My Yorkshire Childhood

W G Waterfield

1961

This edition © J T Waterfield 2008

Two copies of this text were among my father's papers on his death in 2002. The childhood described is of the girl who married my great-uncle, ie one of my grandfather's (Alexander Percival) older brothers. It had been typed up by Winifred's youngest child, Ruth Bell. I have retyped it, hopefully for a wider electronic audience, and to preserve it, as the material is both charming and interesting, not only from a family point of view but also as an example of personal experience unwinding quite rapidly into the longer story of social history.

In my father's own memoirs he wrote:

'Another recorder of her early years was my dear "aunt Winnie" (Winifred Jane née Wardale) who married my father's elder half-brother Edward, known as Odo, briefly a Judge of the High Court in India, and after her husband's early death played a strong part in our lives as children in her beautiful and large house above Dawlish, the Clint, and later, when she had to move for economy, at a smaller house at Chudleigh. She was handsome and vivacious when young, with red hair, but we only saw it grey. She wrote an enchanting account, which we also have, of her up-bringing, in considerable hardship, as the daughter of the incumbent at Bowes, in Teesdale, in a remote corner of Yorkshire bordering on Durham and Westmoreland, and later at Willen in Buckinghamshire in Hertfordshire where she was sent away to live with relatives (Wardales). In India she lived grandly, and retained an air of gracious grandeur in old age.'

From my aunt Mary's memoirs comes this photo, labelled

Mrs Wardale (WGW's mother); Aunt Winnie



It is taken in the conservatory at the Clint.

I have attempted to copy the original text as faithfully as possible, correcting only the occasional typo, though no doubt introducing others. However, in some matters of layout I have consistently amended the original text, largely as a matter of personal preference[*].

JTW – Oxford 2008

[*] Double spaces between '.' and a new sentence removed. Double quotes replaced with single quotes, and vice versa. Some of the longer paragraphs broken up where appropriate.

Introductory note

My mother, Winifred Gane Wardale, was born on September 17, 1875, and died on April 20, 1961. Shortly before she died, while she was staying with us at Lyons, she wrote this account of her childhood in Yorkshire. The account is as she herself wrote it and has not been edited in any way. As anyone who reads it will realise, her faculties at the age of eighty-five were remarkably keen. The only serious disability due to her age that she suffered from was deafness. This indeed was a great trial to her. For someone of her intelligence and wide interests it was particularly painful to be cut off from so many activities and conversations to which, had it been otherwise, she could have contributed so much.

In her long life she had many vicissitudes. As her own story tells, she grew up in an environment of the utmost simplicity, even of poverty. Yet her childhood was far from unhappy. She had an immense capacity for enjoyment and an acute interest in everything going on round about her. These qualities remained with her all her life and helped her to overcome a great many difficulties. At an unusually early age she had already learnt to cope with a wide variety of family troubles.

She was pretty and vivacious and when she grew up she had many admirers. Eventually she became engaged to a man she had known since she was fifteen. Her parents could not afford to send her to school and, when she was thirteen, they gratefully accepted the offer of a distant cousin to educate her in his house. This cousin was at that time Vicar of Datchworth, Hertfordshire. He had several daughters, one of whom had the distinction of being one of the earliest women graduates of Oxford. When she came down from Oxford she not unnaturally wanted to put her qualifications to some useful purpose. The suggestion was made that she might take in hand the education of her young cousin. My mother spent five happy years in the Datchworth household. When she reached the age of eighteen the Vicar offered her a year in France or Germany. As my mother was very musical she chose Germany. She spent her year at a small town near Hanover, where she learnt to speak German exceptionally well, an accomplishment which in later years she never allowed to languish. All her life she read German books and, whenever opportunity offered as it did on several visits which she made to Germany between the wars, spoke the German language with great ease and fluency. Nor did she neglect French. Although she never spoke it fluently she frequently read French books.

Whilst she was at Datchworth, a nephew of her cousin's wife was a frequent visitor during the school holidays. Edward ('Odo') Waterfield was a year younger than my mother. He thought her rather dull at first as she was no good at games, but at the age of sixteen he fell deeply in love with her. He remained so all his life. Seven years later, when he had joined the Indian Civil Service, they were engaged. My father's family were at first less than pleased, and did not take altogether kindly to the idea of his marrying a girl without any money of her own. But this was only their first reaction. Not long before she was due to sail for India her future father-in-law invited her to stay at his home in Devon. My mother was received with great warmth and kindness. From that time onwards her relations with her parents-in-law were very happy and in later years she often stayed at Eastdon.

Two days after my mother arrived in Bombay she and my father were married. She was twenty-seven, he was twenty-six. She was married from the house of the District

Commissioner in the country station where my father was posted. This gave her an early and not altogether pleasant introduction to the strangeness of life in India. As her hostess was showing my mother to her room she suddenly caught hold of her and threw her violently against the wall of the passage. My mother had been on the point of stepping on a krait.

My father and mother were devoted to each other. Owing to the circumstances of their life, however, their marriage was not altogether an easy one. India both fascinated and repelled my mother. From the way she talked and wrote about it, it was clearly a case of what is now commonly called a 'love-hate' relationship. She loved the beautiful scenery, camping – they spent their honeymoon under canvas as they went on tour immediately after the wedding – and she enjoyed part of the social life. She was fascinated, but often horrified, at the lives and customs of the Indians themselves. At times her health suffered. She had one or two painful miscarriages, and it was probably one of these that started an acutely painful form of facial neuritis, *tic douloureux*, from which she suffered intermittently for fifty years. Worst of all were the long separations she had to face when she was in England and her husband in India, for in those days it was thought unwise for English children to remain in India after the age of five or six.

My father died after a long illness at the early age of forty-seven. My mother had ahead of her thirty-five years of widowhood. Her early years of widowhood were sad and difficult from every point of view. I hope I can say with truth that, despite a painful illness, her later years were much less unhappy. In here old age she had, it is true, long spells of loneliness, but she was still able to get an immense amount of enjoyment from life. Many people came to her with their troubles, she was greatly loved and appreciated by friends and relations of all ages – the young loved her very much – and her mind was so alert that it was impossible to treat her as an old lady. She was always interested to meet new people and to read new books. To the very end of her life she was remarkably broad-minded and open to new thoughts and ideas. Less than a year before she died she read *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. She did not, needless to say, always approve of what she read but she never lost her desire to keep in touch with what other people were thinking and writing and doing. She had a very clear understanding of her own ethical standards but, if she judged people by them, she never judged them harshly. Nor were her ethical standards so rigid as to prevent her from falling under the spell of human charm, as was once the case when she met an elderly but entirely charming Hungarian friend of ours who had just married his seventh wife.

Her greatest joy, of course, was in her family and friends and in their children and grandchildren. It was sad that she died only a few weeks before her first two great-grandchildren were born. She had been so much looking forward to their arrival and so happy at the thought of being a great-grandmother.

RB

When in about 1870 my father accepted the living of Bowes in Teesdale, in the corner of Yorkshire bordering on Durham and Westmoreland, it was with every hope of soon being given something better, the patron T. E. Headlam regarding it as merely a stepping-stone. But unfortunately he died suddenly, and his successor had no living in his gift. So my father, like several other vicars of those remote moorland parishes, remained (with one short interval) stranded there for thirty years, in fact until he died. There were tragic instances of men of good birth and education who were not 'tough' enough to bear the strain of loneliness in these remote village, with no intellectual companionship beyond that of the local farmers or the schoolmaster; and some of them deteriorated sadly, especially those with no private means who were struggling to bring up a family. The living of Bowes was only £160 a year (with Vicarage) and though money went much further in those days of course, it seemed wonderful that my mother should be always able to provide us with plenty of good wholesome food, though plain, and with little variety.

