

MABEL CUTTS.

I was born in 1894 at a small  
seaside town near Grimsby in  
Lincolnshire but my early life was  
lived in a small village, <sup>It is</sup> a few miles  
from Grimsby here I lived with my  
mother + father, three brothers, and  
one sister. Houses were then being  
built in the villages (not cottages) they  
were built in blocks of four with  
a large one at each end which had  
three bedrooms, and two smaller houses  
in the middle with two bedrooms.

There was no water system in the  
house but a pump outside which  
was shared by the four tenants. The  
lavatory was the box pover type.  
Each end house had two long  
strips of garden with a pig sty at  
the end and the middle houses  
had one long strip of garden but  
all had a pig sty only father later

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on built a chicken house so we kept a pig & some chickens. My brother also kept white fantail pigeons. The two end houses also had a strip of garden at the side of the house, and all houses had a small front garden.

The school we attended was in the next village - Stallingsboro - about 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  miles away and although it cost only 1 penny return to travel by tram we walked to and from school for most part of the year it had to be very bad under foot or very wet when we were allowed to travel, the cold did not matter so much we were well wrapped up and my mother used to put potatoes in the oven when she got up early in the morning and I had one in my muff to keep my hands warm my brother had one in his overcoat pocket & they kept very warm for a good time. These potatoes were not

to be wasted we had to bring them home and throw them in to the pig bucket on our return. The walks to school + home again were pleasant I remember we did not play much when going in the morning but had great fun coming home, the fields were divided by ditches with a plank across for a bridge but we liked to find a spot where we could jump across + always trying to find a wider part to jump. Several children from Healing the village where I lived went to the school at Stallingboro + so we had some competition in our games. When the spring and summer weather came we would sometimes walk home by the road instead of over the fields and gather wild flowers to take home. The village school at Stallingboro was a brick school but we did not pay to go to it. The staff

at the school was a Mr Gill and his two daughters, Mr Gill was a short plump man and I remember had very black oily looking hair which ended in small curls above his coat collar. In those days I thought he was very strict. The school room was L shaped in the longest part the older children were taught by Mr Gill & the eldest daughters and in the short part (which was know as the infants) the younger children were taught by the younger Miss Gill & was loved by them, in this part we did not have desks but a wooden gallery with the long seats reaching up from the floor to the window & the windows were high in the schoolroom. A big black stool stood near to the higher class it had a large pipe going out of the wall, but in the infants department we had a fire in a grate with a very high guard

in front. We used slates & slate pencil, sometimes chalk for our lessons on these, and we had to start each day with a clean slate one scholar would be chosen for slate duty. On the window ledge was a stone jar holding a short stick of wood at the end was tied a good thick knob of material which was wet, the slate had to be held out & one would receive a dab from the wet ended stick we then had to dry off the slate with a piece of dry rag which we had brought from home. The boys would not always remember & I have seen them drying slates with their coat cuffs. The village boys in those days wore trousers made of a material named <sup>corduroy</sup> corduroy it was very dark brown in colour and had a peculiar smell, it was not like the light fawn cord worn by grooms and some farmers.

On the gallery in the Infants the dull

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children were seated on the bottom rows and according to brightness the others rose up, the clever ones being on the top level with the bottom part of the window. One day a boy on the top row caused great excitement he shot up his arms and called out: "The Hounds, The Hounds", and other children tried to get to the window to have a look and it caused great commotion (The hounds was the Brocklesby Hunt owned by Lord Yarborough who lived a few miles away at Brocklesby Hall) Mr Gell came stamping from his class room to see what was happening & to make each child get to its own place & the boy who called out was made to sit on the bottom row because Mr Gell said he must have been looking out of the window and the reason the windows in the school were high was so that we could not look out but keep our eyes on our

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lessons, Miss Gill (known as Teacher to us) would I am sure <sup>would</sup> have let us all had a look. We took a packed lunch for midday, some took this in baskets or bundles, I was proud of my basket it was a small imitation of the baskets which the village women used to take their produce to Grimsby market & had two lids meeting in the middle of the basket under the handle. In the winter we were allowed to eat this meal in school, but in the summer it was eaten in the playground where there was a pump & we could get a drink from this. In winter the pump was often frozen & I cannot remember any drinks being supplied, also the only place to wash our hands was under the pump. In winter I could imagine that our hands were not washed from leaving home until we returned ~~in the evening~~ and washed for our evening meal.

