

Wigan Archives Service
The Edward Hall Diary Collection

The Autobiography of a Superfluous Man

By Edward Hall

EHC/8



Edward Hall, c.1932

Introduction

EHC/8 is one of the dozen or so manuscripts in the collection written by Hall himself or close family members. The 'Autobiography of a Superfluous Man' is an account of Hall's life from birth in 1898 to the outbreak of the Second World War and his enlistment with the Royal Air Force. It is a fascinating account of a life at once remarkable, but in many ways typical of the times in which he lived, worked and raised a family.

It is written both as a memoir and as a history, and gives invaluable evidence both for those interested in Hall's personal story and those studying his diary collections and this remarkable legacy of his life's work and passions.

The transcript of this volume was produced by Bill Melling, Archives Volunteer, to whom thanks are to be given for his perseverance, detective skills and passion for all things Edward Hall!

For Bill Melling's edited extracts from the records of Hall's early life, please see Past Forward Magazine, Issues 63 and 64, www.wigan.gov.uk/Resident/Museums-archives/Past-Forward.aspx

Editor's Note

All diary transcripts have been produced with the intention of faithfully reproducing the text of the original manuscript exactly as it appears. All spellings and punctuation marks have been transcribed as they appear; where clarification was thought necessary by the transcriber, an explanation, current spellings or punctuation have been added in square brackets or as a footnote.

To Em

Justified in her children

Joan (wife of Lt. J.J. Enders, U.S. Army).

John (at the age of 19, second officer, Merchant Navy,
and holder of four campaign stars).

“Bunk’ (at the age of 17, holder of a State Scholarship,
University of London).

“As fathers commonly go, it is seldom a misfortune to be fatherless,
and considering the general run of sons, as’seldom a misfortune to be
childless’

Lord Chesterfield



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1898-1915

Diaries fascinate me, and I am a keen collector of them in the original,
the earliest specimen in my collection being that maintained by a
Pluralist parson-farmer about the middle of the 18th century. I too have

been a diarist in a spasmodic sort of fashion, my first effort dating as far back as 1916, when, as a youth of seventeen, I was undergoing military training in a north of England camp. On reperusal, no particular promise as a diarist is indicated, and the diary expired in a pencilled scribble, some eight months after its inception; indeed, it would never have been commenced upon but for the fact of its having casually come my way as a Christmas present from my sister May; and its existence was completely forgotten by me until it was returned to me some years after the war, by yet another sister, into whose care I had apparently entrusted it, before proceeding, as I then hoped, for the 'front'—a hope which never materialised.

My next attempt proved much more ambitious and sustained, but apart from its interest to my two elder children as a detailed record of their infantile sayings and doings, it is more a tribute to my staying powers and minute calligraphy, than to any honesty of purpose or perception of the drift of my life. It was commenced upon on January 1st, 1924. for no apparent reason that I can now either recollect or detect, and the sequence of diaries, increasing in size with each successive year went on until 1926,

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that particular diary expiring in the month of March, when a series of financial crises culminated in that major disaster which determined the period of residence in the town of my birth, and also put a period of daily discipline which still did not reflect the true state of affairs.

What prompted me to make yet another attempt in the month of December, 1934, I cannot recollect. The circumstances were certainly propitious, if the somewhat parlous state in which I then found myself, can be accorded that term; or perhaps I had been drawn into the discipline again upon discovering several blank pages in the abortive diary from 1926. Certainly I do remember that I once more decided to dedicate the effort to my children, now increased by one who might later feel resentment in having been born too late to figure in the earlier series. Scorned and rejected by the world outside my own little circle, perhaps someday they would correct their immature conclusions and assessments by a considered study of what lay behind the scenes in the adult lives of their parents, reflecting a stormy past of which they could but dimly surmise, and indicating a future — or lack of same — which was sufficiently reflected in the attitude, even towards them, of the folk at Darton.

Be that as it may, between the years 1934 and 1939, with breaks sometimes of months, sometimes of a year or more, the diaries persisted, so perhaps it was after all, an inherited trait, and my immediate circumstances only served to put into operation that which was latent

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in me. My father was certainly a diarist of sorts, limiting his daily entries in the small note-books he used for the purpose, to the state of the weather, gardening, and perhaps some business memoranda. Unfortunately, no specimens of his diaries are extant, but I may yet have the good fortune to secure a specimen of the art in the hand-writing of an ancestor or collateral – say, that of the Rev. Samuel Hall, the pig headed tutor of young De Quincy, in his Manchester school days; for I am of an old Lancashire family, my grandfather being the first of the Halls to quit Ashton-under-Lyne, for centuries the location of his forebears, in order to establish himself over the border in Yorkshire. He had a staunch companion in his wife, the daughter of Thomas Bentley Kershaw, a cotton merchant of some standing at one time, but who had lost one fortune in the cotton famine which resulted upon the American civil war, whereupon he had proceeded to establish himself in the coal agency business in London, there in due course to amass another.