My parents never been to the North till they went to Bowes, and at first they found the rough speech and unpolished manners of the villagers very unpleasing. But soon they began to realise that these uncouth Yorkshire folk were loyal and faithful, their friendship once given. Some of those who at first seemed specially ungracious became later our best friends, in particular, the old woman who was my Nannie, when the nurse engaged by my mother for my arrival let her down at the last, and Nannie saved the situation by coming to give my mother better care and nursing than she had had with any of her other babies. Nannie continued to be my nurse to some extent after her return to her cottage, and I spend many happy hours with her, when my parents had to be away for the day. We had tea with buttered toast and boiled eggs, laid by the hens whom I always gave names to, and who walked about the room while we ate. Nannie adored me and I was truly fond of her.

Her old face had little remains of good looks, but she was a remarkably shrewd judge of character, and we used to enjoy taking our guests and South country relations to see her, hearing later how she summed them up! She could neither read nor write and of course spoke broad Yorkshire. She had been rather 'wild' in her youth and though never married, had a grand-son in America, who wrote faithfully and sent her money every year. Her little cottage had mysterious upper rooms, into which I never penetrated, and she slept in the living-room in the usual 'box-bed' which when folded up by day looked like a large wardrobe. Her dress was always a very full skirt with five or six petticoats, and she had four caps on her scanty hair, first one white linen, then of black silk, on top of that one of black net and surmounting all an erection of black lace with jet 'bugles' and for 'best' one adorned with purple bows and other trimmings. After my christening Nannie asked if she might take me round the village to show me to friends who wanted to see me, and when she was undressing me later my mother was dismayed to find a number of silver coins hidden in my clothing, given to me 'for luck'!

One of my earliest memories is the sound of my father's musical voice, coming in through the open window of my nursery, when he met a funeral at the church door. These wonderful words "I am the Resurrection and the Life" seemed even then to be deeply moving.

The Vicarage looked onto the churchyard with only the road between, and onto the ruins of the old Castle on the other side. The Keep still remained in a fair state of preservation, and I played often there, climbing up the broken masonry to heights, which it seemed, regarded later, must have required considerable courage and skill! The sight of those

ruins, especially in moonlight, was more grim and terrifying than the outlook on the churchyard.

Our lighting was of course only oil lamps, and I was nervous of the darkness in the passages at the Vicarage, especially of the stone back-stairs leading to a gloomy back kitchen with a huge stone table, only used on washing days. I often lay in bed with hands clenched, longing for the friendly sound of the 'Mineral' train that left the station every night, only really free from fears when my mother played the Beethoven and Mozart sonatas, as she often did after putting me to bed. I hope it is different now, when parents have a so much greater degree of their children's confidence, but in those days it seemed impossible to express one's fears, even to adoring parents.

My mother had much to learn that was new to her when she came to Bowes, especially how to bake all our bread, as there was no baker in the village and no butcher either, though one came up once a week from Barnard Castle, five miles away. The little shop in the village supplied only the simplest groceries with 'goodies' for the children. We got what else was needed on market day from Barnard Castle, when everyone who possibly could went there, in gig or farm cart, or by train, to enjoy the weekly outing. Luckily my father was a good gardener and provided many vegetables that helped out the bill of fare, besides growing many hardy flowers in the wind-swept borders. The garden was not large but appeared to be so, because of the wonderful view from it of the moors and distant hills. I played there happily, though so much alone, making toys for myself out of all sorts of oddments, <u>real</u> toys being far too expensive. One of the chief pleasures of my very early days was the imaginary companionship of 'husband' Tommy in the form of an old wooden 'possing-staff' the same kind that thumped the dirt from our clothes when every Monday the whole village resounded with the noise of the activities of Washing Day. Nannie always came to help with our wash, giving me 'treats' and tea amongst the drying clothes, with great slices of bread and butter thickly spread with coarse brown sugar. I can't imagine how it was possible, but we <u>did</u> always have a 'servant-lass' of sorts, though often my mother had to put up with a half-wit or a girl of doubtful honesty or virtue. I remember one who stole a cheque from a visitor's cheque book supposing she had only to write her name in order to obtain the money! The wages were then very low, only £12 a year, probably, for such a maid, and good service could not be expected but at least it gave my mother <u>some</u> help, which she needed, being very active in the parish as well as having to look after me.

Our sanitation was of course primitive and all the drinking water had to be fetched from a spring at the other end of the village every day. Water for baths and all domestic use was provided by the rain collected from the roof in butts around the house. We often went in procession to fetch the drinking water, everyone taking some can or bucket in size proportionate to his or her strength. When in a dry season my father needed water for his garden, it had to be secretly 'stolen' from the butts, as my mother so dreaded the failure of the rain water, and having to get the water from the river at some expense, and not good to use as the limestone of the river made it so terribly hard. These and many other[*] discomforts and inconveniences made our life somewhat 'tough' but there was much in it that I always feel was valuable and helpful in experience of later life.

We had <u>real</u> winters in those days with weeks on end of hard frost and snow, the river Greta frozen over, and all the hedges and stone walls obliterated, the whole countryside an

[*] orig 'of the' - JTW

unbroken sheet of pure whiteness. Sometimes a blizzard drove the snow so deeply against the walls of the house that the drifts blocked the doors and letters, milk and other things had to be drawn up in a basket to one of the upper windows. The cold was intense and I remember once when I was ill I was allowed a fire all night in my bedroom but in the morning the water in the jug was still frozen solid. There were wonderful sunsets and we sometimes saw the beautiful Northern Lights, just after the sun went down. We often skated on the frozen reaches of the river and sometimes had glorious days tramping over frozen snow to Lartington where a dear old Monseigneur Witham opened his grounds, to let young people of the neighbourhood enjoy skating on a large lake there. Hand in hand with the friendly young priests we skated joyfully, enjoying the pasties my mother had given us, and the hot tea and coffee provided by our kind old host. We went home by moonlight, pleasantly weary from the good exercise in the biting cold, and more than ready for the lovely Irish stew my mother always gave us then for supper. When there was a specially deep fall of snow the snowplough from Barnard Castle was sent up to cut a passage through the village street, enabling imprisoned villagers to get about again. The local line to Tebay was often blocked, and I remember in later years, when taking a small niece to Bowes, fearing we might have to spend the night in the unheated train, or else have to struggle through the deep snow to some nearby farm or cottage.

One great mercy was that fuel was cheap in those days, especially when it could be brought from the Durham pits in a cart kindly lent by a farmer, really good coal at fifteen shillings a load! We also bought at small cost the sleepers discarded by the railway, huge logs soaked in creosote, which burned magnificently.

My father used to read aloud to us in the long winter evenings. The first books I remember were *The Tower of London* and *Old St. Paul's* by Harrison Ainsworth with terrifying accounts of prisons and executions in the Tower and of the Plague and Great Fire of London. They had good illustrations, steel engravings, pictures that were truly grim and frightening. Later we enjoyed Rider Haggard's books, especially *King Solomon's Mines*, *She*, and *Ayesha* and others, and I went to bed after the reading in a state of mingled terror and delight.

I was always very proud to have been the only Yorkshire-born child in the family, especially because Bowes was the village of 'Dotheboys' described so accurately in *Nicholas Nickleby*. Of course I was early familiar with all of Dickens, and when a small child I knew much of *Nicholas Nickleby* by heart. A rather unpleasing old woman who was fond of me (making special ginger biscuits when I had tea with her) used to tell how she had talks with Dickens at her gate when he came up with 'Boz' from the King's Head at Barnard Castle and got from her all the information he could about the schools and their masters. There were two other such schools in the village but evidently neither gave him the 'copy' he got through enquiries about the Dotheboy's establishment. Squeers (whose name was William Shaw) was actually one of the least cruel of these school-masters, but of course the whole system was a terrible scandal and deserved to be exposed. Many strangers came in the summer to see Dotheboys, and I often had exciting times, trying to help them to see what was possible remaining from those days. I used to dash through the old archway behind the house, past the stone stair leading up to the boys' sleeping quarters, into the courtyard where the famous pump still stood, returning then to report the coast was clear, and waiting in some anxiety in the road till my friends joined me in safety. The house then belonged to relatives of the Shaw family, who bitterly resented the interest of the public and occasionally set the dogs on any intruders of their privacy. When this family died out and the house changed hands again there

was a sale to which dealers came from all over the country and high prices were given for much that could not have been even known when Dickens was writing. When the sale was over my mother lamented to her friend the local auctioneer that these fantastic prices had made it impossible for her to buy anything asking if he could still find some small genuine memento for her. In the end, to her joy he remembered the old kitchen chair he had stood on during the Auction, which he knew had been for many years in the Shaws' kitchen. I have it now and it is a cause of some concern to me as to which of my descendants should have it at my death! The kind auctioneer gave it to my mother for five shillings. I never went up to the boys' attics, but my father did, and reported them as being exactly what Dickens had described. There were many of the boys' names still visible, scribbled on the walls.