When in the big class the girls received a needlework lesson once per week it was given by a woman in the village and two girls were chosen each week to carry the sewing basket from her house to school, we felt important walking through the village, Mrs Sleight ~~was~~ in front, and a girl, Esther side of the basket, walking behind. There was a village shop at Stallingsboro and sometimes when we had a half-penny to spend we would pay a visit. One could get a variety of sweets for a half-penny but the favourite of all was a Lucky Packet because you never knew what you would find inside... one or two transfers, a few sweets, or a few beads to thread. The packets were about 4" long + oblong in shape the contents were enclosed in a strip of very thin cardboard both ends meeting in the centre so that the ends were enclosed, then wrapped all over with very gay



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glossy paper all different colours + finished off with a little picture and all these things were real treasures. One of my brothers was rather good at drawing & we saved the cardboard strips for him, these he cut into two and made a pack of Happy Family cards. He had a box of paints and although nearly all his drawings of people were alike he made the difference to them with different coloured paint. We only had four families but could play a game. I am sorry to say the cards soon got limp & bent at the corner with play. However he got a real pack in his stocking one Christmas.

The Vicar used to visit school once a week, and would question a few pupils in turn about the catechism, so it was always a good thing to know your catechism because you never knew when it would be your turn. We would all sing a hymn for him.

On important Saint days we would walk over the fields to the church for a short service, this was nice we could stroll over the fields with our friends we had to pass through the church yard to reach the church and a Stallingsboro girl once showed us a small grave in a corner on its own and told us the baby was buried there because it was not born right. I could not understand how anyone could be born wrong and asked my mother but I did not understand her answer either. Later in life when I read Thomas Hardy I found out. The walk home from church was very nice to because we passed the blacksmiths shop and Teacher let us stay + have a look at him at work.

Out of school ~~we~~ and during the long summer holiday we had plenty of space to play games and pass our

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Time boys and girls together played Relivo + Run it out, one person was "on" and the rest would hide. The person who was "on" could not move far from the hob and if he spotted anyone hiding he would call out their name and say 1, 2, 3, Relivo + get back quickly to the hob. This game could last a long time. Run it out was a similar game but quicker because the one on could go about looking for people + they both had to race back to the hob, the first one to be run out was on next time. We also play rounders + French cricket. The boys on their own played a game called "stick tin" which was a bit rough for girls and they did not wear such heavy boots. Also in the Autumn the boys played "conkers" (horse chestnuts on a piece of string) the girls played at skipping games, also

Battledore & Shuttlecock, Jacke, five Stone and some had a hoop & stick. They also played with dolls which were home made one with black boot buttons for eyes but very much loved. The boys had good fun in a small wood near our home, known as the Plantation, they would climb trees and play 'Robbers'. In the evenings when ~~the~~ they were short and we had not time to go far away from home we could still play games in the road because there was no traffic except when the 6-15 train arrived, our road lead direct from the station, but we knew how many people would arrive. If the folks at the "Big House" were entertaining there's broham or carriage would come to meet guests and we had to stand aside for that. The people who lived in the "Big House" do not

remembers if I knew its name) were:-  
 The Hon. Gerald B. Portman & his wife.  
 They were a young couple, she was  
 a very good horsewoman and always  
 rode a spirited horse so it was  
 safe not only to get off the road  
 but inside the garden gate when  
 she came riding down the road.  
 We saw very little of the folks at the  
 Big House or the house hither, but I  
 do remember they once gave a party  
 for all in the village - children & parents,  
 it was I think to celebrate something  
 but I cannot recall what, I suppose  
 it could have been something to  
 do with the South African war.  
 However I do remember we had a  
 very good tea, and ran races and  
 had donkey rides. Every child got  
 a present even if you did not win  
 a race, mine was a small square  
 box covered with tiny pink shells  
 this I kept for many years. Also I

remembers coming home through the village with my brother + others feeling very tired but so happy. The Rectory + the church were in the same part of the village as the Big House, the Rectory always looked very old and the garden untidy. Some of the village boys would go at times to try and tidy it up and for reward they would be allowed to gather the medlars (nuts) in the Autumn and also windfalls from the orchard, but I am sure they sometimes took more than windfalls. Most of the year there was something to pick or gather, violets + primroses in the spring from under the hedgerows, + later King-bups + Bullrushes. Not far away from our house were three fields covered with cowslips and when the sunshine on them they were a beautiful picture of delicate yellow, we picked a lot of them.

