did sing  
Saying, "Cruel were my parents  
That did me so annoy  
And wouldn't let me marry  
My bonny labouring boy.

2

Now Johnnie was my true love's name,  
As you can plainly see,  
My parents they employed him  
Their labouring boy to be  
To hoe and reap and sow the seed  
And plough my father's land,  
But soon I fell in love with him,  
As you may understand.

3

My Mother thought to have me wed,  
Unto some Lord or Peer,  
I being the only heiress  
To ten thousand pound a year,  
But I set my heart on one true love,  
And he was my only joy,  
This notion I would ramble  
With my Irish labouring boy.

4

Four long months I courted him,  
But little did I know,  
That both my parents  
Should prove my overthrow.  
They watched us closely one evening,  
While in a shady grove,  
Pledging our hearts together  
In the constant bonds of love.

5

My Mother came next morning  
And unto me did say,  
Your Father has intended  
To appoint your wedding day.  
I nobly made her answer,  
That with him I'd ne'er comply  
For it's single I will yet remain,  
For my Irish labouring boy.

Fill the glasses to the brim my boys,  
Let the toast go merrily round,  
Here's a health to every Irish boy  
Who hoes and reaps the ground.  
And when his work is over  
To his home he'll go with joy,  
And it's happy the girl who gets  
An Irish labouring boy.

ARAN

When <sup>Yates</sup> Yates was staying in Paris on one occasion, he met J.M. Synge. He discovered that the young man could speak Gaelic.

"Go to the Aran Islands", said Yates, "and find a way of life that has never been expressed in literature, instead of a way of life where all has been expressed".

Synge acted on the advice and spent several months on the islands spending most of his time on Inishmaan. Subsequently he produced a book on the daily life of 'a unique and unimaginable people'.

By the time John and I were acquainted, John had read Synge's account and I had seen Robert Flaherty's film, Man of Aran. "I would like to live there", I said to Roland Sudren as we walked from the cinema through the Manchester streets.

"You couldn't", said Roland, "you wouldn't survive that life more than a few months, if that". The subject was dropped and never referred to again till I met John and found that he, too, had an absorbing interest in the place.

Our conversations were a bridge between imagination and reality and the day came when we set foot on the 'three wet rocks'.

It is not my intention to describe a place which Synge has put on record for all time but rather to hint at what came from our visits. Over a period of years we lived for short intervals on each island and felt ourselves to be part of 'the scene'. Except on Inishmaan. There we would sit on the ramparts of Dun Connor, the prehistoric fort, and watch the waters of a grey, lifeless ocean wrapping the island like a girdle. We would watch Inishere and Inishmore riding like whales low in the water, fore and aft. We would watch the spreading coast line of Clare County in the distance and know ourselves to be intruders, poaching the air about us and the sky above.

Possibly the island had exacted too heavy a toll of our nervous and physical resources. Its wild, difficult features, its noisy malicious wind, its menacing sky, its shy, Gaelic speaking people needed strong constitutions. Eait Faherty with whom we stayed, her sons Patrick and John, and Norah, the girl we met as she carried water from the spring were our only friends. Old women sitting on low stools by open doors would smile and nod, the rest would withdraw indoors as we passed. No-one would or could talk to us and none would be photographed except the odd barefoot toddler we caught unawares on a sandy track.

We walked uneasily about, slept even more uneasily on rough beds listening to the nocturnal brayings of donkeys and the barking of dogs.



Again and again we climbed the low walls and crossed small fields to Dun Connor. There we could forget the austerity of the place devoid of all creature comforts, where electric light, running water, indoor plumbing, the baker, the butcher, the dandlestick maker were non-existent. Sitting on the ramparts of the fort we could forget all discomfort in the luminous light, the infinite space, the clean visual images of land, sea and sky. The pure air, the bright sun transformed Aran into an unusual and extraordinary place. It is my belief that some of John's best painting was inspired by the days we spent on the islands. Perhaps one of his best canvases that vibrates with awful, primeaval power resulted from the quiet hours he spent on the side of Dun Connor. It hangs on the wall of our friend's house, Gulner Mathew.

