

The Onlooker

Memoirs of Alice Ascoli 1884-1965

Synopsis

Introduction

- 1 The Parents
- 2 Elizabeth – the attractive one
- 3 Walter – the intellectual one
- 4 Edith – the afflicted one
- 5 Herbert – the black sheep
- 6 The Twins – including the irrepressible one
- 7 Arthur – the backward boy
- 8 Percy – the delicate one
- 9 The Onlooker herself

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but in exchange for your
'enthusiastic resolve and imagination'
in facing unsolved world problems.

Introduction

The world has changed considerably in the last century possibly more than in any other similar length of time.

I am writing in the year 1962 and hope that by telling the story of my family as they grew up and lived out their lives that it may help those of the present day to know something of their heritage.

I should like them to understand some of the difficulties we had to face - the poverty and drudgery that existed among the working classes - yet with what a brave face before the world - to keep respectable was one of the chief aims in life. In the rows and rows of drab looking houses lived many heroes and heroines rearing large families of children who went forth each morning clothed tidily and warmly to their schools where, herded in large classes, they worked to be well educated in order to rise in the world, as their parents told them they should. For their children to get on in life was the ambition of myriads of these parents, and the achievements of some of them was tremendous.

Yet in each home, which was a self-contained unit, were many enjoyments - no extravagant toys - no radio or television. They made their own amusements and games with parents in the evening or musical evenings with friends.

Happy faces round the fire in winter listening to stories - or having guessing games, the older ones doing their home work often in the same room as romping little ones. In the summer, no holidays by the sea. If a family was fortunate enough to have relatives - in the country - the children might be invited but often in the summer big sister would take the smaller ones to parks or forests - always on foot for transport was a luxury, but these visits were the highlights in the lives of children.

It is my fervent hope that this generation determine that many things in the world their ancestors knew shall never return and the legacies we have left them of struggles unconquered, and problems unsolved, they may realise are "the birth pangs of a new age" (Mark 13 New Testament) and in enthusiastic resolve and imagination seek their solution.

So if these memoirs are finished in time - for age and fading faculties are beginning to tell - I leave my executors to deal with them as they think best.

1 The Parents

It has been said, not just once or twice but many times, that the union of Jewish and English parents produce a progeny unsurpassed in health, intellect and righteousness. For our family I am claiming none of these things for we were ordinary people living ordinary lives, under very ordinary circumstances, in the late Victorian era.

My mother came from hard working labouring stock. Most of them, as far as I know, ignorant and uneducated. To my mother's credit be it known that she, out of a large family, insisted on going to the local church school where she received a smattering of education which lifted her out of the pitiful slum of dirt and ignorance into which the rest of the family grew. She became an excellent dressmaker and cook and met my father, I believe, at a mission in the East End where they both worked. She was born in 1851 long before the Forster Education Act (1870) gave access to Elementary schools.

My father was born into quite a different background. His parents were Jewish and my father was the eldest of a large family and was sent to the Merchant Taylor's School and so, for the first few years of his life at any rate, was well taught, loved his lessons and showed an intellect well up to standard for his age. But, alas, his father died when the son was only twelve years of age. There was a large family of boys and girls in various stages of development and, apparently, very little provision left for them.

We know that he came of a wealthy family, noted in England and the continent for their learning and business ability, but apparently his father had offended in some way and had possibly become an outcast. His mother lived with us for many years, and was a typical Jewish matriarch, but of the cause of the rift never a word passed her lips and, if my father knew, he also was silent on the subject.

So at twelve years of age, ill-equipped in many ways, my father left school and was sent to work. What he did in the early days we never knew and I believe my mother heard nothing of his early life except that he accepted the Christian religion and so was cast off by his nation as well as his family.

Of their early married life there exists almost as much secrecy, no doubt because both of them wanted to blot out the memory of the poverty and sickness which constituted the history of those early years. Moreover, they wanted to keep it entirely from us as children. We did hear whispers of it from time to time however. During the first year or two the terrors of unemployment faced them and in desperation, as a child was on the way, my father joined the army. Then, sleeping out in a swamped field night after night caused acute rheumatism and he was invalided out. The first child, a girl, was born before this tragedy happened. She was a bright, healthy child with a decided will of her own, equalling in every way children which are born today with all the pre-natal care bestowed upon them by the welfare state.

The second one was not quite so fortunate. He followed, just eighteen months after the first, when the ravages of rheumatic fever had done their worst and the resultant unemployment followed. We understand it was at this time my father took on odd jobs of house decorating, possibly the trade to which he had been apprenticed at twelve years of age.

By this time I came on the scene, early in 1884, when they had been married nine and a half years and he was settled as Assistant Librarian at the Guildhall Library which provided a lucrative employment according to the standards of that time.

The early illness had left its mark and I remember periods of sickness and absence from business recurring again and again until, at last, he was obliged to retire about the year 1887 on a small, and altogether inadequate, pension and his subsequent death in October 1901.

It seems almost impossible to imagine the effect of all this on my mother. I remember her, in those early days of my life, as a delicate woman, always busy all day on the housework and cooking and on the sewing machine in the evening, making clothes for herself and her numerous family which reached the formidable number of nine, the last one being born in 1892. Yet she held herself proudly, and her clothes always became her, so that no-one ever imagined there was lack of the necessities of life existing in our household. We were a healthy looking bunch for the most part, looked up to by the neighbours and popular among our fellows, although we were not allowed to mix very much.

My father being of Jewish blood, and having been converted to the Christian church, had joined the Baptist community and ruled his household according to the religious customs of those days. This meant a strictness and watchfulness on his part for any misdemeanours, and subsequent punishments were dealt out according to his idea of the wrongness of the deed. I hope to show in the consequent records the effect this had on the various characters of the different children. On the other hand, my mother was gentle towards us and many a time kept quiet, when we had done wrong or argued against the punishment meted out to us when we were discovered.

Neither of them indulged in any show of affection towards us. Evidently it was considered wrong and harmful to our characters yet I can personally remember the softening of the voices, or both their parts, on occasions when it seemed they wished to show they loved us, but dared not proclaim it openly. I cannot remember, either, any word of praise being given to any one of us but plenty of reproof when they deemed it necessary. We were of course sent to Sunday School and to church services and had family prayers on Sunday mornings before we left the breakfast table. [elaborate]

My father was an ardent liberal in politics and often canvassed for the various candidates especially for the Parliamentary Elections. On one occasion the famous (or infamous) Horatio Bottomley put up for our division as a liberal and my father said he would not work for him or vote for him either. The candidate himself must have got wind of this for he personally visited my father and with his silver tongue got his promise of a vote but no more. He told us, when he had gone, how he looked around the room on entering and his eye fell on the portrait of Gladstone, "Ah," he murmured in his honey tones, "the Grand old Man." Then, turning, he saw the portrait of Chas. H. Spurgeon. "Ah," he said in slightly louder voice, "another Grand old Man." And, with that introduction, sat down and faced my father with the fatuous smile still on his face.

He had to endure yet another crisis in politics when the Boer War broke out in 1899. He, in conjunction with a number of liberals, felt the war to be wrong, and unnecessary, and was not afraid to express his opinion. The minister of the church he attended, and where he was a deacon, preached a sermon on the necessity of everyone helping the war effort in every way possible. My father spoke about this to him and he was furious and forbade him serving the elements at the Communion Service.

He was known, henceforth, throughout the neighbourhood as a pro-Boer and we had to endure a good deal of ostracism on the part of school friends and when the persecution of people so designated commenced we spent many an evening indoors expecting every minute stones to be thrown through our windows or to be molested in the streets. It must have been due to the high esteem in which my father was held in the place, and a certain amount of sympathy, possibly accorded to him because of his infirmity, but we were all unharmed, though many nearby were set upon and hurt and their property damaged. Before that war was over he had died, in October 1901, at the age of fifty-three.

My mother lived on for many years and, as we all grew and became independent, life became easier for her and she was able to make use of her talents in many ways. Of course the first few years after my father's death had been a terrific struggle for us all but we won through and my mother lived to be nearly seventy-eight. She was quite strong, healthy and upright until she was stricken down in one of the influenza epidemics so frequent in those days - was ill for just one week, then died in her sleep.

2 Elizabeth - the attractive one

The eldest was a girl, bonny and intelligent, and extremely attractive - how proud my parents were of her. My mother's clever fingers added to the attraction and she was the admiration of many mothers as she was taken out in her perambulator. This was a queer contraption with three wheels with a seat for one only padded to make it easy for a child to sit in and, if I remember rightly, covered with a kind of carpet. The same vehicle conveyed all the babies up to the fourth, which was myself, and continued in the family for a few years after a more suitable one was purchased for subsequent babies.

The family lived in Stepney until 1884 when I was born. But my father was longing for the country and they moved out to Edmonton when I was a few months old. So that my first recollection of this older sister was of a child of about seven years of age looking the picture of health, running about freely in the fields with her dark hair streaming behind her.

Horses grazed in the field and maybe I remember, or more likely it was related to me, that one of the games these early children played was running backwards and forwards between the front and back legs of the horses, trying to do so without disturbing the animals. There were also the usual games with a ball at which Elizabeth was an expert. There was school, also commenced in Stepney, for we all started at the age of three up to the very last one.

This lively girl made her mark at the school at Edmonton but seemed to be troublesome to the teachers, and yet a favourite. I remember her telling me that in one class she was awarded a prize of a dressed doll and her conscience smote her afterwards because she thought she had not deserved it.

As the family grew she was expected to help more and more with looking after the younger ones and, although always a boisterous child, she became rather disgruntled because her freedom was restricted.

My mother, having lived in town all her life, was terribly scared of the country and it began to tell on her health. She told us a tale of being frightened one night. She was coming home in the dark and heard footsteps following her. She hurried along and, arriving home breathless, ran to a window to see who it was and saw a horse pass the front gate. Another time a cow strayed into the garden and the help of the children had to be commandeered to drive it out while my mother watched from the safety of the house.

So at last, my father had to give way and they compromised by going to Walthamstow, then a village with a few roads well-lit, shops fairly near to the house - fields being a little further off. We had lived in Edmonton possibly two, or two and a half years, for when we moved to Walthamstow my memories were becoming clear and I was realising the others in the family as separate entities.

There was one school in Walthamstow but this was rather a distance to walk. The two elder children started there at once, but myself and a sister a little older went to a

small private school run by a certain Mrs Warden and her daughter Caroline. I forget how much we had to pay, but very little I am sure, and every Saturday we were given a sweet if we had been good. This gave Elizabeth a good deal of freedom. The school being rather far off, she had her games before returning in the afternoon and was relieved of being responsible for us smaller fry. A beautiful new school was in the course of building and often we walked round to see how it was getting on. In due course it was opened and we were all transferred there.

My memories now becoming very clear - I remember the names of all the teachers and many of the scholars. Elizabeth, however, was still elusive to me as she was in the Girl's Department and I was still an infant. I often saw her in the centre of quite a large group of girls evidently the leader of their games and their pranks and often was in trouble. These were all hush-hush at home.

At this time too she was a voracious reader and all kinds of books were taken to her bedroom. I often tried to see what they were but could never find them, the only ones left about were books like Fox's Book of Martyrs and Pilgrims' Progress, but I am certain these were not what she was reading, so I presume for obvious reasons she hid the ones she devoured so avidly and left the other's about. My mother wouldn't notice for she was not bookish, but my father was always very strict as to our reading matter and novels were forbidden.

I can remember, though, her gathering us youngsters round her and telling us story after story - fairy stories, mostly of the gory type, cruel step-mothers and unkind witches, which we listened to with wrapt attention and often with contented shudders.

In the winter of 1890 we moved to the other side of the River Lea to Clapton. We were still near fields, and not too far from Epping Forest, but neither of these attracted my sister. She loved streets and houses, towns and people and was delighted with the new situation. She had to go to a school in a poorer district as there was no room in the upper classes at the nearer school where another sister and myself were able to go. Up to this time the State schools were not exactly free and for my elder sister's school the fee was 2d a week but for the other one, being in a better neighbourhood, we had to pay 3d every Monday morning. Later on this fee was dropped altogether. It was possibly the cause of many parents keeping their children away and so hindering their education.

So, my sister was again separated from the rest of us during the day and could continue her life of freedom. However, the ever increasing family made it necessary for her to help in the home and restrictions began to gather round her and she became more and more disgruntled. She still attracted a large number of friends, often boys as well as girls. She escaped some of the chores by joining a night school which included a gymnasium in which exercises she excelled. Many were the tales she told of the other classes where she played tricks on the teachers and otherwise enjoyed herself and became the heroine of another group of girls. She went to the Sunday School belonging to the Baptist church while we younger-ones went to a Mission School which was quite near. Her friends here were also very numerous, of both sexes.

Apparently though, she now had to work hard in the house as the many babies had

drained my mother of a good deal of strength and there was no-one else to help. She was, however, approaching fourteen and it was the custom now for girls, as well as boys, to consider a career. She had made up her mind early - she was to be a teacher, nothing else would suit her. I heard my father threaten her often that if she did not work harder at school she would have to go into service. However, she passed the entrance exam and was from now on a professional.