T.B.K was no ordinary man, though Victorian to the core. He apparently kept no diary, but found self-expression, adequate and inevitably, in poetry; and in addition to a pocket book filled with callow specimens of the art in his hand-writing, I possess a copy of his somewhat rare Buds of Poetry, published by subscription in 1845. The quality of the Kershaw muse, the interests and state of mind of the author of the Buds, are sufficiently indicated in such titles as Babylon, Mancunian, Waterloo; My Native Land,

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The Homes of England, Victoria; and particularly in The Dying Boy to His Father, The Lost Sister, The Blind Child, The Dying Youth to Spring, Weep for the Dead, and Lines on the Death Of an Infant – his own. As for The Warrior's Presentiment, if only for its second canto, it should not lightly be allowed to slide into oblivion with its author:

His was only a human soul!
He had dreamed on his bed of rest,
That a raven had stooped – in its winged roll –
To repast on his naked breast!

Notwithstanding, young Kershaw's Introduction to his precious Buds should excite no superior smile, however high falutin the language in which he enshrined his unconquerable determination to get the best out of two possible worlds.

"As the following poems are my first offering at the shrine of Literature, I must claim from my readers the indulgence which is due to a young and inexperienced author, and more especially to one who, of the twenty five summers of his life, has laboured fourteen amidst the unpoetical sights and sounds of a Cotton Mill, and whose limited education has been obtained at the sacrifice of his midnight

rest. Few have been my opportunities of study; and while discharging the duties of my avocation, or mingling with the multitude, my spirit has breathed forth the subsequent effusions.'

The public for his next surge into print, though necessarily limited to that section which follows (or used to) reported debates

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in extensor, or the hardly less copious letters to the Editor, was apparently by no means negligible in the period of the cotton famine, in part no doubt attributable to the generous latitude allowed by the Editor to the personality exchanging belligerent champions of either North or South America, and despite considerable prolixity of argument and the quoted facts and figures bearing upon the vexed subject – whole bewildering, repellent columns of them, which the proud T.B.K. transposed into his bulging scrap books. Beaten in the end in both reputation for mercantile acumen and credit on 'Change', by the logic of events superior even to Lancashire canniness, still arguing, he turned his back upon faithless Lancashire, and departed South, there to make easier game of feckless Londoners. He died as he would have wished to, though at the somewhat early age of 62, seized in the act of signing a cheque by an apoplectic stroke which terminated his career. And forthwith was despatched one of those leisurely telegrams, so redolent of the '80's, addressed to my grandfather at Barnsely:

Dear Ned

Father is very bad, but do not frighten my sister. Send her up today without fail.

I am hardly likely to die in the confident act of signing a cheque, nor am I of a particularly choleric temperament (as I rather suspect my maternal grand-father was), but I like to think that I inherited from him the literary strain in me. T.B.K. had out-lived his wife, one of the Ashton-under- Lyne Halls, but in

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bestowing one of his daughters upon my grand-father, he further cemented the family connection, and established it.

Of my forbears upon the paternal side beyond my grand-father, I know nothing more than can be gathered from a few old heavily black bordered mourning cards, and four samplers of an earlier date, the earliest specimen of the latter having been dutifully and painstakingly worked by Deborah Hall in 1822, listing thereon the numerous progeny, alive and dead, of her parents, Edward and Ann Hall, who commenced somewhat uncanonically by providing themselves with a son and heir within six months of their marriage in 1790. They were still resident in the ancestral home of the Halls, Moss-de-Lee, a place

sufficiently large to do duty as a mill later on following upon the subsequent decline in local consequence of the family. My uncle Tom possessed an indifferently painted representation of the old place, with regard to which, knowing my curious interest in such matters as a boy, he once declared that the Hall coat-of-arms was discoverable upon it. It was discoloured and soiled with age, and most careful and diligent scrutiny upon my part failed to reveal the coat-of-arms, until my uncle, who was possessed of a sense of humour in addition to a mild share of the Characteristic Hall mulishness, pointed to the donkey which was browsing in a hedgerow in the foreground of the painting.

Going back, there is a tradition (retailed for what it is worth) that the bells of Ashton-under-Lyne parish church were given by the Halls in the 17th century; and that our particular branch of the family had its origin, somewhat on the bar sinister side, in a

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deserted hut upon the wild moors. As Deborah Hall saw no particular shame in 'sampler'ing' the urgent virility of her parents. I see no reason either why I should blush over a similar amiable weakness – or strength, according to accepted Lancashire standards not entirely out of favour even today – in a remote ancestor. The Halls were ever prolific, and forms and ceremonies sometimes had to wait on events.

But to return to known or reasonable presumptive facts nearer our own day, and in particular, reverting to diaries, I repeat that it is a pity that those of my father are apparently no longer extant, or otherwise perhaps those gaps in my knowledge of him might be supplied, and that affection which I craved from him, and which perhaps at one time he felt towards me until he abandoned all hope of realising his ambitions on my behalf, might have been found committed to its pages. He died miserably of cancer in 1938, hating me with a hatred only possible, alas, in blood relationships.