GUL

"The woman has come", said the fortune teller.

"Which woman?", asked the major, his thoughts preoccupied by the events of the past days. He had been on a round of inspection up-country.

"The woman I told you you are to marry, Sir", said the fortune teller.

The major moved indoors, consulted the list of new appointments and noticed that Captain Gulmer Ingle had joined the command as medical officer.

Co-incidence affected the introduction. The major and the captain were fond of riding. On the same day at the same hour

give a minute or two, they had ridden out in different directions. Neither knew of the jinx that sat each on the shoulder of the other. Neither was to know they had fallen from their respective mounts till they converged in the waiting room of the clinic attached to the hospital. One had injured an arm, the other a leg. The introduction, the courtship, the engagement, the marriage followed in sequence as night the day.

All this the major (Jesse to us) would tell us years later as we dined with him in the large old house in Heywood.

"It wasn't easy to arrange the marriage", he would continue, still ruminating on past events. Gul is from the north of India, I am from the south. There was family opposition. We came from different cultures, from different religious backgrounds, from a different social class. But finally matters were settled and we were married by my bishop who prayed that I would be the means of bringing my wife to the Christian Church, and that is my prayer to this day".

No prayers brought the captain to conversion. A Hindu born into the warrior caste, educated from an early age at boarding school, trained at the Lady Harding Medical School in Delhi where she graduated in medicine, she had a mind of her own and a spirit of independence that was to bring her to this country apparently for 'good an' all'.

Once married the couple left Umbala where they were stationed, returned to civil life, set up house in Bangalore and began to anticipate the 'happy event' with which most unions are blessed. They waited and waited. Hope changed to anxiety and

anxiety to despair.

Jesse prayed, Gul prayed and their prayers moved in the same direction. Gul had been well instructed in Roman Catholicism by the nuns at her school. Jesse had taken the tenets of the Greek Orthodox Church with his mother's milk.

"If you will give us a child, Holy Mother, we will dedicate the first year of its life to you. It shall wear blue as a token of our love and gratitude. It shall be reared in the true faith".

Whether the Holy Mother or the gynaecologist who was called to the case affected the miracle, remains debatable, but on March 10th, 1954 a child was born and baptised with a double barrel name that included the two cultures. She was christed Nergis-Anne.

With family life established, with Jesse following his profession as accountant, with servants to serve every need, idle days followed for Gul. She found the role of housewife and mother impossible to maintain. She 'upped' and left for London where she had friends who could give her hospitality till she was accepted as interneer at Barnett General Hospital. She hoped to extend her training and specialise in gynaecology.

The best laid schemes of mice and men, etc. went 'aglie'. Gul never qualified as consultant, never returned to India to work. The family joined her in Barnet. Within a short time they moved north where Gul had secured an appointment as G.P. to practise in Heywood.

It was a new practice designed to serve the new housing estate of Darnhill. Once established, and business thriving, the

family moved to an old house built on the crown of a hill that overlooked a wide, spreading semi industrial countryside. In its time Heady Hill house had been an old vicarage.

Gul practised, Jesse preached. A devout Christian, he had received instruction, qualified as lay preacher and accepted an appointment to St. James. Nergis-Anne attended the convent school on the outskirts of Bury.

Gul enrolled at the Bury School of Art, joined the life class, made John's acquaintance and then mine.

One fine August day in '66, Jesse and Nergis-Anne knocked at our front door. They had come to take us to tea.

We drove through the afternoon sunshine. The child held a pale, green plant in her small brown hand. "It's a present for Mam", she said, "we have been to a bazaar at school".

Jesse sat straight as a ramrod behind the wheel of the car. The child chattered inconsequentially. The plant, silent and insensible, behaving as any normal healthy plant should, spoke volumes. It was going as tribute to the 'women', the captain, the doctor, the wife, the mother who seemed able to take everyone under her broad capacious wing.