II

I can see her now as she set out. How smart she looked - my mother still made her clothes. How well she walked, her head high, her arms swinging lightly at her sides and a smile on her face because she was successful at her job and people praised her everywhere.

The training of a teacher in those days was accomplished by half-time teaching and the other half continuing the young person's education. First and third year apprentices undertook a class between them, going opposite times. So that one teacher never met the other who taught the same children the other half-time. The second and fourth year followed the same routine so that a school was running two classes with teenage teachers, often the Headmistress sitting in the classroom criticising and sometimes helping.

If a teacher was talented in that direction it worked very well, but for those who were shy and needed more teaching as to how to set about their task it was, more or less, purgatory. If a Headteacher happened to be sympathetic toward a beginner there was a good deal might be done to alleviate this attitude, but many felt they had enough to do without and a young teacher had to shift as well as she could. Elizabeth experienced none of this frustration. From the word "go" she seemed to know exactly what was expected, and how to win the respect and goodwill of her pupils. All the way through her apprenticeship she earned nothing but praise from the masters and mistresses with whom she worked and, although she never excelled at the academic work, on the practical side she, no doubt, showed exceptional skill.

All this time Elizabeth was growing into an attractive woman and many a young man cast an appraising eye on her. There were several from the Church where she was now in the Y.W.'s Bible Class - first it was one then the other.

There was one story that has always remained in my mind. There was a very good looking, well-to-do young man who used to meet her coming out of school and they would walk home, evening by evening, along the banks of the River Lea. Sometimes he would hire a boat and he would row her as far as the Sea Bridge which was a short walk from our home. From time to time I heard wonderful tales of this clever, successful escort. Then one day I heard this tale of sadness. She and he were coming home together along the path by the river when they heard shouts from the water and they could see in the distance two lads struggling in the river and an upturned boat floating away from them. Without hesitation her friend threw off his coat and dived in. He kept both of them above water until further help arrived and then he himself disappeared and was seen no more.

All these stories of her conquests impressed me so much that I looked on her with

awe and thought her everything that was wonderful. It was years before I began to suspect that perhaps there was only a small element of truth in them. There must have been something about her which while it attracted for a time, afterwards repelled. For one after another of these young men left her and became engaged to other girls, often one of her associates.

Only one remained with her. None of us at home liked him. He often came home and my father gave grudging consent to him accompanying her on walks and other trips, but not one was happy about the friendship. Then even this collapsed. The cause of it, of course, was hushed up, just little scraps of information drifted about here and there, like wisps of hay which fly from the hands of farm labourers building haystacks. I pieced these together and gathered that he had got a girl into trouble. I remember, at first, she hastily became busy getting clothes and other goods together saying she was getting married. Then we heard he was marrying someone else, so we concluded that the girl's father had insisted that he married his daughter and this brought the whole matter to a conclusion.

Elizabeth had now passed what was known as the Queen's Scholarship but, as my father's increasing ill-health had caused him to resign his post at the Guildhall she could not go to training college as she had wished, although a friend of my father's promised to advance the money which was to be repaid out of her income when she began teaching afterwards. I know my parents gave careful thought to this suggestion, but life held such uncertainties, and there were seven others of us growing up - one having died at the age of nine - that they decided the risk was too great. There existed, also, such a horror of getting into debt that this may have gone a long way toward the making of this decision.

However it was quite easy to get a post as uncertificated teacher in those days and this she did. Not a very lucrative post after four years of apprenticeship, fifty five pounds for the first year was awarded and one hundred pounds for the second year and during these years one had to work hard for an examination each year - the same examination as taken by those fortunates in a teacher training college and, after passing these, one was designated untrained certificated teacher always at a lower salary than those who had gone to college, with scarcely any chance of promotion.

Well, I remember the first school she was sent to at the age of eighteen. It was in one of the poorest and roughest part of East London and the Headmistress said no teacher would stop in that class of unruly girls. Her anger at seeing one as young and inexperienced being sent to such a class is indescribable - she just raved. But Elizabeth felt this to be a challenge. She knew she was a teacher and she rose to the occasion and decided she would tackle the job. She described to me that first morning. The girls all shouted with laughter when they saw her and one of them immediately climbed out and sat on the window sill. Elizabeth just told her quietly to come in and sit down, and, of course, she refused. My sister just started a lesson and soon the rest of the class settled down to it, more or less, peacefully and soon the recalcitrant one from the window seat quietly came in and sat in her place. No notice was taken and no remark made. Apparently the teacher was quite indifferent as to whether she was in or out. Of course this was not the end of the trouble but as the days went by teacher and scholars were on good terms with one another.

Unfortunately the Head had written off in great haste, and in high dudgeon, to the Authorities concerned and after a month Elizabeth received a letter telling her to report to another school. This again displeased the Head very much, but there was nothing she could do about it as another had been appointed in her place. However, she let Elizabeth know how pleased she had been with her work. and how she regretted having written the letter in such haste, and gave her good wishes for success in her work.

The next school she was sent to she stayed for the rest of the time she was registered as uncertificated and when after two years she had passed each annual examination the London School Board, as it was then known, would no longer employ her as she was designated "untrained." She applied for a vacancy in a Walthamstow school and obtaining it remained as a teacher in that Borough until her retirement in 1939 at the age of sixty. She was always highly thought of as a teacher and made many friends. She took a pride also helping those who found teaching difficult at first, gave them confidence until they were able to maintain the necessary order in the classroom. This was very often a young teacher's greatest difficulty.

Her capacity for friendship was very great, but something always went wrong with her men friends so that she remained unmarried. With her own sex she was very successful and persistent, so that in her old age she had still retained the friendships of her adolescent days and in her last illness several of them came to see her. She was made welcome in their homes and they were always made welcome in ours by my mother. There was one curious thing about it I never got to know any of these friends, except by sight. Possibly it was my fault entirely for I was inclined to remain aloof, but I was never invited to join the circle, as it were, and in later life they all declared they did not remember me at all.

III

The years were slipping by and Elizabeth's character was changing. Undoubtedly she should have married and even when well over middle age she formed friendships with men but none of them ever ripened into matrimony, though some seemed to go very near to it. It must have been this which embittered her. She became irritable and bad tempered in the latter years and all except her former friends, who still remained faithful, seemed to rather shun her company. She became very difficult to live with and I still felt the impact of her dominating will.

We had, by now, moved back to Walthamstow as we were both teaching in schools there, and all attended the Baptist chapel and were workers there. My sister then became constant companion to my mother and, for some reason which I could never fathom, my mother often said to me,

"You must always take care of Elizabeth."

Of course I gave my consent, although it seemed much more likely that Elizabeth would take care of me. It was at this time that she had almost her last love affair. She became deeply attached to a man who was about her age and a bachelor. She confided in me about this more than she had ever done before and I often found her on her knees as though she was beseeching God to bring about the marriage of which she was still uncertain. She even said to me that if he failed her, she would never trust a man or God again. One day his marriage was announced to someone

else. She was like a mad-thing and was ill for sometime afterward. The strain had broken her nerve. From that time on she was a confirmed neurotic and complained of all kinds of pains, saw doctors continually who sent her to specialists who spoke to her kindly but suggested no treatment. However she looked well, and walked quickly and still cycled, and was never absent from her school work. The one thing she really suffered from was a terrible migraine which was so furious, while it lasted, that she was prostrated with pain.

At last the time came for her to retire from her school work and we took a small cottage in the country in which the two of us lived as mother had now died. Her migraine was reduced somewhat, but she became more and more neurotic. Like mother, she did not like the country and we soon had to move to town, but this time near the sea. Very perceptibly, now her mind was becoming vague. We divided the responsibility of the house between us. I undertook the housekeeping part and she looked after the fabric, curtains, bed linen, repairs etc. to both of which we contributed an equal amount monthly. I remonstrated now and again about not being consulted as to her purchases for the house, but she always maintained she must have a free hand. There came a time however when nothing seemed to be spent on renovations at all and I pointed out one or two things which were urgently needed. She said there was no money with which to buy them. I let it go for another month and when I laid down my contribution said,

"Now, that added to yours will buy what is needed."

She took the money and still protested that there was not enough. Then I suggested that I look at the book in which she kept the account and we would go through it together. After a tussle she consented. Then I discovered what was wrong. All the items of expenditure were put on the debit side correctly but for five months nothing had been added to the credit side. We quickly remedied this and the required adjustments made.

During the day she often did small items of shopping for me and I often found discrepancies in the change or, sometimes, a pound note was taken out and no change brought back at all. So without her knowledge I went to the shops we mostly frequented and asked them to see that she took up the money they gave her and to see that all the goods were put in her basket, and all went well. However, I could see that her physical powers were failing, as well as her mental, and urged her to see a doctor. Her reply was that she had seen enough of doctors and none of them did her any good. I also tried to persuade her to rest more as she still rose at seven and retired about eleven. Even this was of no avail. Until one morning she staggered into my bedroom at seven o'clock and asked if I would get the early morning tea. I helped her back to bed and, tucking her in, said I was sending for a doctor immediately. When the doctor came she said she was very ill and could not readily tell what was the matter because the whole body was so tired, and suggested that she left it for a week. I was to keep her in bed and give her as much good food as she could take and then she would be able to tell better.

It was then the beginning of October and the weather was fine and warm with only just a faint hint of the chill winds of autumn. She lay getting weaker and weaker until, at the end of March, her life ended.

As I look back now on her life, I think of it, with pity. It was so full of promise. She had a wonderful gift of friendship, a lively interest in all around her, yet something always

failed her. I believe if she had married she would have been better as she loved children, although a bit domineering with them. She tried so hard to make everyone love her and often succeeded. Yet I myself made no headway with her. It always seemed that she was jealous of me, yet what there was for her to be envious about I could never tell.

3 **Walter** - the intellectual one

The second child was a boy named Walter Marcus, the second name after his father. Quick and attractive as a small child one story was told, again and again, that when he had his first pair of breeches, which in those days did not happen until the age of five, he wanted to show himself to everyone. When he had been duly admired by all the neighbours and friends he said,

"Now may I show the cat."

He seemed a little delicate though, as one time at about six, he had to go as an out patient to a hospital and was treated for heart trouble. The physician who examined him said,

"Keep him from school and give him a good rest."

To everyone's amazement he burst into tears.

"Whatever is the matter with him?" said the doctor to my mother.

"I expect," she said, "it is because you said he was to stay away from school."

"Well," said the doctor, "that is the first time I have ever known that to happen, usually it produces smiles."

Anyway, he was sympathetic and said.

"Well, if you are so fond of school you may go, but come straight home and rest as much as possible."

This, however, seemed to pass as life went on, but he was never athletic and could never stand any great strain, so I suppose the weakness did remain, but he was otherwise healthy.

He always loved his school and his lessons and excelled in them. When we lived at Walthamstow he attended the school with Elizabeth which was about twenty minutes walk from where we lived. When he was ten he won a scholarship to the local Grammar school. I remember some of his friends there - there were quite a bunch of them - I even remember the names of some of them. They often went to Epping Forest together. It was occupations of this kind which seemed to be their hobby rather than games. I suppose I was too small to accompany them, though I know I often wished I could. There was a big field near our house, however, called Job's field with a large pond in it and I often went with the boys there. They used to take an old basket with them, tie a rope to the handle, throw it into the pond and drag for tadpoles or "tiddlers" as they called the little fish they found in the pond. I remember one day, either the handle of the basket or the string gave way and their improvised net was left stranded in the middle of the pond. There was a whispered altercation as to what they should do, but I do not think it was my mother's basket on that occasion, so I never heard the result of the loss. It must have been a dry summer that year for I remember seeing the wreck in the middle of the pond sticking higher and higher out of the water, until one day the field was enclosed and we were deprived of the pond and the pleasure of the meadow forever. I believe it was taken over for the construction of a new railway, a branch of the L.M.S. which went to Southend, thus connecting the eastern side of London with that famous seaside resort.

Time passed and here we were in Clapton the other side of the River Lea. Walter had to give up his scholarship at Walthamstow as it was only for local boys. He afterwards went to the Tottenham Grammar School where he remained to the end of his school life. This was London but meadows were still available, as well as water, which seemed always necessary to Walter's life for in his young days he was always

a naturalist. It was here I was often allowed to help him. There were pools under the railway arches where we could get water beetles and various water creatures. He discovered a place where larger fish than tiddlers lived and were caught in our net. My mother was scared of all these things, especially when some of the beetles flew from the water and invaded our living quarters. One night he had to be roused from his bed to catch one which was frightening my mother out of her wits.

He also collected butterflies and moths and I often went with him to Epping Forest and learned how to net them, and about the chemical to put in the jar, and also how to mount them. He collected stamps, also, and I used to help him mount these, and learned the names of foreign countries, and he lent me books about these lands and their people. I was very proud to be his helper. He introduced me, also, to chemicals and showed me various experiments which filled my youthful mind with wonder. My father often brought him throw-outs from the Guildhall Museum so a cupboard was utilised for his collection of chemicals on one shelf, and a small museum to which we often added things found in the district, old coins et cetera, on another.