A great event in the life of the village was the New Year's 'Knife and Fork Tea', held in the schoolroom and followed by a concert and dance, at which a very moderate charge was made to help pay for the cost of a most substantial Yorkshire tea. There were about ten long tables, presided over by local ladies, whose husbands carved the huge joints of cold roast beef with tongue and home-cured ham. There were also many cakes of every description, and it was truly a wonderful meal! The concert following it was given chiefly by the villagers, special favourites being the Christy minstrels, who with blackened faces sat in a solemn row on the platform, telling 'funny' stories, and asking each other riddles, often with topical allusions, which greatly delighted the audience. After the concert refreshments (remains of the tea) were offered, and then the dance began, to continue till after midnight. We danced the usual polka valse, and schottische, and also quadrilles and of course Sir Roger and various old country dances, 'The Oyster Girl', 'Corcassion Circle', and others but very specially one called 'The Triumph'. The dancers stood in long lines opposite each other, and the top couple pranced down between them, the lady for a time being parted from her own partner, but subsequently rejoining him when he led her up to the top again in 'Triumph', the temporary partner following disconsolately behind, when the next couple took over. The music was usually provided by a mason and his son who played their fiddles entirely by ear and could not read a note of music. I wish I had written down some of those old tunes, and I still remember the one danced to the 'Triumph', a good one, well marked but with much repetition. The floor was rough, with no attempt at polish, and often the dust rose up from it, but we all enjoyed ourselves, dancing with much energy if with little elegance.

Another special occasion was the anniversary of the Wesleyan Chapel, held after Easter. No one seemed to know of what event it <u>was</u> the anniversary, and the date varied according to the convenience of the Chapel Authorities. Its <u>real</u> importance was because it was the occasion when every female member of the congregation appeared in an entirely new outfit, often rather bright and startling, but a source of immense satisfaction to the wearers. I was always invited to view their entry into the chapel from the house of a friend exactly opposite, and had great fun recognising my friends in all the glory of their new attire. I was once allowed to go to the Chapel service and remember a good appeal by the Preacher for funds to provide matting for the cold floor in which he said: "You know, my friends, whether it is in God's House or your own, you can never serve the Lord <u>with cold feet</u>!"

Our lovely river Greta was a source of much pleasure and entertainment, and I spent happy hours paddling in it teaching myself to 'tickle' trout, a fascinating form of sport requiring much patience and some skill. After slowly approaching the trout with hypnotising movements of one's fingers it was necessary to grasp it in the exact middle, otherwise it slipped through one's fingers and it was seen no more. I remember (with some shame) how I once caught a large salmon, getting it into an isolated pool whence it could not escape. The

problem was how to kill it and get it home. At last I managed this by hardening my heart and bashing its head with a stone, then fetching my old pram and wheeling it home wrapped up in a shawl. We ate and enjoyed the salmon but I had to promise never again to indulge in that form of poaching. In the autumn, usually on a Sunday, the salmon returned from the sea, to go to their spawn on the upper river. To see these big silver fish, twisting and gleaming in the sun, whilst they leapt up again and again from the deep pool below the shallow they had to reach, was a truly lovely sight.

A friend of mine, who was a disreputable poacher, used often to bring me plovers' eggs tied up in his red cotton handkerchief, and mushrooms too which were often so plentiful then. Once I found a field full of them, all perfect specimens, and had to take home all I could in an open umbrella, having nothing else in which to carry them. Our village friends too often gave us welcome presents of eggs, butter and cream and home-made cakes and cheese or a piece of spiced pork when killing a pig. Though as a whole they were what we called in Yorkshire 'near' they were generous to the Vicarage.

As may be supposed, my father was often called upon to give help in many ways that were no part of his clerical duties. Sometimes he had to extract an aching tooth, and I have a vivid remembrance of having to hold the hand of a boy badly bitten by a dog (supposed to be mad) whilst my father applied drastic anti-septic treatment, hoping it might suffice till it was possible to get the doctor next day to cauterise the wound. Another time he had to administer strong emetics to a neurotic tailor who after a violent quarrel with his wife had taken poison. My father, though a sad muddler about his own business affairs, was strangely efficient in giving practical help to others. He seemed able to give excellent advice to parishioners in legal difficulties, and a great many had their Wills drawn up by him. He was sometimes successful in persuading them to send their savings to the Bank instead of keeping them in a tin 'canister' on the mantelpiece or in a box under the bed. Few of the younger people applied for a job away from home without coming to the Vicar for some reference or testimonial.

Bowes had an interesting old grammar school, with an old Foundation Scholarship of £60 a year to Pembroke College Cambridge. The Infant and National School were part of the same building, one headmaster of rather superior education being responsible for all three schools, with two or more assistants under him. My father was (as Vicar) Governor of the grammar school and did much to help the village boys who won this scholarship, taking them up to Cambridge himself. All that I remember took Holy Orders, and only one failed to become what one could call a 'gentleman', not one of them ever looking down on his relations in the village, the blacksmith, railway porter and others of no higher birth. My parents used to have these lads to the Vicarage before they left for Cambridge to try to give them some idea of social life and manners.

One winter when I was ten was specially memorable, because a delightful undergraduate from Cambridge came to rooms in the village to study during the vacation as he could not do in his home outside Darlington. Later my husband and I knew him in India when he was in the Educational Service and Head of the College in Dacca. I was his special friend, he always called me 'St. Winifred' and it was he who cured me of the horrid habit of biting my nails, saying nothing, but simply gently holding my hand for a time. No doubt this nail-biting was the fore-runner of the thumb-sucking of to-day, now so very prevalent, but then seldom seen. This kind friend gave me a wonderful treat, hiring a wagonette to take us to Barnard Castle, to hear a performance of the *Messiah* given by the local Choral Society. I shall never forget the thrill of the drive in the frosty starlight, proudly wearing a spray of

flowers our dear 'W.A.J.A' had got for me in Darlington, looking forward with great joy to the music, some of which I knew well. Of course the performance seemed to me to be beyond praise, and it was probably really good, as even in the more remote parts Yorkshire was considered a musical county. The soloists were a local ironmonger, very tall and handsome, with flowing beard like a Viking and a splendid voice and his wife who had a rich contralto voice and their daughter, who had an unusually high clear soprano. I cannot remember who sang the tenor solos. How happy I was going home half asleep, with my head on W.A.J.A.'s shoulder, and those glorious choruses going round in my head all the time!

We had many happy evenings in his rooms, when he read aloud to us after tea, mostly Dickens, but sometimes poetry. He gave me books too, which I think helped me to appreciate much that was worth reading. I used to save up my small amount of pocket money buy more, and I read a lot of the books in the Village Library, some of them good classics, though many were dull and already out of date. I was faintly puzzled by Ouida, and cried over the pathos of *Two Little Wooden Shoes*. No doubt much of what I read was unsuitable for my age, but what might harmed or distressed me seemed somehow to pass me by, entirely unaffected. Until I was twelve when I went to relations in the South and had proper tuition, such instruction as I had was given by any member of the family who had nothing better to do at the moment. I do not know why I was not sent to the grammar school to have the good 'grounding' there that my sister had before she went to the Clergy Daughters School at Brighton. My father was a keen Freemason, and worked very hard after the death of a neighbouring clergyman to get as many as possible of his ten children taken into the Freemason schools which gave such an excellent education almost entirely free. I believe that six out of the ten children were accepted by these schools, all of them doing well there. It was said truly that their father served them best by dying and so enabling his orphan children to benefit by his having been a Freemason in his life.