Like a latter day Erin Pizzey, no-one was refused 'accommodation'. Friends and relations, patients and consultants, widows and orphans, dogs, cats, birds, plants, flowers, stones objets d'art, antiques, all things, in fact, made by hands were treated and cherished as one and the same under that large, generously proportioned wing. There was time for everyone and everything for time did not

exist. One hour was as good as the next. The night as opportune as the day for any commission that came within the scope of her heavy, programmed days. She could 'up and go' at the drop of a hat. Food, rest, warmth were immaterial where the greatest good of all were concerned. Everything seemed possible to the Lady from Ujjain who seemed to enjoy a freedom without limits and made the women libbers of today seem a clamouring ineffective lot. Had anyone mentioned to Gul that she was one of the most liberated ladies in the British Isles today she would have stared in open mouthed astonishment.

#### KOSAN

A child's green uniform was neatly laid on a bed in the guest room of Heady Hill House. "Nergis-Anne is getting ready to go to school", said Gul. "We are collecting her things together. She will go away in September".

On the day of departure the pekinese, Tashi, crawled under a cabinet in the drawing room and would not be tempted out to follow her usual routine. Her large eyes, beseeched, besought an explanation of a situation new to her experience.

She may have had a cold or some infection but I swear I saw glistening drops of moisture on the rims of her beautiful eloquent eyes when we were visiting one afternoon at the end of September.

There were no partings so disastrous as this first for the little creature. She conditioned herself to the comings and goings of the child each term and she had no reckoning of the six years that changed the adored one into an elegant young woman. She left school

and lived at home. She entered the Bolton Polytechnic as a day student.

A young man from Laas was enrolled at the college on the same day of the same term.

It was natural and inevitable that these two children of the east should gravitate. They were handsome, had strong, vibrant personalities. It was as if the one half, missing for years, had found the other part to make the whole.

They met in hall, in library, in canteen, in precincts, in discoteques, coffee bars, pubs and snack bars.

Kosan rented a small flat. Nergis-Anne brought him goodies from the deep freeze at home. It was time to invite the young man home to meet Mama and Papa. And Mama and Papa, realising how things stood, invited Kosan to stay for longer and longer periods at a time. He slowly, imperceptibly became part of the establishment.

I believe everyone who crosses a threshold brings influences for good or evil. I believe buildings are reservoirs of such influences. I believe there are people who can sense the recorded impressions stored in the fabric of walls.

When we visited Heady Hill House there were times when Jesse became abstracted, when he seemed to listen, to grope into the past and say, "This is a 'good' house, a blessed house". And on the whole he had got it right.

When Kosan joined the household, the small disturbances that punctuated the overall peace and calm were dispelled, and it was indeed a 'good house' and the young man a 'good' man. Innocence

and simplicity were registered in eye, voice, gesture and movement. In the deep underlying calm, newcomers could rest and be safe.

In a lifetime we meet so many people and we know, though we go through all the motions of courtesy and convention, we do not exist, we are a kind of nothingness. With Kosan, so unlike, yet so like our own young men, it was different. In his company we existed, had status, meaning. It was strange. It was revitalising.

When the tiny kingdom of Laos was taken over by the communists soon after the defeat in Vietnam, funds from home for his maintenance in this country dried up. Gul paid his college fees, extended her hospitality to the limit. Jesse busied himself and secured a grant from international aid for overseas students. Kosan worked and went into retreat at the flat for intensive study from time to time. He passed his exams and when about to enter his final year sought permission from Papa to marry Nergis-Anne when he had taken his finals and secured a suitable job.

Permission and blessing were given to a long and flourishing 'affaire de Coeur'.

#### JOHN

Kosan has a scientific mind. He reads mathematics, geology, physics at college. The arts figure low in his list of priorities. Therefore it delighted me that he should say, when Gul would add another item to her not inconsiderable collection of pictures, "John does better than that".

Whether Kosan spoke from ignorance or prejudice in John's

favour, we refused to consider. Recommendation from whatever quarter is sweet.

However the case may be, many years before art was everybody's 'pigeon', John was considered to be one of the best figure draughtsmen in Manchester.

When the members of Charles Peachment's art class rented an old attic in Grosvenor Street, they invited John to supervise their weekly sessions.

I do not have premonitions but I knew as he stood at the door of the studio one Spring evening in '36 that I was to have much to do with the pale, remote man I had seen in the lecture room of the Technical school some months before. The irrational, inexplicable knowledge came in a flash with total effect, and no sooner recognised, the transfiguring moment was gone and the incident dropped from mind.