I was born on 29 May 1898, in a row of small houses in Park Road, Barnsley, a circumstance not to be taken as a fair indication of the local consequences of my parents, particularly of my father, in a provincial town such as Barnsley then was; for, as a matter of fact, he was the second son of three, of a successful engineer and iron-founder, and the Railway Foundry was the most flourishing of the three local and rival firms of that nature. My grand-father, 'old Ned Hall', was still very much alive, and still very much the head of the firm he had founded back in the '70's'; and still disinclined.

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to consider his three sons other than in the category of employees. Of fine physique, his noble leonine face graced by a fine square beard, he was both the terror and admiration of his one hundred-odd

employees. Many were the tales current of his masterful, domineering ways. Quick to anger, he visited his wrath not infrequently upon the offender in a manner which would certainly not be tolerated by the workmen of today; but he was not vindictive, and the incident usually closed with a scathing denunciation, and perhaps a kick in the seat. On one occasion of a practical joke, he strapped a workman to a turning lathe, and set it in motion. The single occasion when the laugh was upon him, was still retold with glee around the foundry when I was a youth there – how, in the act of sawing a plank in two he sawed himself off the unsupported end of it, and saved his limbs at the cost of clutching hold of some steam- hot piping in his undignified descent from aloft. His sons were by no means excepted from his high-handed behaviour, and on the occasion of a difference of opinion between him and my father, the latter incontinently knocked him flat in his own garden, enlisted forthwith in the Royal Engineers, and only sulkily allowed himself to be bought out some thirteen months later. I have seen a portrait of him in his regimentals, complete with cocky little pork pie hat atop. So little love was lost between them, apparently, that my father actually contemplated emigrating shortly after his marriage and the birth of my eldest sister Amy.

The old man, as a result of over-work and inattention to his supposedly weatherproof constitution, caught a chill at the Foundry,

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which developed dangerously, and he spent the last three or four years of his life as a semi- invalid, dying in 1902. The funeral was, of course, the occasion for a final demonstration of the hearty goodwill in which he was held by all his workmen, who formed a procession behind the coffin, and saw him to the grave in the local cemetery, where he lies, surmounted by a massive red granite slab, suitably inscribed 'engineer and iron-founder of this town' and with a heavy iron chain surround appropriately cast at the foundry of his fashioning. The account of the funeral was off-printed upon satin from the columns of the Barnsley Chronicle, for the prideful consolation of his sorrowing family and connections in Yorkshire, Lancashire and London. His wife, from all accounts a termagant (the pram in which I arrived for inspection was never allowed entry, even into the passage) whom I but dimly recollect as the donor of shiny three-penny bits when I was brought to her bedside upon the Sunday duty visits payed by father, soon followed him, and the three sons entered into their most promising patrimony – promising indeed when it was borne in mind that my father's wage, when he married in the early 90's was but 26 shillings a week! The sons never looked back, and within a very few years, had all reached thir goal, in the possession of one of the newly-built houses at the fashionable Huddersfield Road end of the town. They had arrived.

And so had I, in the meantime; and very early I gave an indication of something in my make-up which should have given my father pause

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in his plans and ambitions for my future; for, at the age of 4, on the very day I was emancipated from frocks, I ran away for the first time – or perhaps it would be fairer to all concerned to say that I wandered away, dragging behind me my toy wooden engine (my father as an engineer, be it remembered, and I was his eldest son, and the education had commenced). When my father arrived home for his mid-day meal, there, chalked upon the stone- flagged causeway in front of the house, for all to see, including himself, he saw the following blow to his hopes – NED IS LOST! That same night he carried me back home in his strong arms the four miles distance from the colliery village of Dodsworth, where I had been picked up by a friendly miner who deposited me in his bed pending further developments. I had lost my engine, though.

I have an even earlier recollection; but a month or two past my second birthday, I see my mother in her bed; the sun is descending, and the little room is full of light; my childhood companion has been born, my madcap sister Evelyn. The complement of sisterhood was now complete – in order of age, Amy the brilliant scholar; Edie the sulky Martha of the household; May the prettiest and moodiest of the lot; and the bright, energetic, mischievous Evalyn; and the tally remained thus for the six years subsequent to my birth, when, exactly to the day, on the 29th of May, 1904, my dearly beloved brother Harry ("Sonny") was born – crippled in the act of birth, and doomed to wear steel- sided surgical boots until, possibly in the act of attempting to stand erect in them, just before his fifth birthday he tumbled head

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first into an open drain, developed meningitis, and plunged me into grief the pangs of which I still feel, over forty years later. Would that he had lived – the story of my life might have been vastly different.

As the companions of my childhood but too rarely enter into the diaries of my manhood – to the discredit of us all – suffice it to say at this juncture that but one more child was born to my parents, John, my junior by eight years, and consequently at a disadvantage owing to the disparity in years which separated us, quite apart from the fact of his being a perpetual reminder of the brother I had lost, and whose place in my heart no other could ever take.