He made small poems from time to time which I also viewed with wonder and admiration. One of these was recited at Christmas, year after year by one of my sisters until it lost its interest. Another phase in Walter's life was a strong political and religious bias. Often on Sunday evenings, with Father's armchair as a pulpit, he would gather us younger ones round him and would preach a sermon to us. Of course, he was going to be a minister when he grew up. On the political side, he would often write letters to the local papers during election time in the Liberal cause. Both of these phases pleased my father immensely - he was very proud of his eldest son.

[What would have happened known.
also walking tour
Little about books and plays.]

However, inevitably childhood passed and the time came when schooldays were over and work must be commenced. So, at the age of fifteen he took a Civil Service Examination and became a clerk in the Solicitor's Department - a wage earner of fourteen shillings per week.

II

Now I had lost my companion and I missed him, but I was becoming in myself self-sufficient and withdrawn from the family. Walter, also, was secretly "walking out" with girls. Now and again my school companions told me he was "going out" with a sister of theirs, but soon he found a settled companion of the other sex in a girl who went to the Baptist Church which he and Elizabeth attended.

Her name was Emily Simmons. Her mother was a widow. Mr Simmons, her husband, and their eldest boy had both died of tuberculosis - then known as low fever or consumption - and she had to work to keep the only child left her. She took up maternity nursing and gave up her home, and the child, Emily, had to live with different families. It was a poor life for a child. She went to the same school as I and I often saw her about the school - a neat, well-dressed little figure, holding herself well

and walking with an assurance which I envied.

When it was noticed my brother was friendly with her and my parents knew her circumstances, they invited her to our house as often as they could. She had then commenced as a pupil teacher. She was a talented artist and needlewoman, and did well at her lessons and as a teacher. We had a piano on which she used to come and practice, and she made a very nice addition to our Christmas gatherings - which in those days were purely family ones. She accompanied our singing on the piano and made our parties very lively with the introduction of a new song from her repertoire. One year my father gave his consent to their going on holiday together on condition that Elizabeth went as chaperone.

Walter had now taken higher examinations in the Civil Service and later as a clerk to the London County Council (still remaining) in a Solicitor's Department. He was at the time studying law with the idea of becoming a solicitor, but his subsequent marriage seemed to make it impossible for him to continue, and he remained with the London County Council.

I suppose when a boy becomes engaged to a girl he is, for a time lost to his family. There were, however, one or two things which stand out in my memory. We were now members of the Baptist Chapel at Clapton and he and I were both members of a Young People's Bible Class. It was then, for a short time, he was my companion once more for we talked religion together. He had started reading books of liberal-minded German philosophers and often spoke about some of the ideas mentioned in them. We had, of course, not been brought up to think about religion, but just to accept, and now he was beginning to question that teaching. He questioned his Bible Class leader about these things and was told he must believe, also that while he was doubting he must not on any account attend a Communion Service. This puzzled him very much and he approached the minister of the church. The minister admitted there were some things difficult to understand, and that people were studying these things in order to fathom the difficulties, and advised him until then to continue as he was. But this did not satisfy Walter. He wanted to get at the truth. He worried so much over these things that he began to be listless and to look ill. Then, one day, he came to me and said that he must give it all up as it was ruining his health. He would never give a thought to religion again, but put it right behind his back, once and for all.

III

Soon came the shock which so upset the life of the family - my father's death. It seemed as though the world stood still for us. How could it continue turning on its axis as though nothing had happened? What were we to do? The only monies coming in were from my eldest sister, Elizabeth, who had just started as a teacher in full status, the award being the magnificent sum of eighty pounds per year, and Walter whose stipend was unknown in the family except to himself. Another sister, Edith, was in college training at the Royal Normal College for the Blind.

For myself, I had just heard the result of a scholarship examination which I had taken, which offered free tuition and twenty pounds a year allowance for books on condition that I went for three years and took a London University degree. This, of course, was discussed by the older members of the family as to whether it was

possible for me to take up the scholarship. Walter just put his foot down at once and said he would want to be married before the three years was over, so it was impossible. The argument which won the day was the fact that money was needed. There were four more younger than I who were still at school and, whatever happened, I must go out and earn. So I had to do the same as my sister had done and start as an uncertificated teacher. I was sorry for this as I was not as clever a teacher as Elizabeth, and had made up my mind to qualify as a chemist as chemistry had been a favourite subject of mine and I had excelled in it. But Walter considered himself head of the family and his word was now law.

We were now rather far apart from one another. No secrets were shared and no confidences given one to the other. He was a man of the world, keen on getting wealth and making a good home for his future wife. These may have been laudable ideals but they spoiled his character. He was no longer the lovable boy that we had known and although we looked up to him for his sagacity, we also rather despised him for his changed outlook on life.

Eventually, he got married and a rather large house was bought at Woodford where they lived for a few years. Emily's mother also retired and lived with them having her own rooms and looking after herself. Then the first baby came, a boy named Reginald Marcus. It was then the mother emerged from her back room because this was her job, looking after babies, and having come out she wished to stay out and friction was caused thereby.

Our family were rather held aloof - apparently we were not quite good enough, but this did not last very long and the mother-in-law often came to our mother for sympathy, which was freely given, and we loved the little old lady coming to see us. She was so neat and tidy, and had so many tales to tell of her life as a maternity nurse. She used pomade on her hair, so that it set flat on her head with never a stray hair and had such a soft gentle voice and was such a sweet singer. How could her daughter have been so unkind to her, we thought?

After four years another boy was born, Eric Walter. He was a bright-eyed little chap, quicker in movement than his brother which pleased his mother very much as she thought the elder one much too slow. But Walter was disappointed. He wanted a girl and had said he gave a donation to Dr Barnardo's Homes when Reginald was born. He would give double if this one was a girl, but it was not to be and, sad to say, it was definitely to be the last. So, the household grew to consist of four people. When Eric was no longer a baby a room was found elsewhere for Mrs Simmons and, henceforth, she referred to herself as being turned out of her home. She was always welcome with us, though, and often took advantage of this refuge.

The new family visited us once a year while the children were small - at Christmas - time, but we were not invited there very often and did so very seldom. Walter seemed, to us, to have changed very much. He became a Tory in politics, and they entered no place of worship, and the boys were not encouraged to think about religion at all. However, he kept his very fine sense of humour and we could always be sure of a good laugh when he visited us. He also gave up his studies and just stayed in the same office, depending on the ordinary increments in salary given by the L.C.C. and occasionally a promotion.

His wife was very ambitious and very restless. They moved from Woodford to Higham's Park and later to South Benfleet. This was in 1914 or 1915. He had been refused the army on account of his health and they both felt it would be better for all to live in the country. A rather amusing incident happened with regard to this move. The rest of the family had spent a long holiday at Leigh-on-Sea, which was then little more than a fishing village, on account of the health of one of the younger boys. Two of us girls went wandering round the countryside and we took a train one day to South Benfleet and wandered up the lane from the station chiefly to examine wild flowers. When we had travelled quite a way up the long hill, we saw a notice which said "To Kitscroft." Being curious to where it would lead we followed the direction of the pointer and came to a house overlooking the estuary of the Thames. My companion and I were both devotees of the countryside and we admired the house, and its position, and thought how heavenly to live in a place like that. It was set by itself in a large piece of ground and a few ducks and chickens seemed very happy there. We told the family about our dream house, but mother and my eldest sister were not interested. Imagine our surprise, a month or two later, when Walter announced they were moving to South Benfleet. He began describing the place to us and by asking a few questions we exclaimed in unison,

"Oh, we know it!"

"Impossible." he said, "it is tucked away by itself right out of sight."

But, when we added one or two details, we convinced him that we had seen it. He was astounded. He told us that the owners were Germans who had been interred and they had got it very cheaply. Mrs Simmons by this time had died.

The two boys went to a school at Hadleigh and their mother took them each morning by pony and trap which they had bought, and in which she used to drive about the country lanes, and even into Southend to do her shopping. The boys both enjoyed the country exceedingly and spent long hours up the trees in a small wood which was attached to the property. By this time it seemed that the marriage was deteriorating somewhat, but Walter was very loyal and kept it from us as far as possible. They lived here for some years the boys growing up here, and Walter acquired a motor car - and the boys, motor-cycles.

We visited them now and again, sometimes for a day in the summer and sometimes at Christmas-time, but we did not see or hear very much of them. There was one memorable Christmas, though, when we were invited to spend a few days with them. A younger sister, Beatrice, who was a favourite of Walter, had married and lost her husband through war-activities, and was left with a young baby. She was invited to stay with them for some time, and the rest of the family, with two soldiers from America who were staying with us and a younger friend of Elizabeth's. It was unbelievable that we should all be invited, but the trap met us at the station and my mother and small delicate brother went in the trap and the rest of us walked. It was good sharp, frosty weather and we all loved it. The fires were all lit, and banked up with logs, so we were all warm and cosy. Everything seemed so friendly and the conversation was witty and enjoyable. The war was over and we felt that a new world was dawning, but the disastrous peace treaty had not yet been signed. But we kept off political issues as we rather differed about these things and it was Christmas-time and good-will was in the air.

It was like the old days of happy Christmas family gatherings and the presence of the men from overseas added to the enjoyment. Time was running on. We never all met

again in that way for the widowed sister and her babe went abroad, another brother, Percy, married and later on died when their babe was two years old, and soon after Mother, who always holds a family together, also died. This left only two of us, my eldest sister and myself. The Benfleet family now moved to the other side of London, first, to Bromley, and afterward to Keston in Kent.

Again, it is the Christmas gatherings which have imprinted themselves on my memory. On two occasions my sister and I were invited at the festive season. Emily was, even then, becoming neurotic and hysterical. In the first place she told us we might come, but we must bring our own bedding as she had not enough warm coverings for the extra bed. We were on the point of declining the invitation but Walter wrote and refuted all this. It was not exactly a happy time - the house was cold so we huddled round a small electric fire - the boys were disgruntled - they had both left girls behind them in the Southend area. Walter himself was the one still maintaining his sense of humour and kept the party more or less lively. We made the best of it, but it was not exactly a success. On the next occasion things seemed a bit smoother and one of the boys had his girl friend with him. Possibly Emily was on her best behaviour because of this.

Soon the boys were both married. We were invited to each of the weddings. The older boy had rooms in the parents' house at Keston, but, this arrangement did not last long, and they soon took a small house at Hayes, in Kent, fairly near the parents.

Events seemed to happen quicker at the period the second world war was upon us - my sister and I had both retired and we had to vacate our house and we went to stay in Cornwall. Walter also retired and, as several bombing incidents happened near them, they removed to Devonshire. We were then made more welcome and often went to stay with them. Walter was always very pleased to see us, but his loyalty to his wife continued, although relations, we could tell, were a bit strained. Then they both became ill and the elder son was very anxious for them both and at last insisted in taking a larger house and having the parents living in the new abode with them. The younger son had, by this time, emigrated to Rhodesia. It was not the happiest arrangement but seemed best under the circumstances. My eldest sister, Elizabeth, had by this time, died and I was left alone. For a time I saw little of them, as the health of both deteriorated I visited them more often. He kept a sense of humour until the end. I could see that mentally Emily was worse than she was physically. They still drove a car, however, so could get about a little. They were both becoming a heavy liability to the young people, when the younger man was taken ill the wife could bear with it no longer and Emily was removed to a mental home.

Walter lived for a short time alone with the son and wife, and then had a heart attack and died in hospital, at the age of seventy-nine. He had often in the last days mentioned religion to me, asking me my beliefs, which I told him freely, and sadly he would say, I dare not attempt to think about it even now. I know this, though that when he ceased to take an interest in the church work he deteriorated in character. He became hard and unforgiving - living for self and caring not at all for other people.

4 **Edith** - the afflicted one

Imagine a child in delicate health, one arm twisted curiously - eyesight so poor that people called her blind - the result, all of it we understood, of a poor attention at birth. The nurses were all, more or less, uninstructed in the art. Some loving children, and having the hands of a surgeon, were excellent at their job, but some took it up just to make a living. If a maternity nurse was in attendance a doctor did not hurry to the case, and often one was not called at all.

So Edith Amelia, fourth in the family, was unlucky. When the doctor arrived the child was already born, but insufficiently washed and not carefully overlooked. Nothing, apparently, could be done to alter matters and so I remember the girl, just two years my junior - not hopeless by any means, a strong sturdy little character and full of fun, but sadly afflicted. My early recollections of her are rather vague. In our early school days I had to take her home with me and one day I went into her classroom and found her standing on the form, kept behind for not making her letter's touch the line. I was indignant and told the teacher she could not see properly. She was rather a peppery little person (her name was Mustern) and she first answered me sharply, "She must learn."

Anyway, she sent her off quickly as I had come for her.

Another incident I remember was the old perambulator, holding three of us, being pushed up the Clay Street, as Forest Road was then called, as far as Epping Forest for a picnic. Edith had to ride because of her sight. We had a baby also in the pram and because I was still a toddler rode part of the way. A friend of the family known as Aunt Jenny came with us and she asked Edith,

"Did she like going to the Forest?"

"Yes." I remember the child saying, "I like it except when I sit down. I always sit on prickles."