John was introduced by Roland Sudren to May Belben, Ann Luby, Heather Thatcher, Arthur Booth, James Hankey, Ernest Markham and myself. He did not stay long but returned one evening of the following week and began work. He did not 'teach' in the accepted sense of the word. "It is not possible to teach anyone to draw or paint", he said. "It is only possible to try and reach the level of understanding of anyone aspiring to draw or paint. It's only possible to help release what is already there".

He was a man of few words. His mere presence seemed to bring to life some deep intuitive feeling so that one began to see and feel the flow and rhythm and quality and behaviour patterns of line and form. Shadowy images of torsos, limbs, hands, feet, heads



began to register on sheets of white cartridge paper. Works of art they were not, but they were tolerable studies. Hitherto my own peurile attempts had been consigned to the flames. Now I began to preserve these early efforts. They seemed to prove that John did not talk through his hat.

There was no time now to sit by the fire and play Cinderella. Until John arrived on the scene I would make the fire, make tea, wash up, brush up and play general 'dog's body' to maintain a footing in the place. Someone had to be last in the pecking order.

Now, absorbed in the particular quiet that descends when an orchestra plays or a corps de ballet dances, or a life class operates, everyone worked as one man, lost to self and all other impediments.

John did not intrude. His touch was light, his manner unassuming, unaffected. He had a simplicity and a complexity that made him easy and difficult to know at one and the same time. I began to know, that like his painting, he was inexhaustible. The discovery was slow, protracted. It was not until our friendship had drifted into tea-time talks by the fireside in Grosvenor Street that I discovered John could talk and to some purpose.

"I want to be myself in everything I say. I want to be myself in everything I paint. I think I have 'found' myself and have something to say. Why some people need to put on a front of cleverness, I don't know. If they are clever surely that is enough. Why take credit for it? It's accidental. I'm sure the finest minds are satisfied merely to recognise their own power. They would never show off. There is a reverence, a humility which such minds

possess. I'm not underestimating. If I could produce, for instance, one beautiful note of sound, I should know it to be a miracle, but I should see no reason to get on my high horse. Great gifts are great possessions and they are widely scattered, but genius - that is rare, unique. One can recognise it quickly. I daresay a few sentences of Swift would be enough to show. And cleverness! What is that? A painter can be clever. He can be slick. But no good work was ever slick, merely clever. A crude drawing may be of more telling, more sensitive than all the things produced by clever, technical skill".

This was the nub of John's thinking. He worked slowly. He did not paint for painting's sake. "I am not painting a picture", he would say, to my bewilderment, "I am expressing in the only way I can, what I feel. To translate feeling in terms of paint is difficult, almost impossible. The realisation hardly ever matches the conception. Which is why for me it takes 90% thinking and 10% doing".

John never deviated from this self-imposed discipline. His style, severe, austere, low-key was more 'steel' than soft pap. He never repeated himself, used no ploys, tricks or devices, invented no formula, nor ever produced a mean, commercial 'eye catcher'. Nor did he desert the easel painting for the extraordinary pantomimes of the minimal or action artists of the younger generation of today.

He painted landscapes, townscapes, seascapes, and the nude. "All sound draughtsmanship is based on the ability to draw from the nude", he would say. And John could 'draw' superbly. Which skill,

as every bright young man knows, went out with the ark. However that may be, Derek Senior, the Guardian critic, reviewing an exhibition in Gibb's book shop on the Human Form in '48 wrote, "It was in John Bold's work that aesthetic and human feeling are at once apparent and most happily combined. He delights in the sensuous appeal of flesh and bone and in the use of their outlines and contours as the raw material of fresh and formal, exciting inventions".

We had, and still have, a fond regard for Derek Senior whose references in John's case were always generous and heartening. He bought, as he described it, "the painting of John's 'haunting Hindu Girl' from the Academy Spring Exhibition about this time.

It was years before I realised a painting can equate with all created forms under the sun and follow the line of universal principles. A heavy, high falutin' claim but as valid for me as the breath we breathe or the blood that circulates. Until created form in sound, paint or print invades the blood they remain objective, non-events.