By the year 1908, after a succession of houses step by step indicating the sound financial situation of the Foundry, the house at the Huddersfield Road end of the town was not only envisaged, but the field was purchased in Salisbury Street, the plans and elevations drawn out by my father, and the erection of the house supervised by him. Solidly built in stone, it was at once his pride and our mortification, for it threw a great burden upon my mother and the girls,

and the large garden in its rear (subsequently suffering the addition of another field which was promptly converted into a tennis court), was my particular province, where, under the direction of my father, and with my boyhood pals wearily sitting upon the wall awaiting his pleasure and my release, I dug and delved, mowed the lawn and the tennis court, clipped the privet hedges, washed slimy flower-pots, countered the drought with endless brimming watering cans, and cleaned out the stinking hen-run; with

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the advent of a car (of the open variety, with a door for exit in the rear, which we children obeyed the order to make use of upon hills of any real gradient, by tumbling out like rabbits). I scraped bricks and assisted in the laying down and taking up of the drive (the angle of which never seemed to satisfy my father), and also incurred the acute displeasure of my mother by involving my clothes to their detriment in the course of cleaning operations directed at that hated, messy, brassy, leather-upholstered monstrosity of a car. And when I had nothing else in particular to do, and despite the fact that we now had a daily servant in addition to the weekly washerwoman, I turned the mangle, lit the wash-house fire and filled the wash-tubs and copper, and rose betimes for the cleaning of the boots and shoes of the entire household. Precious few are the hours I have devoted to gardening since my emancipation; and the pairs of footgear I have since cleaned, apart from my own, are relatively inconsiderable in numbers as are the specimens still extant of the type of boot affected by my father, with its upper lace holds protected by ornamental pressed steel guards.

My week-ends were provided against, Saturday afternoons being earmarked for rent-collecting operations, bait sufficient to my father's purpose being offered in the permission to pocket the amount of tram fares, provided I walked to the village of Worsborough, some three miles distant, in which place was situated my father's investment, a row of colliers' cottages; and there was also the promise (never substantiated) of coming into their possession upon attaining my twenty-first birthday. The week-end was rounded off by two attendances at Sunday school and Church choir respectively, a course which usually left me pretty

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exhausted, and almost prepared for school upon the following Monday. It must not however, be thought that life in the Salisbury street plane of values was around of unrelieved gloom or dull slavery; there were periods when gardening was impracticable, or when father was otherwise engaged; and school holidays were both frequent and of generous length; and we children had grown up together, indulging in group games which

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would now increase both in scope and intensity as a result of more space for their development. The game of Dobby (hide and seek) played outside hailing distance of the house, or playing at keeping house in Windermere Villa, the disused greenhouse allocated to us for play, and conveniently situated at a point furthestmost from the house itself, could only be put a period to at some inconvenience to those who required our services elsewhere. And anyhow, it would have taken a far longer course of adult Hall discipline, to knock the mischief out of either Ev or myself. That my father was not unmindful of our claims to be treated occasionally as children, irrespective of what plans he had in mind for us all individually as adults, was instanced in the awning erected near the hen run, and the tennis court beyond; and certainly for three months in every year, until he purchased the car, we could look confidently and excitingly forward to the annual treat of a fortnights holiday at the sea-side – the advent of the car plunging us into a series of holiday-less summers, not because he could not afford the additional expense, but simply that he considered weekend car-rides an ample compensation in lieu. Not until just before the war were we released from this summer bondage, when paradoxically enough, though quite in keeping with his desire to go one better than his brothers, he took the lot of us to the Scilly Isles of all places.

But the car could not come between us and perhaps a greater thrill and joy than the sea-side – Christmas, and its presents and parties and goodwill; for, to do our parents but fair justice, they entered almost as fully as us into the spirit of the Season, though perhaps from a different view point. My abiding recollections of happier aspects of my childhood are coloured by Xmas, and even in Hopwood Street days, a party of such magnificent conception was planned, that its execution demanded the hiring of St Mary's Parish Hall (where,

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incidentally, the future husband of my sister May, cut her head open whilst whirling her round in the course of a set of Lancers). As for Salisbury Street days, can any of us forget standing impatiently in the bay window of the Drawing Room, looking down the snowy street, waiting for the first glimpse of old Doughty and his rumbling cab, which had never ceased collecting and depositing our guests at the superb and superior Arcade Hall, during the past hour or so. And the flutter and giggles as he opened the cab door and we tripped out of its unhygienic and musty interior, and accepted, somewhat self-consciously the tribute of envy from the double line of spectators not of the Barnsley elect, assembled before the entrance to the Arcade Hall; for although there was already a sort of precedent in the annual Charity Ball held at the Drill Hall, with entrance by ticket, no one could have conceived such a pass as that whereby entrance to one of our dances could have been otherwise than limited to the Huddersfield