I remember laughing heartily at this because, of course, I could see where the prickles were and was hardly old enough to realise she had not that advantage.

She learned to read very quickly - and I can see her now, with the book close up to one eye, reading the stories she loved so well. She was also fond of poetry and always learned a new one for the Christmas party when every member of the family was supposed to make a contribution.

It was for the sake of her education that we moved from Walthamstow to Clapton. My parents soon began to realise that Edith could not cope with the ordinary school lessons and as there was no arrangement made in a country school, such as the one in Walthamstow was then, for the teaching of the blind. The only alternative was to find a place within the London area where such provision was being made. Then, once a week I had to take Edith to a school to learn Braille. I suppose I had leave from school for that reason for I can remember taking her but can not remember how she got home. Possibly, someone older who lived near us brought her home and I was allowed an hour off every Wednesday afternoon to take her. When she was older she would go alone.

At eleven, she won a scholarship at the Royal Normal College for the Blind at Upper Norwood where she lived as a boarder. It was a wonderful place. The Principal was a Dr Campbell who was himself blinded as a boy by being hit with a stone. He learned Braille and started this wonderful institution which meant so much to hundreds of

children afflicted in the same way as he was himself. I often went to the Open Day of the College and was much impressed by the wonders of the place. The Principal insisted that people afflicted by blindness could do anything that sighted children could do. He even refused to use the word blind. They learned to play the piano and even to swim. Edith took her place quite easily among the other girls and made some very good friends. One of her friends was a girl from South Africa who wrote little verses about various aspects of the school - not always complimentary - and set them to music, which a circle of them loved to sing in private. She was a great favourite and Edith was very upset when her parents sent for her and Grace had to return home and she saw her no more.

In course of time Edith took her place in the part of the College devoted to the training of teachers of the blind. In this capacity Edith seemed to be out-standing, as she won prizes for teaching on one or two occasions. The young trainees had to learn to use the typewriter so as to take the ordinary Teachers' College examinations. She passed these tests quite easily and, during her last year in the college, won a prize of a typewriter and table as the best teacher of the year.

Now came the difficult years as classes for the blind were still very few, and those that were established seemed to prefer sighted teachers. So for a few years she took places as a private governess to blind children, but these were always poorly paid. However, she took great interest in training these children and we were glad to see her happy. In the circumstance we were glad she was not a liability, as she might have been, at this time when family finances were at their lowest. Then, for a time, Edith lived at home and had a few private pupils, and at last she had a place in a school in Wales run by an old pupil of the Royal Normal College. This period however was short lived. The first world war had broken out and a mysterious disease, known at first as sleepy-sickness, started in the Liverpool district and spread over England. It was thought to have been brought into the country by Lascars who helped with the unloading of foodstuffs and other necessities to England. Edith was working in a school in Rhyl. Nearing the summer holiday Mother had a letter from the Headmistress saying she was sending Edith home a few days before the end of term as she seemed very unwell and would be obliged if she would let the family doctor see her.

When she arrived home she seemed much as usual and, for a day or two, we did not trouble. However, I had occasion to visit the doctor for some minor trouble and Mother suggested I should take Edith with me and ask him to examine her. When he had done so he sent her from the room and gave me a message to Mother that Edith was very ill and she was to go to bed for a day or two when he would come and see her again. From then on her health deteriorated. She had fits, almost like epilepsy, which were followed by sometimes as much as three days in sleep, and she would just wake and say,

"Can I have my breakfast?"

The doctor was very puzzled and sent her to a hospital for examination. The specialist just said,

"Whatever has the doctor sent her to me for? She is definitely an epileptic and must have been so from birth."

But, when my mother told him her history, he was indeed puzzled. She grew worse and worse and had to be watched night and day. My eldest sister and I took it in turn to sleep in the room each night, or should we call it half-sleep? Sometimes we had to sit up all night, as she threw herself about, when we had to keep her from falling from

the bed. Soon Mother, who was now ageing, began to be scared of staying with her in the day time, and showed signs of a nervous breakdown and the doctor said Edith must be removed to hospital.

She died in May 1917. The complaint was afterwards diagnosed as sleepy-sickness or Encephalitis Lethargica. My medical book said "No case was noticed in England until 1917", the year in which Edith died. We feel sure, and our doctor afterwards confirmed it, that must have been the trouble. It must have been one of the earliest cases in England and a particularly virulent one. We noticed many children with the same complaint later on and afterwards, apparently, a cure was found. It now seems to have died out.

Flowers came from many friends who loved and appreciated her, but the sweetest of all was freshly gathered primroses, violets and bluebells from the garden at Benfleet, sent by the two boys, sons of Walter, my eldest brother. A short life indeed, but one of strength and endurance against tremendous odds.

5 **Herbert** - the black sheep

Now had come the time when I could watch the growth of the children from the cradle for the rest we're younger than I. I was just two years old when Herbert Alfred was born. My earliest recollection of him was of a poor, thin baby crying weakly in his pram - unable to sit up when he was the age to have done so, and showing violent fits of temper very often. He was born in our Edmonton home, but we moved to Walthamstow soon afterwards and it was there that I became aware of him as this whining baby with the palest of blue eyes.

You people in these more enlightened years can have no idea the struggle parents had to bring children past their infant stage. To my mother's credit be it recorded that none, out of nine, died in infancy. The ignorant maternity nurse, whose motto seemed to be "I ought to know, I have buried six of my own," was often in charge.

As Herbert began eventually to walk and talk he was exceedingly shy, he would hide immediately from strangers and always had a furtive look, even to those of his immediate family. At three, the age we all started school, he could not talk plainly enough for anyone to understand but the doctor said, "Send him to school, it will help him."

To achieve this was another matter. None of us children could manage him, he would run away screaming. I remember my mother once driven to extremity taking a cane along with her and every time he attempted to run away threatened him. How the teachers managed when he got there I can never imagine - possibly the power of numbers, finding himself one of many, was the answer. Under these circumstances, of course, he made no progress. The first piece, he learned to say sounded like, "Yut sir, yut sir, yuttie, yuttie yo."

We never learned what it meant. With practice, and help at home, he finally managed to learn to read and was certainly not backward in the later stages of his schooling. However, he never lost that, furtive look and no-one at home or school ever seemed to gain his confidence.

One day, when he was about eight, a dreadful thing happened. Never had anything like it occurred in the family before - a shilling was left on the mantle-piece to pay a tradesman and it disappeared. What made my mother have her suspicions I, at any rate, did not know. Possibly such things had happened before. This time my mother went to the school and saw his teacher. By judicial questioning he elicited the fact that some of his companions had been treated to sweets etc. When my father heard this the boy had a flogging. Herbert looked frightened to death, but it made no difference for after this things were continually happening - things, small in themselves, but of great importance to our parents. The type of events changed from time to time, but something seemed always wrong. He played truant. His word could not be trusted. We missed books and found he had sold them to his school fellows. Plants disappeared mysteriously from the garden - we just surmised who had taken them.

There was one thing, however, which shone in his character. He was dotedly fond of animals. One winter's night there was a heavy-fall of snow. We were all out shopping for Christmas - Herbert was at home alone. In those days there were always numerous stray cats about - most of them filthy and diseased. When we came home he had invited in half-a-dozen of these strays and they were ranged on the hearth in front of the fire having their coats dried, and being fed with bread and milk. He kept

pigeons in a house he had built himself in the garden and knew exactly what to do to breed them. He also knew the technique of catching strays. This, we found led him into bad company - there were many pigeon fanciers in the neighbourhood who did not seem very savoury characters and he was often seen with them.

His menagerie grew - there were guinea pigs, dormice, white mice and rats. These were continually coming and going. Did he sell them and buy others? I never knew. Did anyone in the family, I wonder? Again, he would go up to Epping Forest, or said he had been there, and arrived home to our distracted parents at about ten at night - having not been home from school. All these things happened before he was fourteen and due to leave school. He was continually saying he wanted to go to Canada, out west to farm, but although he never seemed short of money, he did not attempt to save up to emigrate. He did once save up cast-off boots and shoes and say he would mend them, to save up to go to Canada, but although his cupboard got stacked with them, I do not remember him either learning how to mend them or attempting one stitch, or using the shoe last to understand the mechanism of cobbling.

He was continually in trouble with his father who believed implicitly in the maxim that sparing the rod would spoil the child. Herbert always shook with fear when he saw this was inevitable - he was as nervous as the animals he loved to help. No-one understood him - no-one stood up for him. He was the black sheep of the family.

[His part in Christmas family parties.]

II

When my parents were faced with the prospect of finding a job for him - they placed the problem before some of the men at the Baptist Church. They were very helpful and one offered to take him in his office, which was a wonderful gesture in those days. Even here the pilfering went on - just small sums from the petty-cash box. He was spoken to seriously about this but it seemed to make no difference. He was well over fifteen when my father was taken ill and did not recover.

I remember well that evening. We were all sitting gloomily looking at one another when Herbert came in. In his hand he carried a paper bag and he looked happier than I ever remember seeing him.

"How's Papa?" he called eagerly.

Then, seeing us all sitting there without answering, he burst into tears. Was it a way of repentance and seeking forgiveness? It looked like it for in the bag was a beautiful pear he had bought for his father, on his way home.

It was in that year that a scheme was inaugurated for sending lads out to Canada as apprentices to farmers. When they were proficient they could apply for a grant of land. They were sent by some charitable organisation at very little cost. With the help of a few of the Church people who knew him he applied and, at the age of seventeen, he departed for Canada. Every one of us had a gift when he went. He wrote to Mother quite regularly, bright letters - he sounded content and happy and loved the farm horses, so that he was soon in charge of them. No complaints ever came from Canada, Year after year went by - he continued to correspond with one and another of the family. He had his grant of land and in his spare time began clearing it - he had horses of his own and loved them.

During one of the terrible slumps in trade from which England suffered at this time - one of the younger ones of the family lost his job. He was not a bright boy and we saw no prospect for him in England. It was then that Herbert came to the rescue. He suggested that Arthur should be sent out to him and he would teach him on his farm. It would be good for the two to work together and the farm was still far from being cleared altogether. So he had a companion from the family. This was in 1907. The two seemed to get on well together, although he did not find Arthur very quick at learning.

Then came 1914 and the War. In 1915 Herbert thought he should "join up" and left every thing in his younger brother's charge. So he came home to England to finish his training. We were amazed at his appearance. He went from us a puny looking lad, short for a boy of seventeen. When he came back to England in 1916 he was well over six feet in height - broad shouldered and upright. His voice was soft and mellow. Most wonderful of all, he could now look one straight in the face. He was thirty years of age, had never married - in fact was not interested in the female sex at all. We said we thought he would have joined the cavalry. His answer was typical - he could not have borne to see horses suffering - bad enough for men.

He was home only for a fortnight, and was then sent out to France. We heard from him continually. He was sent up to the front line almost at once and was killed when on sentry duty at Vimy Ridge in 1917.

The Sequel

So Herbert, the Black Sheep of the family was dead. Was he really a Black Sheep, or was he just the victim of circumstances? He had about one hundred pounds in his pay-book left to my mother. She expressed the wish to go out to see, for herself, the place where he lived and to hear the estimate of his character from his associates on the spot. My sister, Elizabeth, said she would like to accompany her. She had leave from the Education Committee for two months June and July, in the year 1921 and the two of them set out over the Atlantic and half-way across the continent of America where the younger brother was still living. They were made very welcome at the farms in Manitoba by those who remembered Herbert. They all spoke very highly of him as a farmer and of his strange influence over animals. They told about an epidemic of chest complaints among the horses and one of his own contracted it. He lay all night in the stable with his sick creature who was gasping for breath. Together they lay on the straw all night, the man's arms round the horse, his body between its front legs to keep the chest warm. This horse was one of the very few of the stricken ones to recover. How typical, we thought of the small boy who had brought in the stray cats to warm on a winter's evening.

Another story they told us. All the farmers and farm labourers in the district were in the habit of meeting in a hall in the neighbourhood for a concert on each Saturday evening. The artistes were all local talent, so they asked Herbert could he play or sing, or do anything in the entertainment line. For a long time he declined, and then he consented to give them a sample of the same kind of singing which had amused us all so much a lot in Christmas entertainments. He thought he would be hurled down from the platform and never asked again. However, this particular kind of singing without tune seemed to be accepted as a star turn and from then on no concert was complete without a song from Herbert. His friends were amazed when my sister said,

“Oh yes, he never had any tune in him.”

They had all accepted it as his form of humour - all the songs of the moment went over with the queer half-smile on his face which we knew as a boy.

Having watched, just as an onlooker, the life of the boy with his strange eccentricities, then seen this young clear-eyed giant return, can you wonder that I looked on corporal punishment as no deterrent whatever to wrong doing? The only thing to my mind is to gain the confidence of the child, by any available means, and to encourage each one to tell of their difficulties and strive together to solve them.

6 The Twins - including the irrepressible one

On the morning of July 9th, 1888, in our home at Walthamstow, we heard Walter, our eldest brother, shouting excitedly at the top of his voice to his sister,

"Liz, come quick, there's two of them."

My sister, Edith, and I sat up in bed wondering what all the fuss was about. Elizabeth burst into our room with the news -

"There's two baby girls one dark the other fair - both of them ours."