I believe that all natural phenomena come slowly, secretly, quietly into Being. I began to notice this principle operating in John's canvases. They seemed to emerge from some vast, immeasurable void. From the darkest skies, the heaviest earth, the symbols, the images emerged, lit at their focal point by a concentration of light. The best of these canvases gave a sense of infinity which was their source. The sensation gained power with time. One was 'drawn in' and on to some area of equilibrium that mystics and philosophers try to define with limited success.

It was apparent that this brief encounter with the eye on which most work relies would be of little use in John's case, and that the few, timeless paintings that came so slowly from his sensitive hand would scarcely set the town on fire.

He went through all the conventional motions; became a member of the Manchester Academy of Fine Arts, a member of the Modern Painters<sup>of</sup> the Royal Cambrian Academy. He was invited to join the Manchester Group founded by Margo Ingham and the Lancashire Group established by Colin Hilton.

Manchester, Bury, Salford, Oldham, Granada T.V. and the Ministry of Works acquired work for their collections. Painters are gratified that their work finds a permanent home despite the fact that the cellars of such institutions can become graveyards of dusty, forgotten canvases.

It is the private collector who buys work for the right reason who justifies the painful separation of the artist and his brain child. The cash that streams from the departing creation cannot heal the wound inflicted in the deepest part of the psyche. There has been a lopping off, a diminution, a kind of death.

Not every painter, writer, musician is an artist. Not every artist is a genius. There is a distinction to be made.

From the beginning, before I could know better, intuition hinted that John was an artist. I do not agree with Eric Gill that 'the artist is not a special kind of man or that every man is a special kind of artist'. I knew from the days I walked the mean Manchester streets as a child, and heard the names Bach, Beethoven

and Mozart, that the artist in the wider sense of that much abused word was special, very special indeed.

Perhaps Merette Bates writing in an issue of the Guardian 1970 can put the case far better for John than I who am prejudiced in his favour.

"The paintings of John Bold, however, are sunk in time both in their subject and making. Full of a quietness, like growth, slow and imperceptible. But suspended on a tension; the finest hairbreadth between the stillness of what is seen, of objects - and the dream of what they mean, their presence. Most of the paintings are faithful representations. A luminous face of a Celtic girl worked by candlelight because the family would not let the artist into the dirty kitchen by daylight. Celtic Hamlets are a huddle of loaf cottages over a grey-green bog. 'Stand Church' looms out of the dank, dun brick work of Victorian villas in winter.

But even in these seeming representations, there is a glimmer of something beyond, surreal, a pale, wet light hovering over the cottages, a pale halo encircling the church. And in a few of the paintings, mysticism dominates as in 'Maiden Castle'. The walls of the old fort have been entirely transmuted into mystic arca. 'Yoko Ono' shows only the grey sack into which she has withdrawn".

#### ROBERT FREDERICK PENNINGTON

When I first saw Robert Frederick Pennington, I had no idea I was looking at my future brother-in-law. He was riding at the front of a tram car with several other boys on his way to school.

He was twelve. I have never much liked or noticed young boys. But this boy was different. Even at the distance between us on the top of the tram, I liked him. He had the finest features and an air of 'Je ne c'est quoi' about his whole appearance. I would gaze, fascinated, unable to concentrate on the homework I was trying to finish on my way to school. A common practice! I never spoke to the boy and left school whilst he was still in lower school and the thought of him gradually faded.

When Winifred was seventeen, she began to mention a young man she knew at St. Luke's Church. She spoke of him with a great deal of interest and enthusiasm. "Bring him to tea", said my mother "it would be nice to meet him". And when he came I was looking at the boy I had seen on the top of the tram years ago. "This is Bob", said Winnie, introducing him to the family in general. "But what's his proper name?", I asked, as we made tea in the kitchen. "Robert Pennington", she said, and his middle name is Frederick. Do you like him?"

"Why, he's the boy I admired when I saw him years ago when we were going to school. I never knew his name", I said.