Our church, though old, was not very impressive, and had no spire or tower, only a turret, with two rather melancholy sounding bells. The Norman arch of the wide chancel gave it some dignity, and in the transept there was a huge sarcophagus and some other stone relics of interest. The font was an old Saxon one, and opposite it was one still older, on a pedestal which had an inscription showing it had originally been a Roman altar. In the old lead safe in the vestry there was an ancient chalice and flagon of pewter, and the registers of births, marriages and deaths kept there went back a long way. I sometimes copied out the entries to send to people who wanted information about their ancestors, and the money they paid me was well earned as it was often extremely difficult to decipher what was written in a faded brown ink on the old parchment, frequently with spelling that added much to the difficulty. At one time the sexton had been a tailor, who used cut out strips from the registers to use as a yard-measure, so there were some sad gaps in the records. The chief attraction in the churchyard was the tombstone at the west end, which recorded the romantic story of Edwin and Emma. This had been immortalised by Mallett, a local poet. The inscription said that Edwin had died suddenly, and 'on hearing his passing bell Emma had also expired, purely through Love, exclaiming "My heart is broke!"' When visiting courting couples read this moving account the conclusion was usually a fervent embrace, watched with much interest by a small girl behind the Vicarage window curtains.

Funerals were occasions of great importance of course, often more enjoyed perhaps even than weddings and always followed by a feast which often cost more than the relatives could well afford. I only remember in very early youth seeing the black silk crinolines with wide hooped skirts which were the correct wear during those days at funerals, but there were

still many ugly and gloomy observances. Only the really wealthy had the hearse drawn by coal-black horses, with waving ostrich plumes on their heads, but even the poorest had attendance 'mutes', in long black cloaks, and the bearers wore black silk sashes round their 'chimney-pot' hats and of course black kid gloves. A day or two before the funeral two women in long black garments, their faces almost hidden by large hoods, were sent round the village to invite people to the funeral feast. They were called 'bidders' and I remember being frightened when I first saw them at our door.

At the extreme west of the parish, almost in Westmoreland, there was an old very lonely farmhouse called 'High Spittal', which had been built on the site of a religious house in the Middle Ages. It was owned by an old man rather fierce in voice and manner, and talking such broad Yorkshire that even we could scarcely understand him. The old grey house seemed rather grim and sinister, even on a summer day, and there was no garden, only a group of sycamores behind the house, through which the wind seemed to be always moving, making the sad sound of a distant sea. There was a story about this place, telling of a young girl left alone while her employers were away for the night, when some robbers attacked the house and tried to force the girl to disclose where the farmer's money was hidden. They attempted to terrorise her by threatening her with the 'Hand of Glory', a withered specimen of a human hand which they declared put a curse on anyone who defied them. This girl must have been clever as well as brave, as she somehow held them off till a traveller chanced to pass by and was able to rescue her. In the confusion she took possession of the robber's 'Hand of Glory' which descended as an heirloom to the present owner, the girl having married his ancestor. It was not difficult to picture such happenings in this desolate spot in those far-off times.

My father was a very strong Conservative and worked very hard at election time, when I too played a small part, making scores of blue rosettes and driving a carriage and pair to take voters to the poll. We went to every Primrose League function within reach. I specially remember one at Streatham Castle, where the Earl and Countess of Strathmore lived quietly, having let their Castle of Glamis for some years. For their station they were poor, but though unable to contribute much in money to the various local good causes they gave much friendly help and sympathy and were greatly beloved and valued. They were of course the grandparents of the Queen Mother, and were a handsome old couple with lovely white hair. At this particular gathering there were several of the younger Bowes-Lyons present, and one young man (I think an uncle of the Queen Mother) noticing that I could not see some side-show properly, held me up to sit on his shoulder till the end of the performance. That sort of personal kindness seemed to be typical of them all as a family.

Our nearest grousemoor, Gilmonby, was let for many years to a family from Blackburn, wealthy owners of cotton mills there. They arrived just before the Twelfth and stayed till late in October, during which time we enjoyed the only social life we had, apart from visiting friends in Darlington or Barnard Castle. I can give no idea of the wonderful kindness and generosity of this family, who gave us so much help and consideration. There were five children, the eldest girl six months younger than myself, who till her death a few years ago was a most faithful friend. Mrs Dugdale, the mother, was very musical and had a good voice, but the daughter, my friend, had one a great deal better, a high pure soprano. They sang a great many songs that I listened to with deep pleasure. It seemed sad that later when my friend studied singing abroad and her master wanted her to train seriously for Grand Opera the idea was considered by her family as entirely out of the question. In those days such a career was thought highly unsuitable for a girl of good family and the strong

Evangelical convictions of the Dugdale family would make it seem a specially dangerous one.

Whilst they were at Gilmonby life became for me a time of great enjoyment. Nearly every day a message came from the Hall to invite me to lunch or tea, or to go with them for a drive in the big wagonette, drawn by the splendid pair of bays that took us so pleasantly for long distances. We had many happy pic-nics, at Rokeby (the scene of Walter Scott's famous poem of that name) and at the lovely 'meeting of the waters' where the river Greta joined the Tees, and many other places of special beauty – Brignal Banks, Egglestone Abbey and Wycliffe, where we paid homage to the good oil painting of John Wycliffe at the Rectory. Sometimes we drove farther afield, to see beautiful old Raby Castle, where the Middle Ages seemed to come alive again and where were heard fantastic tales of the many eccentricities of the old Duchess of Cleveland, who seemed to be very clever but entirely mad. In early October we went to High Force in Middleton-in-Teesdale, where there was a magnificent waterfall, the Tees pouring a great volume of water over the high rocks into deep pools below. I was reminded of it later when I saw the Falls of Gersoppa in India.

When the weather was unfavourable we visited the Bowes Museum in Barnard Castle, where our friend the Curator showed us what was worthy of admiration and what was not. The museum is a huge ugly building, a little like a continental Hotel, and it always seemed to dwarf the little country town. At times it was regarded as a 'white elephant' but I was interested to read recently that there was a renewal of public interest in the museum and its contents. Some of the pictures were really good, though others (some of them painted by the Countess Bowes or her husband) were of little merit. There was some beautiful glass and china that had belonged to Napoleon I remember.

Barnard Castle was a charming old town, with a round building at the centre, the Market Cross, where the country women stood on market days with their baskets containing eggs and butter and other farm produce. The ruins of the old Castle were to be seen, very picturesque perched above the river bank.

To return to the Dugdales, they gave us help of many kinds whilst at the Hall, always grouse after shooting, and huge delicious rabbit pies, which lasted us for many days. In May when the old rooks were shot we had wonderful 'crawpie' made from breasts of the young rooks. I have never tasted it since. The greatest kindness to me personally was when Mrs Dugdale gave me on my birthday a really very good new dress or coat, whatever I specially needed, bought at one of the best London shops, or made by her own dressmaker for me. Only those who have had to be clothed mostly in 'cast-offs' of relations can understand the deep joy and satisfaction I had from this annual present. No doubt it gave my mother almost as much pleasure. We had many good times lunching on the moor with the guns, and when our friends returned to Blackburn with their many servants and masses of luggage in the special train, we felt the winter had begun and we had to settle down to the usual months of loneliness with lack of any real social life.