"Two," we said, "it can't be two, one must be Mrs Walker's."

She was the maternity nurse in attendance.

So, we welcomed into our home Henrietta Lilian and Beatrice Maud. Identical twins? Oh no! Very far from it, exactly opposite would be nearer the mark. Both in appearance and dispositions they seemed to be entirely different, the one from the other. Henrietta's mop of black hair from the start which was quickly replaced by soft wavy chestnut curls. Beatrice, almost bare at first, but later on grew to fair unruly straight hair.

The one learned quickly to smile ever the shy smile as she edged closer to her mother. The other, as if eager to be off and away on her adventures, kicked about and laughed as if she saw a great joke in the big world into which she was born.

Again, the one gentle, thoughtful, tidy in habits and person; the other never caring a bit about tidiness, dashing about here and there in ecstasy and joy, skipping, running, jumping while her quiet sister walked sedately along. The one just eager to be home to her mother and never wishing to move from her side, the other finding most of her joys outside the home being friends with everyone.

The story of Henrietta Lilian is soon told for she died before she was nine - the only one who passed away in childhood which was remarkable for those days in such a large family.

She had left, however, her impact on the home. We missed her quiet presence. She had been quite a healthy child, looking always more colourful than her twin sister. She plodded on at school, careful with her writing and her sums. Her conduct too was exemplary. She could knit and do needlework with the same careful neatness. One of her teachers showed her how to crochet and she made many pairs of woollen cuffs which were worn over the wrists by almost everyone in winter. These were made with a crochet-hook in a stitch which the teacher showed her.

Then came one of those influenza epidemics which were so frequent in these years, and my mother was stricken with it. Hetty (as we called her) fretted after her mother so much that Mother said,

"Let her come in."

Coming into the room was not sufficient for Hetty - she climbed on to the bed and snuggled down beside her and, for a time, no-one could move her.

A day or two after, the child was feverish and unwell and had to be kept in bed. She had caught the epidemic. It lasted a long time with the child but eventually she got up, apparently well. She went back to school, but had lost her healthy appearance and, being thin and lethargic, she was only back for a short time when it was noticed that she had a temperature and she took to her bed again. For two years she

gradually wasted away. She was in hospital for a short time, but she gained no strength as she fretted as badly for her mother. When Mother fetched her home she was so light that mother carried her in her arms and a woman in the bus asked what was the matter with her baby. The reply was that she was no longer a baby, she was nearly eight years old. She was in bed nearly all the time after this - doctors called the complaint by various names low fever, wasting disease and consumption. Of course it was what is now known as tuberculosis. There was nothing done for the sufferers in those days, they just lingered on, losing flesh, getting weaker and weaker, until life faded out. She suffered a good deal but she was often very bright and cheerful. It was typical of her that she kept different shades of hair ribbon in a box under her pillow. These were straightened out each night and a fresh one put on the next morning.

"Blue one to-day please, mamma."

And she had to look in the glass to see that it was well tied and the hair quite tidy. Her twin sister would sometimes want to come and sit with her, she would be told, "Tidy your hair first then."

She died a month or two before her 9th birthday.

Now, Beatrice, boisterous and careless but just as lovable, remained. She was a remarkable child, she enjoyed life to the full from the very start. She loved everybody she met, consequently everyone loved her. She was in trouble continuously at school. When she first started (and we all started at three years of age) she was often put in the corner or sometimes inside the fireguard. She would come home and confess to us all -

"I just cannot be good."

Mother would say, "But you must try."

"Alright mamma, I will really try to-morrow."

But, alas, there was trouble again but little Beatrice said,

"I was put in the fireguard again but a little boy was in there too and he was such a nice little boy."

She was very conscientious, though, at that young age. She would confess her wrong doings to someone and there was always a promise to try again. She told me once that she had been dishonest. She was still in the Infants School. It must have been near Christmas time for the teacher put on the board the word mistletoe and asked if anyone could find out what the word was. She puzzled over it and then said, "Miss tie toe," sounding the middle "t" and the teacher said, "That's right, it's mistletoe."

She had not connected it with the decoration we used at Christmas and felt she should have confessed.

After Hetty's death she quietened down somewhat putting her gift of friendship to some practical use. We were now, of course, living at Clapton, in a typically suburban row of houses. Beatrice actually knew the names of all the people in the road and much of their history. She laughed and chatted with them all - offered to run errands for those mothers who were tired and was invited into many of their homes. She would tell me so-and-so's husband is ill, or someone had lost a baby, or one was very poor. Her sympathies were as wide as her world, she took everyone in, and her spirits were always so high that she left these people happy and at ease. The people in the various shops on the High Road knew her too. She would tell me of Mr Smith who had a little girl just her age and Mr Brown who would just love to have a little girl but he hadn't any children.

She was the only one who could get round my father. She had only to say, "Oh, I know you don't mean that, do you papa?" in her wheedling voice and our strict "papa" gave way.

She was irresistible. One day a party of men came to the road to dig, laying pipes for gas, I think it was. Some people insist it must have been electricity but I am almost certain it was gas. I know that electricity was in use at the time, because my father had told us of the wonderful lights which had been introduced at the Guildhall. One just turned on a switch and it came alight. He experimented with it one day and put his key against the switch with the result that the key twisted up and the top of one of his fingers was burned. There was no insulation in those days.

Besides this, I can remember for a long time in my childhood we used lamps with the daily filling with paraffin. Then when the gas came into the road, it was laid on with 1d in the slot for 25ft. We were provided with five lights and a gas stove for cooking. The light was not very good. It was a fan shaped flame at the end of a pendant and there was no shade. We did not have electricity until we moved back again to Walthamstow in 1902.

But to return to the men digging. They had a brazier on which they boiled water and sometimes heated up something for their dinner. My young sister soon made friends with them and with the promise of secrecy she told me she took them a potato every day from Mother's vegetable basket. She got out of them which road they were going to do next and followed them round the borough with her potatoes.

I often pleaded with her to try to be good. She never reproved me for my prudery - only laughed gently and said,

"There were many ways of being good."

How often I wished in after years that I had exercised more sense of humour, and seen the happiness in her life which was so infectious, and could have been a great help to my solemn view of life.

This love of fun continued throughout her school days. She could not see any use in half the lessons we did and frequently made fun of them and whispered something funny to those around her. She was often scolded and yet the teachers liked her. Often, though, they would lose patience and give her one hundred lines to do, which was the usual punishment in those days. There was no set exercise for this and one day she prefaced them with a quotation she had found in the Bible.

"The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."

Another time, in a science lesson, she was accused of not listening and was told to write out all she remembered of the lesson. She showed me an effusion something like this. She had made a story of a man who was fond of sitting in the bath all day and letting the water run until it overflowed - then he said,

"I have found out how many pints my body measured," but he did not have to store his body in pint bottles.

This was called boil's law because I suppose he thought the water boiled as it ran over. I remonstrated with her on showing this and said he would be very angry but she said,

"Oh, they never look at what we write."

Anyway, this time he did look - she said - she was frightened but he put in on the table and turned away. She saw it there afterwards and managed to smuggle it away.

Again, one day she had lines to do for all the classes she had been in that day. She looked at the paper in dismay, how could she do all that in one evening? So she thought she must get some to wait. Ah! Miss Bruce she was the softest-hearted - she would approach her first. Miss Bruce was sympathetic when Beatrice said, "Would you wait for another day?" and to my sister's delight she said, "Well, suppose we forget it this once and you try to do better?" Of course, Beatrice was effusive in her thanks, but the thought came quickly to her mind.

"That plea was successful what about trying another?"

And she went through the whole list with the same result and got let off the whole lot. I often wonder whether they conferred together afterwards and discovered how they had been duped, but possibly they were afraid of confessing their weakness one to the other.

Strange to say, even from the start Beatrice was deeply religious. She was fond of her Sunday School teachers and they of her. She followed a band round the streets and stood listening earnestly to what was being said. She even attended prayer meetings. Although she never succeeded in getting a prize for day school lessons, she surprised us all one year by coming out top in the local Scripture examinations which comprised all the non-conformist Sunday Schools in Hackney.

How quick she was, too, at repartee. My eldest sister was walking out with a young man. Apparently another of her admirers asked Beatrice was that her brother Elizabeth was going home with.

"Oh no," said the irrepressible one, "he is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

II

Well, school days at length were over but not the fun and adventure of life. It was then the great calamity happened in our family - the death of our father. There was so little coming in and life was going to be difficult. My eldest brother must have been earning a good wage in those days. But he had entered the bad, selfish period of his life and said he could not increase his allowance to the family. He wanted to get married as soon as possible. I had just gained a scholarship which would admit me to a day college free of charge with twenty pound allowance for books. He said I must not go. I must get a place at once. Beatrice was then fourteen, but a very small child and was wearing, at the time, little sailor blouses and pleated skirts with very childish looking hats. How we laughed when she declared she could leave school and go to work. But she had her scheme. Her Sunday School teacher and her sister ran an office for training shorthand-typists and professed to find positions for the girls after two years training. As Beatrice made very little progress at school we all felt this seemed a sound scheme. When the proprietress saw her she said, "She will have to wear a long shirt and put up her hair."

This caused more amusement in the family. We could not imagine it. However, she soon surmounted this difficulty and really made herself look very nice and adapted herself very well to the grown-up style. She was known in the office as "the Imp" as she was always up to one trick or another. Miss Ellen Rothery Smith was not at all pleased with her progress as a shorthand-typist and really underestimated her ability in other directions. For the second year of this apprenticeship the girls were sent out on temporary jobs to anyone who applied for one. Miss Smith hesitated about letting Beatrice go but, one day, there was no one else and Beatrice was sent. She had a

good report, which pleased and surprised the head of the office, but her surprise was doubled when the same man wanted a permanent clerk and said he wanted the clever young lady he had had previously.

In this first office job she was the only clerk. The proprietor had invented a new kind of pump and one of the first things Beatrice did was to learn all she could of the mechanism of this article, so that she could understand all the references to it in the letters she wrote. If the "boss" was out, and anyone came in concerning the pump, she would tell him all about it and keep him well employed until the manager returned. However, the pump did not succeed and another place had to be found for the clerk. Someone heard she was likely to be in need of a job and came hurriedly round to the office to see if she would like to come to him. This was a Swedish iron firm. The owner himself was a Swede and nearly all the clerks in the office were foreigners and all of them male. There was consternation among them when they heard that a woman shorthand-typist was to be introduced to the office.

This was an opportunity Beatrice was very glad to have. By nature she was an internationalist and this widened her outlook tremendously. She became especially friendly with a Mr Danielsen who was a Swede and professedly, an atheist and a German named Auconbach. These two she often brought to our house and went with them for walks in Epping Forest. In this way she got to know the political and religious views rampant in those years before the first world war.

Now, you will be wondering what became of her religious views with this impact with the wide world. So we must go back a few years to see how her young mind was developing. She had started in the Mission school near our home and it was here that she followed the open-air meetings and became so ardent a religionist. She was very loyal to this school and mission and although one by one we left it, as we grew older, she declared she never would. However, she succumbed to the general trend and left when she was about thirteen and joined a Bible class at the Baptist Church we were all attending at that time. She was very original in her thinking and often asked questions which astonished us all and which we all thought rather silly. One day she said very seriously.

"How is it some people are rich and some are poor, it seems all wrong to me."

This was when she was very small but seems to be the beginning of a mind opening to new thoughts, religious and social.

In the Bible class, of which she became a member, discussions were held on many subjects and she often decried orthodox views and could always give her reasons. One summer holiday, she said to me,

"I am satisfied with the teaching and services at our church. Will you come with me to some other denominations and see what they are like?"

This started a trek to find out the differences of Christian ideas and she marvelled but found none satisfactory.

We were, by this time, back again in Walthamstow where my eldest sister and I were both teaching. At the back of our house at the corner of a turning was a large vacant plot. One day a board was placed here which said reserved for the building of a Friends' Meeting House. We talked about it with interest but Beatrice did more than this, she began finding out all she could about the Society of Friends. It was not until the building was erected and opened that she announced she was going there to the first Sunday meeting. When she returned she confided in me that she had, at last,

found the Church she wished to attend. I went with her quite a bit and thus learned a good deal about this interesting and progressive society.

Our two younger boys went to a Junior Adult School held there at nine o'clock on a Sunday morning. Here, handicrafts were taught and lectures given on topical subjects followed by free discussion. The whole set-out attracted me very much but my mother urged me to remain loyal to the Baptist cause. Beatrice, however, continued and found there her first work in a Christian Church. She was only fourteen, but asked if she could have a class of small children. She was very successful in this and worked very hard in preparation for the lessons she gave her little ones. At this time there had come from Canada a certain George Hamilton Archibald, who was giving lectures throughout England on the teaching of religion to children. When he came to Walthamstow Beatrice was intensely interested and went to the lectures each evening the whole week he was there. It was just what she was wanting and asked leave to adopt the scheme straight away. Leave was given and she adapted her lessons according to his plan.