My slender, blue-eyed sister radiated bliss. From this time she was his girl. Neither of the two had any other sweetheart and in due course they were married with the blessings of my mother and father and the entire family.

The wedding gave pause to our preoccupation with the frightening news from France and the evacuation of the B.E.F. from Dunkirk. The 'happy couple' spent their honeymoon in a Welsh seaside

resort. Despondent soldiers with nowhere to go and nothing to do dominated the town. Gloom and doom clouded the skies of those beautiful, fine June days. Regiments had not been reformed nor re-equipped nor the continued resistance in these islands begun.

By some strange dispensation of the Gods, the men in our family took no part in Hitler's war except for the civil defence on the Home Front. If ever I should believe in the influence of the stars in human affairs, it would be because of the preservation of our men throughout the two world wars. No-one ever seemed to notice this strange state of affairs, no-one, to my knowledge, ever remarked on the fact.

The honeymoon over, Robert went back to his desk in the office of the Refuge Assurance Company where he had begun work as an office boy after leaving school.

His good looks, his attractive personality, his intelligence soon attracted attention and he was directed to work for Mr. Proctor Green, Deputy Chairman and Managing Director of the Company. When Proctor Green died, he continued as clerk to Sir William Proctor Smith who succeeded him.

In course of time Sir William became director. He then appointed his son Richard and Robert as joint investment secretaries to control the Company's Investment portfolio.

During the time Robert had worked for the two heads of the firm, he had familiarised himself with the complicated and intricate manipulation of money and the mechanics of investment. Knowledgeable, dependable, discreet, his superiors admired and trusted

He was deputed to open an investment office in the Strand. He moved with ~~delicacy~~ and caution and delicacy until he was familiar with the sophisticated and complicated dealings in the city.

He had dealings with brokers whose rich, resounding names rolled impressively from the tongue. Lord Brabazon of Tara, the Marquess of Queensbury, Lord Glendyne and Sir Alexander Cadwallader Mainwearing Spearman with whom he had become particularly friendly were now his associates. It was at Spearman's flat that he met the Treasury Lords and cabinet ministers.

When he became chairman of the British Insurance Association he met Anthony Crossland, Douglas Jay, Pardo, Wellbeloved, Shore and others. The B.I.A. held small luncheon parties at regular intervals for discussion with the politicians of the day.

He had moved from the Strand by way of premises in Leadenhall Street to Old bailey where he entertained people of influence such as Sir Leslie O'Brien, Governor of the Bank of England and <sup>Sir</sup> Patrick Allen first Lord of the Treasury, Sir Arn Arnold Wincott and Rees Moggs, editor of the financial Times.

He met mayors and sherriffs at functions at the several guildhalls.

In 1964 Manchester Corporation applied to Parliament for powers to invest superannuation funds in Ordinary Shares. Since this was the first application of its kind in the country caution was necessary. If three investment experts could be found and approved by the treasury, permission would be granted. The three experts were found and Robert, being one of the three, served for three years, commuting at regular intervals between London and Manchester. In this way Robert laid his finger on Manchester as John in a different capacity had laid his. The husbands of the two sisters had somehow made conjunction.



T O C O N C L U D E

A man once said to me when I was knee high to a grasshopper "You are an hedonist".

I went home and opened the dictionary and found that 'a hedonist is one that advocates hedonism' and hedonism to be 'the doctrine that pleasure is the highest good'. I would substitute the word joy for pleasure. It is a word that cannot embrace the cruel excesses of this century. It is a word that cannot tolerate any negative thinking. Therefore what pain and suffering have laced my days have been excluded from these pages. The incidence of two world wars, the persecution of minorities, the atrocities perpetrated by terrorists leave scars and blemishes throughout the nervous system, sufficient to tarnish the golden thread that still remains immaculate, bright as the day it first emerged to the light of consciousness. Which would seem to be a lesser miracle in this disturbing, riddlemerae planet.

I apologise to all our close friends who make no appearance in these pages, to my brother, Harold, who receives only a passing reference, and to his sons, Peter, Paul and Brian, and his wife, Hilda, who receive no mention at all. I apologise for all other omissions, shortcomings, indiscretions or whatever.

July 27th 1978