My first ride in any sort of motor must have been in a steam car belonging to Quaker friends in Darlington who had a cottage in the village. This must have been about 65[*] years ago and my parents looked on it as somewhat of an adventure, and anxiously waited for my return in safety. Through these Quaker friends I got to know many of the Quaker families in

[*] ie c 1896 - JTW

Darlington – Pease, Fry and Backhouse, and deeply admired the really saint-like character of the older people, who so truly expressed their principles in their daily life. No word of unkind criticism was ever spoken in their homes, and I doubt if even a thought that failed in kindness entered into their minds. I liked when I stayed with the Fothergills to go with them to their meetings and soon ceased to find the silence and lack of any ceremonial at all irksome. A wonderful feeling of the peace of God seemed to fill the Meeting-house, where nothing usually happened*, as a service, but the reading of the Bible and the prayer for dismissal. I was astonished when at a Literary Meeting at the house of Jonathan Backhouse, a very prominent Quaker, and a wealthy banker, he took me in to supper himself, looking after me most kindly, though I was the youngest and least important of his guests. But that, as the Fothergills explained, was in the Quaker tradition! They only used the 'thee' and 'thou' in the family or with intimate friends and the Quaker dress had long since become obsolete. But I do remember once seeing a handsome old couple dressed in the original Quaker fashion, he with a wide brimmed hat and she with the lovely bonnet of pale grey beaver with grey woollen gown and cape and deep cuffs of white muslin.

Though I cannot imagine how it could have been financially possible we did have in my early days two holidays at the seaside – one when I was four, at Whitby, and another a few years later at Scarborough. I was too young to take in much of Whitby, and only remember vaguely being shown the graves of our Wardale ancestors on the cliff, which the sea was undermining, so that it looked as if they might ultimately be buried in the sea. I have a vivid memory though of a storm there when some vessel was in danger of being wrecked. My faster insisted on taking me from my bed, wrapping me in a thick rug and carrying me to the beach, where a crowd of people were watching the efforts to launch the life boat and there was much noise and confusion, with rockets coming from the ship and flaring torches everywhere. All the men from the ship were rescued and the life boat got back safely. My father was scolded as my mother so feared he would not be able to protect me from the violent wind, but he would not be dissuaded and said "she will remember this one day!" He was right.

I could recall more of the visit to Scarborough, very specially the really brutal introduction to bathing which was quite usual in those days, and of which I have read a graphic description by fellow-sufferers of what I myself had experienced. These accounts were in no way exaggerated and it seems now incredible that loving parents should have allowed what was really cruel, and in the case of a nervous child, might have proved highly dangerous. Shut up in a heavy wooden hut on wheels we lurched out into deep water, often being bumped against the sides. The hut had no window, only a skylight, and was drawn by a huge carthorse. When we were far enough out, the door at the back opened and an enormous female entered and dragged one down under the waves, utterly disregarding the gasps and screams from the terrified child. These horrid women all looked alike and wore dark blue chemises of serge with wide straw hats tied under the chin. When it was thought one had been sufficiently submerged, one was returned to the hut, sick and shivering and blue with cold. It seems a marvel that after this experience we ever learnt to love the sea and to bathe in it happily.

In those times a famous evangelical preacher held services for young people on the beaches of the seaside towns, with organised games and much singing of Moody and Sankey's hymns. I appreciated the secular part and the singing but failed to respond to the

* orig: 'where nothing happened sometimes...'

real purpose of all this, which was to 'convert' us all and I saw no reason why I should make public confession of my sins.

An event of the year was the horse fair at Brough Hill, the nearest village to us in Westmoreland, where horseflesh of every kind and description was brought to be bought and sold. I always wanted to see it, but was never allowed, as it was a wild rough affair with danger to women and children, as the horses stampeded around with very little control. So I had to be content with descriptions of the Fair from the men of the family. For some days before and after it I watched straggling trails of horses and ponies, with various 'shows' going through the village, and admired the gypsy caravans, the real old-fashioned sort, never seen now; they were huge and drawn by powerful horses, and were gaily painted, with shining brass, and scarlet geraniums in the windows. It was forbidden, of course, but I could not resist asking the owners to let me see the inside of their caravans, which they willingly did. I came out full of envy of the children who had such a truly enchanting place for their home.

The women of the village did a lot of sewing, especially elaborate patch work, and very good quilting, which was done on a large wooden frame. Everyone knitted, the old women going on with their sock or stocking, even when half asleep, the girls knitting as they walked to school, and sometimes the boys also. Many of the older people used an attractive sort of wooden 'dagger', often carved and inscribed. It had a hole in the top, in which they inserted the left needle, which enabled them to knit more quickly, the dagger being stuck into the apron-band. I tried to get some of them when last in Yorkshire, but no one seemed to have any and they are now never used.

I could write much about the various 'characters' in my father's parish, which was ten miles long and four miles broad with a population of about twelve hundred, nearly half of them in scattered farms on the moor. Some of these unusual persons were undoubtedly a little mad. Others (I think chiefly because of their uncanny looks) we believed to be witches though I cannot tell of any evil practices by any of them. It is true that my sister was suddenly cured of a large wart on her pretty hand, but it was done by a normal farmer-wife with a paste of herbs from her garden. I well remember one young man who as regards the affairs of ordinary life was certainly 'not all there'. But he had a marvellous gift for healing sick animals, and farmers from distant dales would send for him to attend their cows when ill. He seemed to be able to soothe the sufferers by laying his hands on them, and making strange sounds as if speaking to them in their own language! He would not treat human beings except occasionally to set a broken bone, which he did with great skill.

Another strange person I remember as rather frightening. She was a sister of the Bousfield who married 'Fanny Squeers' – in real life Mary Shaw, a gentle old lady utterly unlike 'Fanny'! This old Miss Bousfield had a perfect passion for cleanliness and was so house-proud that she laid paths of brown paper to every chair and table to protect the carpet, and every door and cupboard was always wrapped in brown paper to keep the brass bright. She had a really beautiful face like a statue in marble, with large cold eyes of pale blue and she always wore a mutch of fine white muslin exquisitely goffered.

Next to her lived a dear old friend of mine, with whom I often had tea, persuading her to have it in her cosy little kitchen, instead of in the stiff front parlour, where there was little to admire, except a corner cupboard full of most lovely lustre, silver, gilt and bluish pink, all beautiful in shape and design.

One old woman who I believe was perfectly moral was shunned by her neighbours, because she was never known (for some reason) to enter either Church or Chapel and it was even whispered that she was an Atheist!

Of course in those days one very seldom heard of divorce, and amongst the poorer classes it was entirely unknown. We were all deeply horrified and grieved when a nice young woman we had known left her husband for another man, and it took us weeks to recover from the shock of such news.

There were many illegitimate babies in the dales, often born to girls of otherwise excellent character, honest and industrious and working devotedly in their homes, seeming to have all the virtues except chastity. These lapses were regarded tolerantly by their neighbours and were alluded to as "having happened a misfortin". When possible of course my father tried to get the parents to marry but this was often out of the question, as the man was frequently the hired help employed by the farmers for specially busy seasons and his whereabouts were not known. There were at times sinister rumours of the sudden disappearance of these often unwanted babies, with the suspicion that they were smothered and buried in the garden at night. In several cases it was thought that some old grandfather had been hastened to his end after becoming too great a difficulty in the home. My father used to tell about an old man in a very remote farm on the moor who died most inconveniently in the busiest part of hay-time. When my father commented on the unusual interval between his death and the time of his burial, the relations answered: 'There was nowt to do but saltdown the auld 'un till we'd gotten t'hay in.' I remember reading of a similar incident (I think in Ireland) and it was probably not unusual in those remote places where life was often grim and hard, with little real civilisation.

I think, looking back, that the really great hardship of our life at Bowes was the difficulty and delay in getting the doctor. Of course there was no chemist in the village, nor at that time any kind of District Nurse. The only telephone was at the station, connecting it with stations above and below the line, and could only be used by private persons as a great favour and in dire emergency. Sad things happened in the village, which might well have been prevented, if the doctor had been more frequently in touch with us. One event that greatly distressed my parents was the death of a very handsome girl, the 'village belle' who had a good voice and was a favourite performer at our concerts. She had very bright red cheeks, which she considered 'vulgar', longing for a pale complexion to give a more 'refined' appearance. She persisted in living on raw rice and other unwholesome food, to reduce her high colour. Her mother remonstrated, and so did my own mother but no one could convince here of her folly. When at last the doctor was called in it was too late, and she died of acute anaemia.