She was so successful as a teacher that the class grew quickly and she soon found herself with a class of fifty children and still gathering impetus. She knew this was too large a number for her to manage and get to know the children personally, so she gathered some young people together and met them in the week to talk over the lesson for the Sunday afternoon. In order to perfect her knowledge of children and how to interest them she would go into our small local park and ask a few children if they would like to hear a story. So, she gained courage and wisdom in dealing with small children and her work was a great success.

She felt, also, it was not sufficient for her to know the children, she must know their background and their parents. So, she started visitation of the homes of the children. It was astonishing to me to hear about these people. She was only sixteen but many a woman found a sympathetic hearing of her difficulties and, timidly at first, Beatrice gave her opinion and advice, gradually gaining courage and knowledge in dealing with all sorts and conditions of women. Her religious outlook, too, was very broad: far beyond the age in which she lived. She seemed able to see through every problem of her day quickly and easily. Instinctively she seemed to know the answers to questions which were baffling religious leaders, politicians and social workers at that time. Yet she was quiet, un-assuming and non-aggressive in her manner. She only gave her opinions when asked for but her answers were always direct and forthright.

So, she came to know how to deal with all the subjects dealt with by those men at the office, and was able to state her point of view in a way which was always inoffensive to her questioners, and in amazement they often said, "Yes, I suppose you are right."

III

So, the years went by. One Sunday after her school, she was invited out to tea and a young man was there - a missionary, home on furlough from Madagascar, named James Ryan. The two seemed attracted to one another from the first and friendship ripened into love and they became engaged. She could have married and gone out as a missionary's wife but this did not suit Beatrice at all. She must have training in the mission work so as to be a helper as well as a wife to James. So, she retired from her office work to go into training. Various remarks were passed at the office when

she told her news for she had still retained her spirit of fun. The general picture of a missionary at that time was of a very serious person who could not see a joke, let alone make one, and it was unbelievable to these clerks that such a person as Beatrice could go abroad for that purpose. Then, one of them said, "Well after all, that's the kind of person they want for such a job."

So, now Beatrice was sent to the training college at Selly Oak, Birmingham known as Kingsmead. At first she felt the restraints of such a place difficult to bear. She then determined to break down the atmosphere of reserve and rigidity which prevailed. One morning before breakfast she took a stroll in the grounds. The gong went for the meal and she waited until a number were assembled then, passing a window and looking astonished as if she had not noticed before that it was breakfast time, promptly jumped in through the open window. The matron put on her severe look and said in injured tones, just one word, "Beatrice!" But the whole house, realising what had happened, were just convulsed with laughter. From then on there was more fun and laughter in the house - Beatrice had won her point.

One of the tutors there told me she had a wonderful Influence and, yet, was so quiet and unassuming. She stayed for two years. In the second year, as the mid-summer vacation approached, it was suggested to her that she should go to France to accustom herself to speaking in French and understanding it when being spoken to. The Mission offered to pay for her stay. She, however, pointed out that this would be wasteful and unnecessary. How much better it would be if she got a place as governess in a French family. She would then get the necessary conversation and all the practice she needed in a much better atmosphere and she would feel more independent. The authorities were rather taken aback, but saw the force of her argument and agreed on the condition that in any difficulty she would apply to them. She was fortunate in getting a place as holiday governess to the small daughter of Madame Pathe of film fame. They spent the whole time at Trouville and Beatrice was in charge of the child all day - dining with the family in the evening and sometimes going out with them afterwards. She described the small girl as being self-willed and sometimes obstreperous but Beatrice felt it very good practice and thoroughly worthwhile.

Sometime before this we had received notice of the death of a relative of my father who lived in Paris. My adventurous sister had taken the address with her and called on the widow of the relative and found out a good deal of the family history of which before we had been entirely ignorant. She learned that the Ascoli family were highly respected and intellectual Jews - some had developed on the commercial side but most were students, lecturers in colleges etc. and specialists in many departments of learning. The widow said her husband could speak fluently in seven languages.

IV

Eventually Beatrice went to Madagascar where she married James Ryan and they worked together for some time in the capital. The personnel at the mission were, she found, rather narrow in their outlook and she found the work rather irksome.

Relief came, however, when a suggestion came from the Friend's Mission in London that the young couple should branch out and commence a new mission to a tribe hitherto unreached. This suited them both and they moved to the west side of the island to start work among a tribe called the Sakalava. They were a bigger people

than those on the eastern seaboard and quite untutored and the two were allowed a free hand which suited Beatrice of course and, I think, James also. They had to build their own house and at the same time get to understand the people and help them in every way possible. A small dispensary was opened and a school started for any intelligent lads and girls who would like training.

Many of the young tribesmen were enlisted to help in the building of the house and so many were influenced in a variety of ways. The plans were made and the house finished when it was time for them both to go on furlough. They had hoped for someone to work with them so that the mission could be carried on while they were away. They were disappointed in this, however, and the authorities in London insisted on their taking holiday for health's sake. War had, by this time, broken out and some boats had been torpedoed but they arrived home safely, after facing a few alarms, in the summer of 1917.

We were, of course, glad to see them and to hear of their adventures, especially as a gap had already appeared in the family by the death in France of Herbert who had enlisted in the Canadian army.

Beatrice had been worried while abroad as no child was on the way and they were anxious to have a family. So, as soon as possible she saw a doctor in London and a small defect was put right. They took a small house in Selly Oak, Birmingham and while still in England a baby girl was born named Mary Winifred. James had informed us that, whether boy or girl and whatever name was chosen, the child should be called by the name given and no diminutive was to be used. On hearing the name we sent a message back of congratulations on the birth of Molly Ryan - and Molly she was ever after.

For a time the baby did not thrive, then the doctor discovered that the milk was not sufficient. She was put on certain baby foods, weight began to increase and good health followed.

Furlough was now over and application was made for return to Madagascar. It was now the beginning of October, 1918, and places in ships for civilians were scarce so only males were allowed to travel. So, the young couple had to decide. Should the husband go back alone or wait until there was some shipping for them all? They felt that there would be more chance for the wife and child to get a place if the husband was already in the field so they decided that he should go.

They all travelled to Liverpool and goodbyes were said and James embarked while Beatrice and the babe went back to spend the night at the hotel. There was no fear in their hearts and Beatrice slept until the morning. She awoke to the dread news that the boat had been torpedoed in the night and, as far as they could tell, there were no survivors. Poor Beatrice was heartbroken but her spirits revived somewhat with the thought that prisoners may have been taken and that, when the war was over, they would be united once more. Nothing more was ever heard of him and wife and child were bereft.

Now what was she to do? In just over a month the war was over. Oh, if he had only waited, but it was useless to think thus, it was important to face facts. She felt her life's work was out there, her home and her possessions were there and she made

up her mind to go. The authorities in London were amazed and appalled at the idea and would only agree on condition that a companion could be found to go with her.

A young woman agreed to accompany them. The journey was accomplished in small stages. They first crossed France to get a boat from Marseilles as there was usually a regular service to Madagascar. Molly was now eighteen months old - a charming little person who made friends with all on board, often bringing people to her mother and introducing them to her in the recognised fashion. After a long, tedious journey the boat finished up at Durban and they were told the service to Madagascar's west coast had not yet been resumed. Undaunted, and finding it was impossible to get to her destination for a time, she took a job as a teacher in a native school for several months.

At last, she heard of a cargo boat about to cross the intervening channel and decided to take her chance. It was a very rough and dirty boat but what could she expect of a cargo vessel.

At last, she reached her home. She found many of the people round about remembered her and gave her a welcome. There were many volunteers to help her set her house in order but we shall never forget the description of the first night in her old home, so carefully built by her late husband and the native helpers.

In the dispensary rats had gnawed every case and medicines were all mixed together in a deplorable fashion. The kitchen stores were the same. Ants had made their home in the furniture and there was general ruin all round. These things, however, never daunted a brave soul like hers. She dried blankets and saw that one bed at least was ready for the first night. She and Molly snuggled down together and went to sleep. Not for long however. There was a sound of drip, drip, drip, what could it be? Then one big drop fell on her face and she knew it was raining heavily. She just got out of bed and shifted the bedstead to another part of the room, but soon it had spread there also.

They arose early and, with her willing band of helpers, the gaps in the roof were made good. Her former helpers just came in to work next morning as if she had been away for a casual week-end. The dispensary and the school started again and in a few weeks everything was as usual except that the male side of the establishment was missing. Her companion had gone to the large port in Madagascar and had to cross difficult country to get to the western side - so the place was in fair order when she arrived. She was a great help to Beatrice with the small girl while she was learning the language and getting used to the work. But she was not very strong and soon saw that it was impossible for her to endure the climate and she was obliged to return to England - so Beatrice was alone once more with just her child for company.

As Molly began to grow she became very observant of native habits and was a great mimic. Beatrice soon began to see it was necessary for her to part with the child if the work had to continue. So, very reluctantly, she sent Molly to South Africa where some friends of hers placed her in the care of a family. No one can enter into the secret place of a mother's heart to find herself bereft of her child. She had been a most engaging companion too and mixed with the native children so naturally that every one had marvelled, yet the mother felt that it was for the good of the child.

The great scourge of the European people in that part of the country was Blackwater fever but having lived there for several years she felt she was immune. She had herself nursed many of the Government officials, and others, through this terrible disease, when she herself was stricken there was no one near to minister to her distress.

She had a mild attack just before Christmas in 1923 but recovered quickly in a day or two. She then set out for a journey through the villages to find pupils who were willing to come to her school when the disease struck her again this time more violently. She abandoned her journey and made her way toward a place where she knew there was a Norwegian mission. It was a long journey and when she reached it was on the point of collapse. She could neither speak nor understand their language and, without making her wants made known, lapsed into unconsciousness and died on January 24th, 1924. She was buried in the little Norwegian cemetery there, a small headstone marking the spot.

So lived, and died, one of the most remarkable people I have ever met. Definitely before her time in thought on religious and social problems. Some of her ideas were the utter uselessness of military force, and the entirely wrong approach made in modern countries to crime and punishment. Beside this she felt that Christian people generally had not come anywhere near the understanding of the meaning of the life and teaching of Jesus and her ideas on education were advanced far beyond her years.

Many people have since adopted the same points of view on these questions of recent years but in her days they were looked on, more or less, with derision.

7 **Arthur** - the backward boy

I remember well the year we moved from Walthamstow to Clapton. I was nearing seven years old. It was rather exciting to be going to another house in an entirely new district. I had had measles in the Spring of the year 1890 and it had left me with a slight ear trouble which came on intermittently and caused me to be irregular at school. So I watched the preparations for removal. My father had chosen the house so mother had not seen it until she and I, with the two babies, arrived and, soon afterwards, the pantehnicon with the furniture. My sister Elizabeth afterwards arrived with Edith and Herbert from the Grammar School where he was continuing his studies, for a time at any rate. My father came home straight from work. I forget all the details of straightening the house and allotting of rooms. The removal men put up the beds and Mother and Elizabeth helped to make them up ready for the night. A standing up meal - a cup of tea and bread and butter - was hastily eaten, and partaken by the removal men as well, and lamps were filled with oil and lit with candles for the bedrooms for it got dark early. It may have been November, anyway, Christmas soon followed on.

My mother did not seem to like the house. There was a dark staircase down to the kitchen apartments of which she was scared. At the bottom of the stairs was a huge coal cellar. The rooms however were larger than those in the Walthamstow house and there were more of them. I suppose the shortly expected arrival necessitated the extra rooms, especially as the twins were now two-and-a-half years old, and the rest of us growing fast. It must have been a nightmare to a mother with all these young children about her, that staircase and the black cellar at its base. No accident ever occurred there, as far as I remember, though.

Well, we settled in and I remember how we enjoyed that first Christmas. My father played the flute and he put on a black cloak, stooped to our level, and we all followed in single file all over the rambling old house to the tune of the flute. This took place after that as a kind of Christmas morning ceremony until my father became too ill to lead any more. Of course I was quite oblivious to the fact that a baby was expected. Soon after Christmas my father's mother arrived to stay with us. She was a very dominating person -quite a typical Jewish matriarch. We were all ordered about by her and I remembered her even telling my mother what to do - how dared she! What I did not realise was that she had come to help at the birth. I felt sorry for my sister Elizabeth. She was ordered to scrub floors and make beds and do all kinds of jobs after she came home from school. I remember her face looking highly indignant at these things. She always said she worked up till twelve o'clock at night, but I hardly think that possible.

I was still at home with the ear infection. When I was presented at the school the mistress refused to take me until I was better. So I became familiar with the surroundings and helped in many little ways in the house. They told me that Mamma was not very well and I was glad to be of use. There was a spell of very cold weather soon after Christmas and we were frozen out. Stand-pipes were put up in the street. Fortunately there was one near our house and early each morning two or three of us went out with pails and water-cans, fetching water into the house for washing and for cooking.

At last the day came before the end of February when Grandma presented the new baby to us. It was a boy. Mother was ill and Grandma looked after her and the baby.