and my mother made cowslip wine, when it was ready for drinking it was a very very, clear pale gold colour and had a good taste. The wines made ~~by~~ then were quite potent, during their holiday one year my two brothers went pea picking for a local farmer to earn a little pocket money. The farmer's daughter brought some rhubarb wine to drink with the mid-day snack and after it both of my brothers went fast asleep in the pea rows so they did not earn much that day, next time they went pea picking my mother packed them a bottle of lemon water. After the summer holiday was over we would all go gathering blackberries taking a hooked handle walking stick to pull down the berries out of reach, these would be used for jam & jelly, then it would be time for sloes and crab apples.

for wine and jelly making, and of course in winter and near to Christmas we would gather evergreens to decorate the church & our homes. A little while before Christmas the pig would be killed & the farmer or butcher who came to do the killing would arrive early in the morning before we were up for school and I can remember pulling up the bedclothes over my head & ears so that I would not hear the squeals from the pig, but that was all forgotten the same evening when he returned, he arrived with a long wooden tub & two trestles. on which the tub rested. He would fetch the pig which had been hung all the day from a post up the garden lay it in the tub & scrape off all the hair from it then rub in lots of salt all over the body. We were called in for bed long before he had finished his job but we all enjoyed that little time in the back yard watching



him although it was mostly very cold and sometimes bright and moonlight. After this my mother would be very busy making all the good things which come from the pig - sausages, pork pies and scraps which were all good to eat. The bladders would be filled with lard the ham and bacon salted and hung in from the pantry ceiling to be cut at when needed. In the winter evenings when we could not go out to play we played indoor games, Snaps, Happy Families and guessing games. One evening one of my brothers, when playing I Spy said "something beginning with B", this had to be an object in the room, we all had many guesses but had to give in and then he said "binders" we others pounced on him, and then my mother said the game must end and it was time for bed. We also did some useful work the older ones would cut strips of thick cloth to be used for rug

making, my mother had a special tool which she used to pull these small strips through hessian to make the rug. She once got a soldiers red coat and it looked very gay when worked into the rug. My younger brother & I did "pecking", very thin and loose material then the cloth was cut into squares and we would pull in thread from thread and soon would have a big pile. This was used to stuff cushions and no doubt those home made dolls. Christmas at Healing was always a happy time and I seem to remember many snowy ones. On Christmas eve the Willow Warts came to sing carols in aid of the Grimsby Hospital, they sang all round the village and carried lanterns & we watched and listened at the window. We always had some good log fires & good things to eat, sometimes my Granme & Granpa came to stay.

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The stockings which we hung on Christmas we were never a disappointment, and all had lovely ~~present~~ presents in, but in the toe of each was always an orange or an apple, a bright new penny and a sugar mouse or pig.

When I was nearly 11 years old I left Stallingsboro school and started to attend the Welholme Board School at Grimsby where my older brothers & sisters had been attending for a few years. My two friends who lived next door to us and we all travelled back & forth to school by train, together with other folk who went to Grimsby for their daily work. The commuters of that age I suppose. It was a good walk from Grimsby Station to the school and morning lessons had always started when we arrived but we did not get a late mark if we arrived at the same time as bus drivers a teacher who lived at

Healing and Travelled on the same train as us. I thought the school was a very large building it had two floors and a very large playground. A similar building for boys was next to the girls school. I did not stay long in the junior department on the ground floor before I started at the senior school. up a lot of stone steps, the cloakroom seemed large and in it was a wash bowl with one tap (cold water only) and a towel hung by. There were four classrooms the two middle ones were divided by a wooden or glass partition which could be slid back to make one large room, this was done on special occasions and all the pupils could assemble there. I soon began to enjoy the work at this school. One eventful day I do remember when we had just got started afternoon lessons the teacher said that I and my friend (who came

from Healing) had to go to the Headmistress's room, my friend's older sister was also there. The head told us we were to get <sup>all</sup> our coats etc from the cloakroom and leave them in the outhouse and then stay and play outside as we should be going home by the afternoon, a teacher would come and tell us when it was time to leave for the station. We were all very puzzled about this and each started some most unlikely reason for it. We were also told not to come back to school until our parents received notice. When we arrived home we found out that Mr Quickfall my friend's father had been sent away to the isolation hospital suffering from Smallpox. Both our house and theirs were disinfected and we had quite a few weeks at home which I think we enjoyed because I remember the weather was pleasant when Mr

Quincefall returned home, he looked poorly and had a few small scars on his cheeks but was not long before he was back at work. When I reached the highest standard in Welholme School I was made a monitor, and the headmistress wrote to my parents saying I should make a useful pupil teacher, that meant helping with children in the lower classes and being generally useful to the teachers. My parents did not see eye to eye with this and although my mother was very strong on my side my father would not agree and what father said at that time had to be. Reluctantly I left school, having enjoyed the time there, but never became an uncertificated teacher.