There was of course a great deal of toothache amongst the villagers, as little care was given to children's teeth and many had never seen a dentist. There were a few cases of consumption and many of goitre amongst the women, which we thought was probably caused by the hardness of the drinking water. We had our own simple remedies of course. When I had a bad chilblain on my toe, Nannie made me hop around the garden several times barefoot in the snow. Next day there was no sign of the chilblain and it never came again. My mother thought it proper to give me (in the Squeers tradition) a large spoonful of brimstone and treacle every day through the Spring. I used to go to her room early for it, and for some time succeeded in stowing it unswallowed in the cheek away from her, to be ejected as soon as I

left her. But one sad day I absently-minded put it in the cheek nearest her when of course she saw the bulge, and after that there was no escape. The sulphur had a disgusting taste, nearly as vile as the gritty greyish Gregory powder with which most children were dosed in those times. Though I lament much that I have seen pass from life, I rejoice that in almost every way it is so much better and happier for children!

It added much to the attractive look of the village street that almost every window showed such lovely plants in pots – geraniums and pelargoniums in every shade of red and pink, and bronze and yellow calceolaria and always the dear little yellow musk whose most delicious scent has for so long most mysteriously and sadly disappeared. Possibly these fine blooms were the result, not only of much care, but also of complete absence of draught, as the windows were never opened except once a year for Spring cleaning.

When I was seven I was invited to take part in the annual 'Rushbearing' at Musgrave and Warcop in Westmoreland. This was an interesting survival of medieval times, when the children collected rushes for the floor of the Church. Later it was kept up by a special service in the old Church, to which girls and boys walked in procession, the girls in white dresses with high medieval crowns of flowers on their heads, and the boys with white wands decorated with cottage flowers. There was an endowment which provided tea for the children and a good story book as a memento of the occasion. I was glad to hear from the Vicar of Warcop recently that this pretty little festival is still kept up, though it had lapsed during the war years. From a photo the Vicar sent me I noticed the girls now wear a much more modernised crown, not the high medieval shape I wore, which though not too comfortable was so much more picturesque. The expedition to Warcop was specially memorable because I nearly fell out onto the line on the way there, as the door of the railway carriage was not fastened and I was leaning against it. Fortunately my sister was near and was able to catch hold of my dress and drag me to safety. But it must have been a near thing, and there were cinders from the track in my hair.

On occasion my mother was inspired to make some article of clothing that was too original to be worn by me in comfort. Very specially I remember her being attracted by a description in some woman's magazine of a hat. It was made with a wide brim of cardboard, covered with ordinary Turkish towelling the kind used for bath towels, the whole adorned by large beads. With bitter resentment I wore this erection at morning service, sitting in the chancel, exposed to the wonder and scorn that I well knew such unusual headgear would arouse in the minds of my friends, the village children. But it was too much for me and after that one appearance I firmly refused ever to wear it again.

My little mother was a woman of great energy and enterprise, with wonderful courage, both moral and physical. Once when the outside of the Vicarage badly needed repainting (money for it of course being unobtainable) she did it herself most successfully, borrowing ladders and brushes from the village carpenter who also gave her help and advice about the work. She was at times hard on others, but far harder on herself, living up always to her precept 'There is nothing you cannot do if you ought to do it!' For some months before I was to go out to India to be married, she had suffered great pain from a cyst, especially when playing the organ every Sunday which she nevertheless persisted in doing. Everyone tried hard to persuade her to go to the Hospital in Newcastle to have it removed, but it was only when I declared I would not go to India and be married till I had seen it properly treated that she consented to go. It happened that when she was already on the operating table, all bound up in much discomfort for the operation, a man was brought in with a very badly injured leg,

so terribly crushed that if it was not seen to immediately the leg might have to be amputated. The surgeon asked my mother if she could wait till he had treated this accident, and of course she cheerfully agreed, begging him not to think of her at all. Her first words on coming out of the anaesthetic afterwards were, “How is that poor man? Could you save his leg?” We have a great deal to thank her for, perhaps most of all for the example she gave us of genuine thankfulness for the blessings of our life, the healthy bracing air, all the beauty of the countryside, and the human interest of the village life, which we shared in so fully. Everything would have been so much worse for us if she had lost courage and had fretted at the loss of all the comfort and security of her life at home, so different from her life as the wife of a poor parson.

There was sometimes a financial crisis in our affairs, with complete failure to balance the budget. One such occasion was when there was a Bill of Sale on the furniture to meet some special debt. On the day when the furniture was to be removed, we were sent to pic-nic on the moor, which we did quite happily, returning at night to find a lot of our ordinary furnishing taken away, and my mother busy converting packing-cases and odds and ends to replace it. Kind village friends lent us what we really needed at once, and the situation seemed in some ways more amusing than depressing. My mother had taken many of her old family treasures, before the sale took place, to hide them in the organ in the Church, especially, I remember, a huge China jar. After some weeks our furniture seemed either to come back or somehow to be replaced, what was lent by the village was gratefully returned, and my mother brought back her treasures from the sojourn among the organ pipes and life at the Vicarage went on much as before.

Remembering the money shortage, I recall a rare and beautiful character, the owner of the best draper’s shop in ‘Barney’, where we were obliged at times to get the materials and clothing that were really necessary. This Mr. Garbutt showed us always the greatest kindness and consideration, attending to us personally, as if we were his best customers instead of the dead loss we must have been, being for years in his debt. His business was very flourishing but I think its success was due more to the friendly interest he took in his customers’ purchases than to the undoubtedly good value of what he sold, the country people from long distances coming to buy at his shop. I wish I could have heard him when he preached at his local chapel, for I think he was truly one of the pure in heart who see God. I was very sad to find when I returned from India that he was dead and I could not thank him for those years of wonderful kindness and delicate consideration.

Our chief friends in the town were the Scotch doctors and their young assistants, cheery fellows from Edinburgh, who told us interesting tales of Scottish life, and through whom we got to know and appreciate the ‘kail-yard’ literature just then coming into fashion. In order to enjoy an evening party we had to stay the night or else walk five miles back to Bowes, as the last train going west left ‘Barney’ before 6 p.m. Our own doctor was a very attractive man in early middle age, who had married a sweet countrywoman, with a charming Scots accent, pretty too with her blue eyes and pink cheeks and abundant white hair, but so very much older that strangers invariably supposed she was his mother. I never heard any explanation of what seemed in age such a very unsuitable marriage.

In Brigate, the oldest part of the town, there was an old ruffian who when he saw us pass, walking from or to Bowes, would point to us, calling to his neighbours, “Them’s my kinsfolk”. He said his name was spelt the same as ours, but we never found out if this was really true.

The village of Bowes consisted of one long street with houses on both sides. At the bottom after the turning from the station was one of the other former schools, a tall grey stone house, now lived in by a farmer and his family. A little way up the street on the right was the more important on the two inns, the 'Unicorn' which must have seen lively times when the mail coaches to and from the West changed horses there. The large cobbled courtyard seemed forsaken, and was only filled when the Agricultural Show was held. The house itself must have been old, as all the passages and public rooms were dark with low ceilings and uneven floors. Sometimes friends from Darlington came to spend the week-end there and in the summer would invite me to breakfast in the charming little private sitting-room, panelled with oak. Further up on the left was the Church, with the turnings to the Castle and the Vicarage, and the long street ending in 'Dotheboys', and a turning up to the Clint which is the same as 'cleve' in the South West. Rather sentimentally we called our house in Dawlish 'The Clint' because we had become engaged there. It was a much-loved spot with a good view of the village and the country round.

Probably I am prejudiced but I do think that the percentage of good looks in the Yorkshire dales was high, possibly because of intermarriage with Scandinavian races in the past. One family I specially admired, father, mother, five daughters and a son, all with the most glorious bright hair, more the real Titian colour than red. They had good features too and fine figures. Another good-looking family was that of the gamekeeper on Scargill Moor. We thought he might have a strain of good gypsy blood in him, as he had not only that type of features but the dignity that one saw sometimes in people descended from the true gypsy families. The wife and children were all good-looking too, and had delightful manners. The second daughter had hoped when a child that she might come to me as 'lady's maid' and she actually came to me some years after I married as children's maid and gave us the most devoted help till she married during the First World War. No words can say how I missed her, after nearly ten years of her wonderful help. She has a tall handsome son, doing well now as a schoolmaster, whom I am proud to have as my godson.