We were told to find a name for him. I started at the beginning of the alphabet and thought of Arthur. I liked the sound of it, so did the others and we all told Mother we had chosen the name of Arthur. He was an ordinary looking baby and, although his body was well formed, yet as I look back it seemed he had a series of set-backs. - things which necessitated visits to doctors and often treatment in hospital. He was backward in walking and when he did start his legs became bowed - he was suffering from rickets - then very common among children. For this he attended hospital for some time - had continual bathing and one doctor suggested splints. These, however, he rejected with all the force a child is able to assert and they were left off. Eventually, the legs straightened. His next trouble was eczema - so, back to the doctor once more. This was very troublesome but, with my mother's persistent treatment, at length disappeared. Then it was noticed his mouth was continually open and he snored at night. To the doctor again - and an operation for adenoids was found to be necessary.

Poor Arthur! When he at last started school he was behindhand and utterly bewildered. The operation had left him slightly deaf and we could tell by what he told us had happened at school that he had not heard properly what had been said. The words of songs and small poems that were taught at school he transcribed into meaningless jargon. He had a little girl friend whom he called Mary, but what her surname was we never even guessed, though we heard it several times. He was very slow at his lessons but how much was due to this lack of hearing we never knew. He seemed to get away with everything with a broad smile. He found this facial idiosyncrasy very useful and used it a great deal through life.

At the Mission Sunday School, to which we went when we were young, each in turn had a card to collect for the "John Williams," a ship which connected up the islands in the Pacific for missionary work. If we collected as much as five shillings we had a book about the work of the London Missionary Society. Of course, we only asked our friends and those adults we knew in the Sunday School and Mission Hall. When it came to Arthur's turn to collect my parents queried the wisdom of him taking a card. But he pleaded and it was allowed. His method of collecting was to show the person the card and, with his head on one side, just put on his beaming smile and the money was produced. He collected more than any of us much to our amusement and amazement.

He never made much advancement with his lessons but he learned to read and write a fair hand and to figure tolerably well enough to get him through the ordinary vicissitudes of life. He was good tempered, though rather inclined to be sulky and could not bear teasing which went on a great deal in our family, one against the other. School bells were rung in those days so that all in the neighbourhood could get to school on time. He evidently could just faintly hear this and would ask in his slipshod voice which he had adopted,

"Is-a-bell-ringing?"

So someone would say, "Oh, that's her name is it?" and after that time we teased him by saying,

"There's Isabel calling for you," to which he would reply in injured tone,

"Now stop it, stop it. I tell you!" But he soon forgot and would smile again.

The organisation of school classes was different from the present time. One had to pass a test before going into the next form, or standard as it was then called. He never attained higher than Standard Four which I suppose indicated that he spent

two years in each class as the highest was Standard Seven and the few who remained passed into Ex Seventh.

II

We were now back in Walthamstow and the question was, "What to do with Arthur when he was fourteen?" Naturally, he was unfitted for office work, so it must be some kind of handwork. We were all attending the Baptist Chapel and one of the men there had a wheel-wright business and he offered to take Arthur as an apprentice. The master got very fond of the boy and he found him a good worker, though rather slow in learning. Times were difficult, too. There was a terrible slump in trade following the Boer War and thousands of men were out of work. Wages were low and there was not even a small dole for the out of work - so, many roamed the streets homeless. The wheel-wright trade was hit as hard as any and the business stopped and Arthur was out of work.

He was now sixteen and helped as registrar in the Baptist Sunday School, and was well-liked by all his associates, but that did not help him in these terrible days to find a task in life suited to his limited abilities. His brother Herbert in Canada, who was doing fairly well as a farmer, then wrote and asked for him to go out to Canada to be with him. Arthur was only seventeen at that time. It was more of an ordeal for a boy of his nature, than it had been for Herbert, to cross the ocean alone but he seemed quite composed about it, and said goodbye with his usual smile on his face. I can just imagine him with the people on the boat, winning them with his pleasant face and everyone just chatting with him casually each day which would please him more than anything. He settled to his farming job with his usual hard work, but little imagination, but he was making a living and dwelling among his associates with friendliness and good humour.

We did not hear a great deal of the brothers' work out there. The letters home were full of incidents about the people they mixed with and very little about the work itself. The older brother had procured a farm but it had to be cleared before anything could be done with it so both of them were working as farm labourers and saving what they could for the future.

Then came the 1914 war and Herbert, as was described before, joined up and subsequently met his death on Vimy Ridge. That was the testing time for Arthur, he was driven much more to his own resources. My mother and Elizabeth took a trip out to Canada in 1921 to see him and to gather any information they could about the life of the two boys out there. They found Arthur a bit downhearted and had rather drifted into a way of letting himself go as far as general appearance was concerned. They did what they could for him and later on he rented a farm and married a girl much younger than himself, but who was a great help to him.

Now he was a man of property and much happier. He lived in a house of his own and soon a family grew up around them. His first born was a girl of whom he was very proud. Sad to say she died after an appendix operation when she was about six years old. He was very upset as he thought the world of her. However, more children came along and, with only one more loss, a family of two boys and two girls grew to maturity.

Arthur had, now, a farm of his own which he managed tolerably well. We never imagined he would become a rich farmer but, in that he brought up his family and kept the farm going, we were satisfied and, I think, he was

III

As the boys grew, the elder was bright at his lessons and went into an office. The younger loved animals and helped on the farm. The elder girl took a post in a family and the younger kept on at school and wanted to be a teacher. Money, however, was short and she contented herself with a clerkship at a bank. Both the girls married but at the time of writing the boys were both bachelors.

In course of time both the boys took over the farm, the elder one on the business side and the younger, the field work. Arthur and his wife, Bertha, lived with them. Bertha still did the housework and cooking. The boys, of course, wanted to bring the farm more up to date. This angered Arthur very much and he had long fits of depression. Of course, the younger men wanted to run the farm according to their ideas and Arthur was annoyed at every alteration.

At last, Arthur made the decision to move to town, leaving the farm entirely to the boys. Life then became much happier for them all. Arthur took on some light work gathering news for a local paper and, with a small old age pension, a new era of life began. The girls and their husbands lived near so that a good deal of time was spent visiting especially when grandchildren appeared which were his pride and joy.

At the time of writing he had developed some heart trouble and after a term in hospital was told he must take life more easily. So, we leave him with his wife bestowing every care on him, his children and grandchildren near at hand - the boys who were making a success of the farm not too distant, so we may imagine the smile coming back to his countenance as contentment once more settled upon him.

8 Percy - the delicate one

There was a day when my mother said to me, with a calm smile on her face,
"If I had another baby I would call her Mary."

A month or two before I had heard my mother and father speaking angry words at each other and my mother was in tears. It was years before I connected the two events but apparently the time had come when Mother had accepted the fact that another babe was on the way. So that when, one day in May 1892, I came home from school and was greeted by a stranger in the house who said,
"Come and see your new brother."

Of course I was delighted - not so, my sister Elizabeth. She had already started teaching and her response was,
"What, another little pest?"

She must have been recalling her sufferings at the last birth when my paternal grandmother was in charge.

There was no such upheaval now, things seemed to go rather smoothly. I was well over eight years of age and I promptly took charge of the baby. I watched him having his daily bath and I thought he was beautiful. He was very fair, his eyes the sweetest blue and mother made a long curl on the top of his head, the fashion in those days. I remember admiring his beautifully firm limbs and loved to help in the bathing operations.

He was called Percy and from the start he was my baby. I took him out, wheeling him up and down the road in his perambulator. All the neighbours stopping to admire him. He was wonderfully bright and good tempered - very quick and active in his movements. Coming in from school I always waited for some account of his exploits. One day he had climbed to the top of the lattice about eight feet high and then called out, crowing with glee - this before he could walk, he had crawled into the garden and then climbed.

Another day when he was trotting round the house he said to my mother,
"See my pie done."

And when Mother opened the oven door there was a tin full of cutlery oven-hot and some very discoloured.

There was a home-coming of shock for me, though. I arrived home to find Mother rubbing him vigorously with a towel and a neighbour standing by - alarm still on both of their faces. Then Mother related what had happened. It had been a year of drought and water was turned off at certain hours of the day. So my mother, as with all housewives, collected water for use in the house. The water for cleaning was stored in a wooden tub in the garden covered over with boards. My Father was at home ill and Mother was up stairs seeing to him leaving the baby downstairs, as she thought, shut in the kitchen. Hearing a low gurgling noise looked from the bed-room window saw two baby legs waving in the air above the water tub. She just said quickly to my father,

"I must run down and see what that boy is up to" - dashed quickly and rescued her baby, by this time, blue in the face.

Shouting for a neighbour to help her, rushed in, turned him upside down to get the water from his lungs then rubbed him back to life and he had returned to consciousness just before I came in. If ever a mother was glad there was such a thing as school for children as young as three, it was when Percy attained that age.

I can remember that first day, he had on a little plaid dress pleated from the waist - little puff sleeves tied up with red ribbon, the long curl across his forehead, and wearing a little white frilled pinafore, all these things were fashionable in those days. I took him to the classroom. The teacher was one we knew, a Miss Marks - a quick, lively little woman whom all the children loved.

"And who is this little girl?" she said.

"A little boy." I stammered and gave his name and particulars and would she keep him until I called.

So, life was full of promise for this beautiful, healthy, energetic child - the youngest of our bunch. He got on well at school too, and was popular with all the children. It was when he was six that trouble began. One morning he woke up in a high fever. There was swelling in the limbs too and he complained of pain. We had a nurse friend of the family named Miss Hunt whom we called Auntie Jenny. She happened to call that day or perhaps Mother had sent for her. My father was nearly frantic, possibly he guessed what the trouble was. Aunt Jennie promptly took charge and quietened everyone down in truly nurse fashion and the doctor was sent for. It was rheumatic fever - not at all uncommon with children in those days. But what a remarkable patient. The pain would come on at frequent intervals when he would call out, "Oh! my knee, my knees" and his teeth clenched with pain.

The moment it had subsided the smile came back, as well as the merry twinkle to the eye, and he would make some childish joke or call the cat and remained smiling until once more racked with pain.

Of course, the illness lasted some time and a long convalescence ensued. The round, rosy face and the lovely baby limbs had disappeared and a thin delicate looking child had taken his place. As so often happened in such cases the heart never recovered so he was continually in poor health and had long absences from school. He could not join in any sport - all this was barred to him but he was fond of fun and often he was the author of many classroom jokes.

One year he chanced to have a form master who seemed sometimes inept and incapable of class discipline. It was then Percy organised the pin game. Several boys in different parts of the classroom had pins fastened in the seat of the side of the boys concerned, and one would start twanging the pin making a small musical noise. The master would stop, look in the direction from which it came and said, "Now who is doing that?"

This was signal for it to commence at the other end of the room. This mystified the master and he turned in that direction and said,

"Oh, it's over there is it?"

It would then start somewhere else and the fun went on until the class was convulsed with laughter.

It was a few years later- when Percy had left school, that he attended a heart hospital and saw among the out-patients this same teacher who came up to him and spoke so kindly to him that his conscience smote him and he feared that it was the master's weakness of body which had caused his apparent failure at times to keep the attention of his pupils.

So, school days ended and even he must face the world of commerce. He knew he could not take any position which required medical examination. At this time a friend

of ours who was a chartered accountant had an opening for him in his office. The friend of course knew what he had to contend with and was sympathetic and Percy was able to learn the rudiments of office work under congenial circumstances. There were many breaks for illness -the trouble was a recurring one, and in 1914 the war broke out. The head of his office saw trouble ahead for himself and quickly joined up as pay-master to the troops and the office was closed. As many young men were joining the forces it was fairly easy for a young man to find employment and he was taken on a firm making cables which bid fair to keep in full, and even increasing, capacity.

In his teens Percy had become rather complaining and depressed in disposition - quite a change from childhood days. Why was he so different from other boys? He could not take part in any sport - not even cycling which was then becoming very popular He tried swimming but even getting in the water caused a heart-attack and he was exceedingly discouraged. Then a change took place. It was after he had offered himself for the army and been turned down that he went to our family doctor for advice. I have no idea how the doctor approached the subject but he must have been a clever psychologist. There was an immediate change in my youngest brother's attitude to life. He became much more cheerful he held his head high and there was a light in his eye we had not seen for many a day. His sense of fun and humour returned and he joined his fellows in the country rambles and quiet occupations. One thing the doctor had told him was that he must take care not to let a cold get hold on him.

Of course, he worked in town and overcrowded trains were his everyday portion. It astonished him too that men always wanted the window shut and when he was hard put to it to keep well. He then developed some sort of cult. If he felt the beginnings of a cold he would come home and say, "I'll wait a bit for my tea."

We came to know what this meant. He would then lay down on a couch in warm room and one could watch his body become completely relaxed. His breathing would gradually become easier and more even and after a while he would say, "That's all right. I have got rid of that," and would sit down to his tea as if nothing had happened.

Soon he had the appearance of a healthy young man. He went, occasionally, for a chat with his doctor who was exceedingly pleased with his condition and said once, "If you keep on like this you could live to be ninety" Of course, by this time, he was well into his twenties and although he had been friendly with a few girls, he had never fallen in love. And then it happened.