Road clique, and their connections, mostly business, among the wealthy colliery folk. Just imagine a state of affairs where one of those spectators, so envious of us as we tripped along the strip of red carpet, could decide to purchase the right to rub shoulders with their betters! So, my sisters, all in white and swans'-down and warm over-shawls and be-ribboned shoes, and myself, for once not feeling acutely miserable in my Eton suit and black, shiny pumps, passed beyond their ken, into Fairyland and a blaze of light and all the bustle of a pre-war Xmas party. I wonder how much such a party must have cost my father—£50, say—£50 in English gold sovereigns. Jellies, not evolved out of synthetic crystals; blanc-manges, not incipid in taste; trifles notor-

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-iously inclining towards biliousness; iced cakes of a richness and architectural design, the art and honesty of producing which must have passed away with that generation, alas; Christmas decorations which fairly took your breath away in their profusion and a real dance band from Leeds, playing the waltz tunes we hardly recognised as the same we had been accustomed to hear at Miss Taylor's (also of Leeds) select dancing classes. And all round the gaily lit Hall, the mothers (and somewhat later on, even some of the fathers) of us all. And the tricky little ornamental dance card, with coloured pencil attached by a red tasselled cord – the rush for one of the pretty Wood or Lodge girls from Ryhill, or for Belle Carr, the colliery managers daughter from Dodsworth, and the belle of the ball; and the balancing in my mind of pride in my father and his achievements, and the fear that she would eventually be reserved for something more eligible than a Qualter Hall; and the mortification of having to reserve at least three dances for your Aunts, with still no less than four of the bewitching De Miramonde girls unplaced on your card!

And above all mundane joys, the Masonic Hall, so much more prized for its exclusiveness and for the added distinction of occurring but each alternate Xmas. And how the real power of Barnsley descended among we children, and we penetrated the Holy of Holies of the Masonic Hall itself, dancing under a blue dome, so prettily spangled with gilt stars, no expense spared (tickets a guinea a time – and there were parents of friends of ours who would gladly have paid 5 guineas for the circumscribed privilege); a real Punch and Judy show, as well as a simply enormous Xmas tree, whose topmost star almost lost itself among those painted

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On the dome. And Father Xmas in his rich red robe, with real ermine trimmings – some whispered that he was a real live Lord, or at the meanest, a baronet. And above all, my father, looking so exquisite and nice in his evening dress – my father, of all people! How proud I was, how good to be a Hall, a Qualter Hall, at Xmas, when school was

closed, and the garden looked doubly attractive under snow (a hard frost was equally welcome, as it eclipsed gardening operations); and Xmas morning itself, and how all we children managed somehow to scramble either into or upon the sacred bed of our parents, and displayed our treasures, and made our own offerings to those who were so good to us –why, there was even a fire burning cheerfully in the grate, and Dad was actually wearing a clown's hat, and blowing a Tommy Talker! Whatever next – oh yes, there was the 'waits' outside, singing the dear old Xmas carols; and Sunday School where we sang them, whilst in our absence great preparations were in force in the culinary department, and as we sat, enormously replete after Xmas dinner, the Old Town silver prize band filed onto the lawn, and we children tried hard to suppress our delighted embarrassment at the taking of such a glorious liberty – our traditional enemies, too, their sons, hangers on to the band, and staring at us through the French windows ; and the whole half crown which I would be given, to hand to the conductor; and unlimited pennies to still more Old Towners, in their rags at the front door, bawling snatches of carols through the keyhole for the next fortnight after the event. Oh, that it was always Xmas, and childhood never faded. Yes, my childhood was not entirely one of unrelieved gloom or dull slavery; and on reflection, my father's ambition to out-do others, had its points.

But to return to the house, that apotheosis of getting on and

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getting somewhere, it was fitted throughout with new-fangled electric light; the hall passage was laid out in geometrically designed tiling; there were genuine, if somewhat amateurish, hand painted panels to the doors leading to both the dining and drawing rooms; there was conservatory leading of the dining room, too, and, significantly, an outside lavatory for the accommodation of the servant; and the weekly washing operations were also banished outside the house, into a specially designed wash-house – all of which definitely elevated us into a higher social plane, despite the inconvenience of an upstairs lavatory minus the convenience of artificial lighting; an approach to the bedroom occupied by my two elder sisters, by way of that occupied by sonny and myself; an enormous mirror situated upon the dark landing, into which more than one visitor had barged; and a linen cupboard door (invariably left open) occupying the upper half of the wall in the bedroom which was subsequently mine following upon the death of Sonny, and which was designed, perhaps not intentionally, to scalp, me every time I danced into my bedroom. And there was that odour of smouldering wood which pervaded the house for a week or two following upon the initial lighting of a fire in the bedroom of my father and mother, its source eventually being traced to the supporting beams under the hearth there.