When I was a child the Deceased Wife's Sister's Bill was not yet passed, and I remember a case where the woman married her brother-in-law as it seemed the best way in which she could bring up her dead sister's children. The village looked on them with disapproval, but they were specially good people, and I am glad to remember that my father still welcomed them to Church and did not refuse them the Sacrament.

Like most children, before motors and aeroplanes made life so much more exciting, we were greatly interested in anything to do with trains. A friend of my brother's was the signalman and he and I were often in the signal box, allowed to pull back the levers to signal approaching trains. Between us and Barnard Castle there was a high viaduct, Deepdale, which crossed over a wide deeply wooded valley, with the Tees in its rocky bed far below. This Deepdale viaduct looked very frail and had only slender iron supports so it seemed possible that it might not be able to bear the heavy weight of the mineral trains, their trucks loaded with coal from the pits or stone from the quarries. It was supposed to be tested every day to make sure it was still safe. As a child I always felt a thrill of fear when passing along it very slowly in the train, not able to enjoy the beauty of the valley for thinking we might be dashed down to the river so far beneath!

Our Southern friends often thought Bowes looked bleak and bare, and had no obvious beauty in the landscape. But we knew of so many lovely hidden places, little ghills, with

becks rippling down to the river and sheltered dells with over-hanging rowans and a carpet of blackberries, moonwort, and lovely water forget-me-not. I always loved the bare outlines against the sky and to this day I am inclined to regret it, when I see trees, however beautiful, on a hill-top.

My father had hard work to get the people in the more distant farms to bring their babies to the Church to be christened, as they always put if off till a convenient time. Then, when a baby had a touch of croup or some such ailment, they got into a panic and came for him to go out and baptise the child, sometimes in the midst of a deep snowstorm, or in the middle of the night. We pitied him having to bestride a carthorse or some old nag, which the farmer brought to convey him to the farm.

There was a little corn and not much oats or barley grown in the parish and hay was the only really important crop. I loved the hay-time and took part in all that went on then in the fields near our house having tea with the hay-makers, and often working with them, as indeed we all did, when the weather looked threatening and hay had to be got in quickly.

The long lines of hay-cocks were cleared by what was called a ‘sweep’, long since no doubt a thing of the past! It was like a heavy wooden gate, but with the bars upright, and there was a wide ledge at the bottom on which the driver stood. There was a hinged ‘wing’ on each side, and the horse (often a pair) was driven so that the heaps of hay were gathered between the wings and so taken to the rick. Frequently the hay got jammed under the ledge, and then the driver and any passenger beside him had to make a quick leap backwards as the ‘gate’ fell backwards and might easily cause a broken leg. This was exciting, and I was such a passenger whenever it was possible. On the steep uplands the hay was carried in sledges; to ride on them was also very good fun.

I often watched the butter and cheese being made, though I could never turn the heavy wooden churns then used. The rooms where the cheeses were kept were marvellously clean and fresh. The cheeses were stacked on stands and carefully turned each day. We liked to test them for the blue streaks which made them a little like Stilton cheese though of course not nearly so rich. Large chunks of them with a thick slice of good Yule cake were sent me at New Year.

Between the age of 8 and 12 I paid some very pleasant visits, staying happily with the Dugdales at their home in Blackburn. And my sister and I stayed also with other friends who rented a moor near Bowes. They were kind but were not our friends in the way that the Dugdale family were. One of the daughters though was interested in my voice and gave me singing lessons which I enjoyed. My sister and I often went to stay at Cockerton Hall, where our dear W.A.J.A. lived. His parents were extremely kind to us and so were all the family, three brothers and a very nice sister. Later, when my sister was married, I used to stay frequently with the Fothergills in Darlington, sometimes bicycling the eighteen miles there, spending the night for some special performance of a play or good concert. When I was sixteen, I had an attack of pleurisy at first very painful, but soon becoming rather pleasant as it brought a very amusing Scots doctor often to see me, and I had an astonishing number of kind presents from various friends, including a large case of Jaffa oranges from the Dugdales. The cousins at Datchworth thought I should go away for a change after the pleurisy, and my sister Maude too, as she had nursed me devotedly. I was allowed to choose where we should spend a fortnight and would hear of no place but Edinburgh, a really most unsuitable choice in the cold winds that prevailed there in February. However the cold did not seem to affect us

and we had a very happy and most interesting time. Through our friend Chris Fothergill we had introductions to the most attractive society there, and every one was most kind, helping us to get the utmost out of our fortnight and to see and do all that could be done with only little expense. The best society in Edinburgh in those days was far from rich and those kind people understood the need for economy in our sight-seeing.

We had special kindness from the Armours who were Chris Fothergill's people, a sweet Scots saint of a mother, a very clever sister, who had written and translated several books, and an extremely pretty younger sister, who was a nurse. The elder sister gave very pleasant informal evening parties to which writers and artists and the more intellectual of the circle came. It was not unusual for dear old Mrs. Armour to make a request in the middle of a party for 'a word of prayer'. This of course was willingly agreed to and it was something worth remembering – the sight of those sophisticated people kneeling down, without a smile or the least sign of embarrassment, whilst Mrs. Armour prayed aloud for their and her own souls' salvation. Perhaps it was something in the natural piety of the Scots character that made this possible. A cousin of the Armours was studying medicine in Edinburgh and he took us out whenever he could escape from a lecture, exploring the old parts of Edinburgh and going out to Leith and the Firth of Forth, climbing up Arthur's Seat in deep snow, all such good fun. I have always loved Edinburgh specially since that happy visit.

Another visit that I paid about this time, when I was 17, was to Watford to stay with my father's younger brother and his wife. My uncle was a schoolmaster, and taught at a large orphanage, he was very musical and played the organ at the school services. Their daughter was very worthy but rather dull, and their son Herbert strikingly handsome and very clever. Aunt Ellen was very pious but her piety was not the gentle kind like Mrs. Armour's. She used to pray for us as a family and was tactless enough to tell us so. She objected to a very innocent friendship I had with a young Chinese who was staying as a paying guest with some neighbours of ours; he had been sent to England by his Government to study engineering in England. Herbert and his sister and the young Chinese and I used to go about together but Aunt Ellen became alarmed at the thought that his Government might object to the friendship and she warned me off. Of course I then stopped seeing him. Herbert and I had a mild romance. The cat had to be found every evening and it could usually be induced to go down the cellar steps which were too narrow for Aunt Ellen, who was built on Juno-esque lines. So Herbert and I would pursue it and then sit on the steps and talk. I think I deserved a little amusement after my good behaviour over my Chinese friend.

To return to Bowes. A special friend of mine was an elderly woman, married but with no children, and she kept me in stockings, knitting me all I needed. She had a great love for pansies and her little front garden was a beautiful sight in the spring with huge blooms of every colour. She had been housekeeper to the Duke of Fife and had married his head gamekeeper. Her parlour was hung with portraits of the Fife family, and on the Duke's birthday I always went to have a very special tea with her. When the Duke married the Princess Louise, Edward VII's daughter, her pride and delight knew no bounds and she had the charming impulse to bestow £5 on me to celebrate the occasion! Needless to say, I had never had so much money in my life and was quite bewildered as to how to spend it!

When I was about 8 my mother became convinced that cold baths all the year around was the best way to harden a child, so I was made to have a bath every morning in water straight from the water butt, with slivers of ice in it. Mercifully after a few days my father got

to know of it (hearing I suppose my loud protestations) and for once put his foot down and that was the end of my cold baths.