She was a charming girl. I had known her since she was five when I taught her in school. She was several years his junior but a good companion for him and such a happy disposition. But before he declared his love he sought advice once more from Dr Harris, "Ought he to marry? And how about having children? Was his complaint congenital?" The doctor assured him that he would perfectly safe if he could refrain from excitement. That there was no reason whatever why he should not bear completely healthy children and wished him all good fortune in his wooing.

So, at the age of thirty, he married Margaret Ramsay, aged just over twenty. She was quite cognizant of the situation with regard to his health, but was willing to take the

risk. Men were by this time returning from the war and the housing problem was difficult. So we decided to buy a house which was convenient for them to live with us for the early days of marriage at any rate.

By this time there was just Mother, my eldest sister and myself at home, so it did not require a very large house and as Mother was becoming old it seemed advisable to have someone in the house with her all day.

[Visits to emporium for furniture and the party.]

A rather amusing incident happened at the first week-end after their short honeymoon was over. Margaret had cooked her first joint and when dinner was finished they came to our sitting room to report, leaving the remains of the joint on the dish. We congratulated them and we all sat for a while laughing and talking together. When the young couple returned to their room the joint had disappeared. Of course, they thought one of us had played a trick on them but we all declared our innocence and detection work commenced. There was a ventilator to the window which was open. Could it be a cat had come in that way and escaped that way? It seemed impossible but on examining the wall underneath there were certainly the marks left by a cat's paws but no other clue was ever found to the mystery.

Life went on very smoothly with the young couple, the only slightly discordant note was that sometimes Mother interfered a bit with the young bride. She was only a girl after all and Mother felt she needed some direction. A year or two after the wedding we were all invited into their rooms for tea - a very nice looking iced cake held its central position on the tea-table. We enjoyed the repast very much and all felt that the one time the bride had progressed very much with her cooking and we congratulated her heartily on the wonderful cake. Then the young wife stood up and said very shyly - it is a birthday party. We were non-plussed at first for knew it was not her birthday or her husband's - then we realized this was her way of announcing they were to expect a child. We were very happy about it - Mother most of all. She had two grandchildren both boys and she hoped sincerely this might be a girl. Slowly the idea dawned us all that another room would be required and after a good deal of consultation it was agreed that we - Mother and her two daughters, should look for another house.

So we moved away - not far off so that visiting was easy. The months flew by and a girl was born - a very pretty baby from the first with fair hair and blue eyes. As the hair grew it became a mop of wonderful curls and she was the admiration of everybody friends and strangers alike - she was called Lorna. The young mother suffered a good deal after the birth and eventually had to go into hospital for an operation. The babe was sent to Margaret's mother while Percy managed by himself. Margaret was very weak and ill for some time and how solicitous he was for her welfare. Eventually she recovered except that she suffered from headaches a good deal but they were glad to be together as a family once more.

Then they gave up the large house and bought a smaller one at Higham's Park. Percy continued in his search for health and was still successful in warding off illness even through those anxious days of Margaret's illness. When the child was eighteen months old we all spent a holiday together on the south coast. We had a very happy time, the children Molly and Lorna, Elizabeth and I with mother and Margaret and Percy. Walter and some of his family also spent a few days with us.

But difficult days were approaching. The great after-war slump was upon us and the fear of dismissal hung precariously over every man. In Percy's office they had to work very hard and put in extra hours during the winter of 1927. Night after night he would travel wearily home then relax for a time to recover his health and spirits but the long hours were beginning to take their toll and to offset this he asked for annual holiday in May. It was that much too late. He was ill with influenza. He tried hard with his relaxation scheme but failed.

I went to see him one day and he said to me despondently,
"It doesn't work any more - nothing happens."

I tried to comfort him as well I could but the sickness had him in its grip and it held tightly. At last he had to go into hospital where they discovered the germ had got into the blood and he died in hospital in November 1928. He was magnificently brave in his fight against ill health. Gentle by nature and deeply religious, his home was happy and he was a good husband and father.

9 The Onlooker herself

Does one remember all the things one thinks one does - or are many things repeated, again and again, in the family intercourse and so fixed in the memory as remembered happenings? I do not know! Of course our lives overlap so much that the outward things of my home life have already been told. So this last chapter is more the inner life, the thoughts, the effect the rest of the family had on me and how things, as I see them, affected my character.

I was by nature a quiet child from the beginning - noticing a good deal and bottling thoughts up in my mind - weighing them one against the other and making judgements all by myself and never saying one word about them to a single person. I must have been quite a normal child from the beginning - I walked and talked at the time expected in an ordinary child. I ran about and played in the fields watching the others rather than participating with them in their games. I always waited to be asked to join in games and so was no leader in sports or in the fun, always a follower. In fact, I was very shy, even in the family. However, I knew within myself that I was intelligent because I learned as quickly as anyone else and was rather pleased with myself in consequence.

Also, I thought all grown ups were perfect. That was why at a very early age I accepted all that was told me and, as my father talked a lot about religion. I absorbed it all. I do not think in early years of my life I questioned one single thing that was told me by an adult. I gathered quite a lot of knowledge that way though.

At six I had measles which left me deaf in one ear at any rate. This was a tragedy to me as I had been a great listener though hardly ever expressing an opinion of my own. However I was beginning to read books and these began to take the place of people. Our library in those days was very limited and I somehow got the idea that reading stories was wrong. Even if we were not taught this it must have been the general idea of the time in religious families such as ours.

There was a library provided by nearly all the Sunday Schools of that day and they were story books of a kind but all about good children and good people - so I came to despise those that did not go to church or Sunday School - they were not good and not fit to associate with. We were not allowed to go into other people's houses or play with children in the street and, as I wanted to be "good," I always came straight home from school and so missed the healthy games of children generally. It increased my shyness too and I did not get that look of health and happiness which is the right of every child living a normal life.

As I grew older I had a tendency to curvature which I think was due to not joining in games and bending too much over books for I was fond of school lessons. I was entirely lacking in imagination.

Notes by Angus Willson (1985)

One remarkable feature of "The Onlooker", and one which provides further insight into Alice's character, is the form of the original manuscript. It was written, in pencil, on one hundred and fifty nine used Christmas cards. It is clearly marked "Rough Draft" and the "Synopsis" is no more than the chapter headings as given. In preparing the text very few changes have been made beyond the expansion of abbreviations and the plentiful addition of commas. The occasional, but tantalising, inserted notes have been included in square brackets, thus []. Alice made few corrections in the course of writing which is creditable bearing in mind that it consists of nine interwoven chronologies.

Although much of her own life is told through events involving others in the family, the story ends with a brief, almost plaintive, self-analysis. Contrasted with the purposeful, and almost strident, introduction this emphasises that we are sharing an unfinished version of the memoirs.

It might be considered peculiar that there is so very little about the second world war and the post-war period. However, it was clearly Alice's main intention to relate personal incidents concerning the family. Although her occasional references to wider matters are illuminating, the appeal is in her identification of character traits. It is a shame that her role as observer does not extend into the later period of her life and include more on the generation for whom "The Onlooker" was intended. Alice died in 1965 and over twenty years later it is intriguing to consider how she might view the "new age" in terms of the social changes influencing the role of the family.

1 The Parents

Curiously. Alice does not refer to her mother's name which was Jane Elizabeth Palmer. Her father's name, Marcus Ascoli, is identified in Chapter 3 as Walter's middle name.

W E Forster, in charge of the Education Department in Gladstone's first administration, was a Quaker and a Radical.

The East End Mission where both parents worked was called
Fathers time in the army

Location of the Guildhall Library

Horatio Bottomley

Chas. H. Spurgeon was a well-known non-conformist preacher.

Boer War 1899-1902

Marcus interred in Chingford Cemetery

Jane interred in Chingford Mount Cemetery. Family Grave No. 43870. (The In Memoriam card was mis-printed as No. 48370 and corrected by hand.)

2 Elizabeth Alice Ascoli

Locations of houses:

Stepney

Edmonton

Walthamstow Clapton

Locations of schools:
Stepney old and new
Walthamstow small private school

Sunday School and Baptist Church Mission School

Y.W.'s Bible Class

Location:
small cottage in country
moved to town, near sea

Interred in Sutton Road Cemetery, Grave No. 17904 Plot U.

3 **Walter** Marcus Ascoli

Walthamstow Grammar School

Tottenham Grammar School

LMS branch to Southend

Is it possible that the scholarship book allowance could be a quarter of a qualified teacher's salary?

Woodford, Essex. 1 Marlborough Road

Higham's Park

South Benfleet, Kitscroft

Bromley

Hayes, Kent

Keston

Married Emily Mary Simmons and had two sons:

Reginald Marcus Ascoli, who married Hilda and had two sons

Eric Walter Ascoli - emigrated to Rhodesia – married (1) Marion who had a son Peter and married (2) ?

4 **Edith** Amelia Ascoli

Aunt Jenny (note alternative spelling in chapter on Percy)

Royal Normal College for the Blind, Upper Norwood

School in Rhyl, North Wales

Although Alice twice refers to Edith having died in 1917, an In Memoriam card says May 4th, 1919. Aged 37 years. Interred at Chingford Mount Cemetery. Private Grave.

5 **Herbert** Albert

Scheme for land in Canada and charitable organisation

Manitoba

Canadian Regiment at Vimy Ridge

6 **The twins** – Henrietta Lilian and Beatrice

Short-hand typists school

Swedish iron firm

Friend's Meeting House, Walthamstow

George Hamilton Archibald

James Ryan was studying at Livingstone College when they met. They engaged in 1909.

Kingsmead Training College, Selly Oak

Pathe family at Trouville, Summer 1911

Father's relative in Paris

Beatrice went to Madagascar in 1909 ?

John Ormerod Greenwood, 1978, *Whispers of Truth. Quaker Encounters Volume 3.*

William Sessions: York. (pages 84-88)

Location of Mission

Young woman who accompanied Beatrice to Madagascar

Beatrice buried in Norwegian cemetery close to Morondara

Henrietta interred at Chingford Mount cemetery, No. Grave 43870.

Molly Ryan married Tom Watson: one daughter, one son

Susan Mary Watson, married Christopher: two sons, Jonathan, Matthew (15 July 1977)

Michael Watson, married two daughters, Rebecca?, Phillipa.

7 **Arthur** Ascoli

London Missionary Society

Married Bertha Toms

The names of Arthur's children are not given: girl (died age 6) +1

2 boys, bachelors in 1962. Walter married Lucille, Henry married Laura?

2 girls, both married. Alice

Arthur died in

8 **Percy** Edwin Ascoli

Cable firm

Interred in Walthamstow Cemetery, Family Grave No. 301 C/A.

Married Margaret Ramsey

Margaret Ascoli later re-married to become Margaret Wiltshire

Lorna Ascoli married Alfred Willson and later married Peter Fermer:

Janet Willson married David Thomas: Andrew, Philip

Stephen Willson married Elizabeth Smith: Robyn, Natasha, Amy

Angus Willson married Margaret Prince (6 January 1978)

9 **The Onlooker herself** – Alice Maud Ascoli

Dates

| | |
|----------------|---|
| 1851 | Jane Palmer, mother, born |
| 1874/75 | Married "first year or two Elizabeth on the way" |
| 1878 ? | Elizabeth born |
| 1880 ? | Walter born |
| 1884 Jan | Stepney to Edmonton |
| 1884 Dec 1 | Alice born (9 1/2 after marriage) |
| 1886 | Alice 2 Edith born, Herbert born |
| 1987 approx. | Father retired |
| 1888 July | Henrietta and Beatrice born. Walthamstow |
| 1890 Winter | to Clapton Alice nearly 7 |
| 1892 May | Percy born, Alice well over 8 |
| 1896 ? | Henrietta dies month or two before ninth birthday |
| 1898 Feb 16 | Henrietta died, aged 9 years and 7 months (Memorial card) |
| 1901 Oct 23 | Marcus, father died, aged 53 |
| 1902 | to Walthamstow |
| 1903 | Herbert to Canada aged 17 |
| 1905 July 29 | Emily Mary Simmons (see little card) |
| 1907 | Arthur to Canada |
| 1911 summer | Beatrice in France |
| 1912 May 1 | Beatrice married to James Ryan, Tananarive, Madagascar |
| 1914/15 | Walter from Woodford to Higham's Park, to South Benfleet |
| 1916 | Herbert returns to England |
| 1917 May | Edith died, Herbert killed in France |
| 1917 Summer | Beatrice and James home, Molly born |
| 1918 Oct | James Ryan killed |
| 1918 Dec | Christmas at South Benfleet |
| 1919 May 4 | Edith died aged 37 (see Memorial card) |
| 1921 June/July | Mother and Elizabeth visit Canada |
| 1922 | Percy 30 and Margaret 20 married |
| 1924. Jan 24 | Beatrice died in Madagascar |
| 1925 Nov | Lorna born |
| 1928 Nov 12 | Percy died aged 34, Lorna 3 |
| 1929 Mar 3 | Jane died, aged 77 |
| 1939 | Elizabeth retired aged 60 |
| 1948 Mar 22 | Elizabeth died aged 69 |
| 1950 ? | Mother died nearly 78 |
| 1959 ? | Walter died aged 79 |
| 1962 | Alice writes "The Onlooker" |
| 1965 | Alice died Arthur died |