As for my father's taste in other directions, the 'family tree' sampler worked by Deborah Hall, was relegated to the servants attic; and

upon receipt of a magnificent inlaid lang-settle from the relics of a deceased Lancashire connection, he accommodated it to the requirements of the kitchen, by cutting off one end of it, and stuffing

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the seat with red plush; It was certainly comfortable enough as a result, but

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something stirred in me at the time which struck a decided note of divergence in matters aesthetic between my father and myself. As to my destiny in life, there was never the slightest doubt or argument at any time; for was I not the eldest son of George Harry Hall, partner and director in the long-established firm of Messrs Qualter, Hall & Co. Ltd (originally my grandfather had other partners, but the last was eliminated by the suicide of Mr Qualter in the 90s) Railway Foundry, Barnsley. My father had received his education at St. Mary's Boys School, under old'Boss' Frankland, who was still the respected headmaster and who was required annually to furnish one boy, qualified by the winning of a foundry scholarship, value one guinea, for a guaranteed future in either the offices or the works. Further, Mr Frankland was required to train up the rising generation of the Halls, to wit, my cousins Tom and Jim, and myself, against our apportioned destiny. Tom would succeed my father as traveller- canvasser for the firm; I would go into the Drawing Office(quite irrespective of either my qualifications, which were about nil, or wishes on the subject; and Jim was destined to succeed my esteemed Uncle Tom upon the administrative and accounts side. (At present, though the succession was assured, no one was envisaged as succeeding my irascible Uncle Willie, father of Jim – which was perhaps as well for the comfort of mind of his successor-to-be).

Mr Frankland was a grand fellow, one of the old school of masters, wielding quite unnecessarily a thick bamboo cane as a support to his

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authority – an authority which no boy ever dreamed of questioning; and he evinced a decided partiality towards me, which I returned within my limitations, one of which was my inability to benefit fully by his instructions and correction. Certainly I was never far removed from the head of the class in History, English Literature, or Scripture – particularly Scripture; but my position in all other and more vital subjects produced a state of mind in him and my father, which was reflected in the interchange of confidential letters, and extra tuition at the hands of my eldest sister, Amy, then fairly launched upon the road to High School, and University beyond – a career, and the high hopes fostered of it, blasted almost at the outset of her arrival at Newham,

where intense application to her studies brought on an attack of brain fever, followed by epilepsy. The epilepsy remained, and her studies were thereafter confined mostly to financial news columns and brokers' reports, which placed her in a sufficiently stable position financially, and qualified her subsequently to point out the moral at various times of my own chequered career.

Of what earthly use to me in my future career would history, English literature, or damned Scripture, my father would reiterate, with supreme disgust (his contempt for biblical education in no way turned him from the convention of sending all his children to Sunday School, or me to St. Mary's choir – where, incidentally, I came under the influence of Dr Soar, who devoted himself (without the slightest of encouragement from my parents) to my musical education – God bless him!

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Clouts on the head failing to produce the desired result (both my cousins were now advanced upon their own merits to Secondary education) thrashings increased upon me. That aspect of my education I could only too easily amplify, and hardly over-emphasize. My mother favoured a thick leather shaving strop, a course of which was inevitably followed up with the minatory warning – 'Wait until your Father comes home!' And my father was never without his steel two-foot rule, which he invariably carried in a special long pocket down the side of his trousers – a wicked instrument, which swished as it bent upon the downward stroke, and left narrow, painful weals upon the bared posteriors. Well-intentioned at the inception of this course of correction, the medicine tended to arouse and satisfy a dormant sadistic streak in him (all his successive animal pets were cowed with the exception of Tiger, who was more than his match; and I have seen him use the two-foot rule upon my helpless, crippled brother), but it ceased with startling and unpremeditated abruptness following upon the occasion when I turned upon my torturer as he hounded me across the kitchen yard – fists clenched, I faced up to him, shouting 'Cad, cad, cad!' through my scalding tears. I still see the uplifted arm, which fell slowly to his side – the look of utter repulsion!

From that day he closed his heart to me; or at any rate, the real process commenced, and there was little in our future relations or contact which could stay the drift. Stinted in pocket-money, he had to punish a petty thief; penalised in my spare time, consequent upon the claim of a large garden and greenhouse, he had to take

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the necessary steps against sullenness and scamped work; no church-goer himself, my acceptance of the Bible in my periodic adolescent spasms of religious fervour, excited his contempt and positive rancour; and having effectually deprived me of opportunity to

share in the out-of-school activities of my class-mates, he was sarcastic when I brought home the only sports trophy I ever won – a hairbrush, second prize in a sack-race.

Bitterest of all was his support of my mother in surely the queerest and most intolerable of sartorial notions ever woman possessed or inflicted upon her child. Forced against my will to attend a Sunday-school situated in the lowest, most class-conscious of districts – Old Town – I had, in addition to running the gauntlet of hoots, taunts, and jeers, sometimes even to dodge stones and brick-bats aimed at me by care-free gutter-snipes as I proceeded along, attired in my Eton suit, skin-tight kid gloves, and with a bowler hat as the crowning indignity – to offset which, and as the result of a further curious sartorial whim on the part of my mother, I was innocent of tie over the conspicuous white dickey I wore! I could obviate some of the discomfort attendant upon the bowler, by prolonging summer-time and 'boaters' until well into November, but there was no solution for the absent tie other than that provided by one of my sisters, who inked one in upon a photograph taken of me about this period. At the age of 13 I was regarded as a bit odd. I still am.