In many ways I think I had an unusually satisfactory childhood as I was always allowed any sort of 'ploy' that I fancied, unless it were actually dangerous. At one time I lived for nearly a week in a laburnum tree in the garden, coming into the house only to sleep at night. My kind mother made me suitable meals, not too difficult to eat in such conditions, which I drew up in a covered basket. Books, writing and sewing materials were hung around in bags in the tree. Of course playing at 'house' was a very favourite form of amusement and I specially liked playing in the fields below the Vicarage, where there were remains of the Roman encampment on part of which the Castle had been built, wondering if little Roman girls had played there like me all those years ago. My father found several Roman coins and pieces of pottery in the garden, which he sent to the British Museum. At intervals we had visits from Archaeological Societies who walked over the fields discoursing learnedly. It seemed a pity that there was no money forthcoming for the cost of further excavation.

My mother had one of the little girls from the village to tea occasionally and let me go to her home to tea in return. I was always friendly with them, but confess I found them rather dull and thought their games rough and a little stupid, entirely lacking in imagination. When left alone in the chancel whilst my father was in the pulpit and my mother at the organ at the west end I played a game which greatly intrigued some friends of mine in the congregation, till at last they guessed what it was. I pretended all the prayer and hymn books were loaves of bread and had to be slapped in and out of tins, with my handkerchief as the oven cloth, sometimes shaking a burnt hand and always slamming the oven door hard.

Later on the pew opposite ours was occupied by a specially kind old friend, the mother of one of the nicest boys who won the scholarship to Cambridge. It had always been her ambition to have a seat in the chancel, which she called the 'parlour'. One summer she had two little granddaughters to stay with her and she sat proudly between them in her pew in the parlour. I can say truthfully that I very seldom envied other little girls their nice clothes and (except when really too conspicuous) I wore cheerfully what seemed to be my portion. But for some reason I terribly envied these little girls their Sunday bonnets of white straw trimmed with yards of shining satin ribbon, one pink and one pale blue. Years later when I met them at Cheltenham where their brother (George Hedley) was Science Master at the College, I told them how I had longed for a bonnet like theirs. Their old Granny was a shrewd Yorkshirewoman telling her grandson to whistle all the time so that she would know he was picking and not eating the fruit.

I wonder if those farmhouse kitchens I loved in my youth have changed with so much that has become different since then. They were pleasant, home-like places then with real *gemutlichkeit*. The floors were of stone flags generally scoured with Bathlick or whitening and there were always thick rugs made of pieces of cloth prodded into Hessian, often in handsome patterns. From the rafters hung hams and sides of bacon and home-made sausages. A grandfather clock stood in the corner, usually kept half an hour fast, and a warming pan and other brass and copper ornaments hung on the walls. There would be a dresser of course, sometimes 'cloamrack' with light rail across to keep the plates safe. And by the hearth there was a settle – sometimes one on each side – of oak or elm with a high back to keep out the draughts. Fender and fittings of the open Glendenning grate were of highly polished steel, reflecting the glow from the fire which was kept going even in summer, the evenings then being so cool that a fire was welcome. On one side of the grate was the boiler for hot water

and on the other the oven. Above the fire was a large steel hook from which depended the girdle, a round sheet of thick iron quite flat. As soon as she saw us in the distance our hostess would begin to make her lovely hot girdle cakes. These farmers' wives never grudged money for really good tea and I have been in many houses where the tea was of nothing like such an excellent flavour.

Memories of many little incidents come back to me as I write. One was when I was nearly four. Like most children I suppose at one time I had a sudden longing to see what there was behind the horizon and determined to go myself to find out. So I set out one morning with a few special treasures in my beloved little wheel-barrow. But on the way I thought of Nannie's good apple-cake that would be nice to take on my journey, so I called in on her leaving my barrow at the gate. Meanwhile there was a great hue and cry at the Vicarage when it was found that I had left the garden. The boys from the Grammar School were given a holiday so that they might search the countryside and no doubt they wished I would run away once a week. Then someone suggested I might have to gone to Nannie, and my father hurried to her cottage, of course seeing the betraying wheel-barrow outside. When I heard steps outside I popped myself, stool and all under Nannie's wide skirts and was completely hidden. No doubt Nannie and my father exchanged winks and nods, and when he began a sad tale of all the concern about me I popped out again, crying "Daddy don't be sad, I'm here!"

The Rector of the next parish had nine children and his Rectory was not large but he and his wife were enterprising and they supplemented their income by having young men of the aristocracy for the Rector to coach for exams. One I remember was Arthur Wellesley, afterwards Duke of Wellington. My parents used to go there to help with village concerts and rather than leave me alone with the maid (probably specially unreliable) they took me with them. The young men petted and made much of me, of course, but I found the aristocracy dull and much preferred the son of a neighbouring parson who was good-looking and amusing.

When I was seventeen I was sent to Germany for a year and after my return was very much occupied, helping my sister with her three small children and also helping with her husband who had become blind. When she brought the children to Bowes I acted as nurse and had little leisure, with all that had to be done for the three children. Once when I was heating the baby's food the methylated spirit stove blew up in my face, and when I took my hands away eyebrows, eyelashes and much of the skin of my face came too! My eyes were so sore that we feared there might be some permanent injury and it was a long anxious night till at dawn my father walked in to Barnard Castle to fetch the doctor. We were much relieved to hear the sight would not be injured, that in two or three months everything would grow again and I should look the same as before.

My mother was always ready to offer tea to any strangers who came for the church key or to ask how to get into the Castle, and sometimes she entertained angels unawares, as they proved to be authors or journalists and sent us later a magazine with an interesting account of Bowes and mention of the hospitality of the Vicarage, often sending a book for me too.

A few years ago I noticed that a vicar had been appointed to Bowes who spelt his name Wardle, and I wrote to ask him if he were by any chance connected with our branch of the family, mentioning our ancestor Sir John de Weardale who was in the train of the Earl of Brancepeth and went with him to Agincourt, afterwards giving grants of land to Durham

Cathedral. Mr. Wardle replied that he must indeed be a distant cousin, as he well remembered his father's telling him of this ancestor, and of his gifts to Durham Cathedral.

Of course my engagement was a matter of great interest to all in the village, though it was considered a matter for regret that I should marry a Southerner instead of a proper Yorkshire lad, but they approved of my choice on the whole. My old friend who had the lustre never ceased telling how he insisted on carrying her heavy basket up the village to her house. The woman who did his laundry said it was easy to see "he was a perfect gentleman as he wore a clean white shirt every day".

In the later years before I married we saw a great deal of the Rector of Rokeby, a charming young-elderly widower, who had great literary taste and seemed wasted in that little village as regards his intellectual gifts, He often walked over the moor to see us, and I sometimes rode to his Rectory in the long summer evenings, on the cob lent me by a farmer so that at least I could learn to stick on and even to trot after a fashion, in preparation for the riding I should have in India. He would walk back beside me, talking most interestingly of books and especially poetry that we had read together. He wrote me many delightful letters and was altogether a most dear and valued friend.

At that time money, though always very scarce, seemed slightly easier to come by, and by hook or by crook it was possible for me to collect enough for a modest outfit for India. Every article had to be shown to my friends in the village, and because they were so disappointed that Odo could not marry me from my home I felt I must give them all that was possible in sharing interest in the preparations, even deciding to have a full list of the wedding presents in the local paper, which we felt was rather vulgar, but we knew it would be a great pleasure to the village to see mention of their own and their neighbours' presents in print. When the cable arrived telling of our marriage two days after I landed in Bombay the two church bells were put in motion and rang all day to tell everyone I was really married!

In this little account, without order or sequence, I have left out a great deal that would have made it more interesting but which I feel it is not fitting to record, even in what is written for the family only. I am the last of the contemporary relations and I feel it is best that much that is sad and painful and too personal to the family should be forgotten and die with me. But I dare hope that what I have remembered and written down may give my grandchildren some idea of what my life was like in that little moorland parish so long ago. Though I was so happy touring in the Indian jungle I often longed for the cool bracing air of my native place, especially as the hot weather approached with the thermometer at 110 in tents.

Whilst I can remember anything at all, Bowes will be dear to me, and I shall be thankful always for so much that was good in my youth there.

Lyons, January 1961