My father's philosophy in life could perhaps best be summed up in a piece of advice to me, oft repeated and emphasised as he made fresh

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successful business contacts – make plenty of friends; you never know how useful they may prove to you later on in life. In some respects he could certainly quote his own example; I never, for instance, heard him swear, and I certainly never saw him under the influence of drink – at least, in those days of my youth; but a more inordinately vain or boastful man it would have been difficult to parallel. His unblushing account of a wind so powerful that he was obliged to proceed in low gear during the course of a descent into Lancashire, used to reduce us to a state of mingled amusement and embarrassment, especially when related in the presence of company – and probably not for the first time so far as they were concerned. Another stock story, though of a somewhat later date, was concerned with a cruising zeppelin, which crossed over Barnsley and dropped its bombs upon a burning slag-heap at Dodworth; and how he entertained the girl workers (including two of my sisters, then upon voluntary war-work) there, with funny stories, whilst another senior official proceeded outside the factory in order to watch the progress of the monster overhead; 'and', he would quietly add, with an inimitable smug complacency and a characteristic toss of the head which used to torture all of us, 'I wonder who was the braver of the two?' And he accepted, not without conscious pride and as of a right, the title of Master about the house, originally without distinction of company by my mother.

Thrice in my boyhood did he surprise me with unwanted largess – for

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the conservation of money was writ large in his creed where the education of his children was concerned. The first occasion was that of an annual choir treat, when we boys of St. Mary's Church choir were taken by train to Cleethorpes, and he gave me a whole half-crown, which I duly spent, only to learn to my bitter cost that it had been intended primarily as a gesture, to flourish before the less fortunate of my friends; that I had spent the whole of it, in one single day, earned me a thrashing which I can remember to this day, and reproaches for weeks after subsequently (he did not know, however, that I had smoked no fewer than seven cigarettes in the locked lavatory of the train as we returned from Cleethorpes). On the second occasion, another half-crown was forthcoming, when I proceeded upon a fortnight's visit to relations upon my mother's side, in Leamington; but this time, in view of my protracted stay (and possibly influenced by the fact of their being in the nature of 'poor relations'), I was permitted to indulge myself, in order thereby to acquire experience calculated to stand me in good stead later on in life. Would that they had given me more frequent opportunity in the handling of cash – it would possibly have saved them, as well as myself, from much bitterness later on. As for the third instance of generosity in a big way, I have never been able to solve the enigma of the shilling which he presented to me upon one Ascension Day festival, a festival which included a challenge cricket match between St. Mary's Boys' School and a village team at Cawthorne. Perhaps he had secured a large order for the Foundry, or his animosity towards the church was temporarily in abeyance for some reason or

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other; but gave me a shilling he did, of which one penny went into the collection plate to salve my conscience, and the rest – well, at any rate, I secreted into the house in Salisbury Street, and into the bed which I shared at the time with my crippled brother, a fair share of the good things I had been sampling most of the afternoon at Cawthorne. Endowed with pretty acute feelings, and a sensitiveness which my outward conduct all too successfully obscured; embittered, cowed, brutalised; I sometimes wondered whether I was really the son of my parents, and indulged myself in all sorts of queer suppositious conjectures regarding my origin, inclining at one time to favour a fraud practiced upon myself and my alleged parents, by the gipsies who still frequented our town. On the other hand, it may have been nothing more than an expression of the wander-list in me (my favourite author at that time being Ballantyne) but I distinctly remember cultivating and assuming a devil-may-care air and loose-limbed lounge (though not on Sundays, of course, in my Eton suit) in the hopes that I should be taken by strangers as a Canadian, in whose country all the Ballantyne heroics were performed. As for my parents, they too must at times have wondered how they came to be saddled with such an intractable

offspring. Seriously enough, I idealised and worshipped my father in some of my moods – and his. He was handsome, strong, rich; he was possessed of a moustache which I prayed I might emulate when I too came to the desirable state of manhood; and I was loyally convinced, and prepared even to argue it out with my cousins, that he was the mainstay of the foundry – an assurance which needed no further backing from him. Oh, that he

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had not succeeded in life, and that those pleasant walks along the canal banks following upon the visits to the Foundry in order to open the Sunday mail, had never been succeeded by rides in a loathed, dust raising, stinking nuisance of an open car. Not until he was in his coffin was I to recapture that thrill of my childhood, as I looked once again fairly upon his face, transfigured by death, once again reducing me to silent awe and a sense of something great in him which I had never been able, alas, to penetrate.

To the Foundry I must go, and after an ineffectual year or two at the local Grammar School, at the age of 14 ½ and under pressure of my own importunity (for I knew, no more than my father apparently, what I wanted out of life) I made an exchange of servitudes, taking my place on the bottom rung of the Drawing Office, apprenticed for seven years. There I learnt how to print neatly, to mix Chinese ink and to sweep the floor to the satisfaction of the draftsmen, as also to snigger at the filthy talk which went on, and the talk of remarkably easy local conquests among females who seemed worlds removed from those of my own immediate and circumscribed knowledge. There also I learned how to avoid and dodge my father and his two brothers as I idled my time away in the fascinating departments of the foundry, the moulding and the black-smiths shops, or penned my first love-letters under cover of my work in the office – or even more daringly, met their intended recipients in broad daylight, in town, and during work hours!

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It was made paradoxically easy, too, for me, by my father of all persons; for, stung into parallel action by the gift of a brand new motor-cycle to my cousin Tom by his father, I too was provided with one (second-hand of course) whilst I was still not 16 years of age, and I could forthwith command almost any girl of my own class, and with consummate ease those of a somewhat lower strata, with the temptation of a ride on the luggage carrier of my lumbering creak of a Scott motor cycle, a complicated affair which I shoved far more miles than ever I rode it. There were limits, though, imposed upon my easy conquests among the opposite sex; the two gallons of petrol and the pint of oil allotted me per month by my father, and ill-supplemented out of the shilling or two of my pocket money, frequently reduced me to guile and positive theft in order to satisfy my acute urge for speed and the opportunity to show off. And, despite the ideas and public

curiosities inspired by the talk of the office, my conquests remained virginal enough.

My cousin Tom had anticipated my arrival at the foundry, as into the world, by one year; and in addition to his duties in the Drawing Office, he was provided with a suit of dungarees, and every alternative morning he turned out like the various workman, checking in at 6 o'clock and putting in a couple of hours at a work bench, acquiring practical experience. Nothing would have suited me better than to have followed his example, and possibly a good practical engineer was lost in me when my father, in pursuance of his policy on my behalf, graduated me also into the works, where, instead of placing a chisel in my hands, he armed me with a pencil and note-book, instructing me to perform a tour

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of the various machines and benches, and to question the men, checking their timings upon their respective jobs, so that in due course I should have a practical background to my own particular job of estimating, up in the Drawing Office, I was met with an hostility, though, which not even my obvious youth and palpable discomfort were avail against – for the men were not of my grandfather's generation, and scented my father's spy in me in this innovation in their midst. I was miserable – I hated those early morning summons, I envied my cousin his luck and relative popularity gained at my expense, and I soon chose out the older of the employees, basking in their pity and perception, and provided myself with notes which were written mostly upon my mental tablets, and of no particular value to the future of the Foundry.

The war broke upon us, and columns of local men, from both the Huddersfield Road district and Old Town, marching shoulder to shoulder, parading the streets behind rousing bugle and brass bands, and sleeping in the Public Hall, reduced me to utter distraction. The war would assuredly be over before I could get into it. Reservists had left their benches in the Foundry already; and there was my handsome cousin Jack Normansell attracting all eyes as a commissioned officer (with but two more years to live) ; so at the age of 16 I all but overcame my shyness and presented myself as a candidate for the Royal Horse Artillery; and only the sight of a solitary sentry, with bayonet fixed, set me on the right about. But there came a morning,



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at long last, in August, 1915, when my father innocently made his usual early morning foundry call (had he but noticed how promptly reacted to his initial summons for a change!), and I left a home which had become purgatory to me, and just scraped into uniform - 'yet another massive specimen' was the remark made upon me at the recruiting office in Sheffield, where I attested under the false age of 19 years, 2 months, and became No.1559 Private E.Hall. of the 12th Battalion (Sheffield 'Pals'), Yorks and Lancs Regiment.

It was not until some time later that I learned of the reactions of my father upon that fateful morning, when I threw off his yoke, and for the time being we called quits. He arrived back from the foundry sufficiently perturbed and puzzled by my absence, and ordered my sister May to keep the coffee warm for me. She, who was in the know, greatly daring informed him that I should not be home for breakfast – that I had enlisted! Nevertheless, keep the coffee warm, he insisted. As he observed later, he never thought I would have had the pluck – whether to defy him, or to join up, he did not specify. Later on at the office, he made further enquiries, and one of the draftsman, confirmed the statement of my sister.

It was the first defection among the Halls, and there remained the almost certain action which would see me brought back ignominiously to the office desk, released from the forces as being under age. But strangely, nothing happened. I should stay in the army, for all he cared – the discipline might bring me to my senses if nothing else could; and anyhow, he would see to it that I got into no mischief, such

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as going out to the 'front'. He was personally acquainted with my colonel as also with my company commander – indeed, my mother, on hearing with horror that I had been seen in the streets of Barnsley (my first camp was situated within a few miles of the town) as late as 11p.m., and upon a Saturday night too, almost persuaded him to request my colonel to disallow late passes in my case! There was one other reason, which he was apparently chary of admitting as a brake upon any action he might contemplate, such as fetching me out – he knew that I would join up again.

From that date, my mother's attitude towards me completely changed, and she became to me – my mother! I was her absent boy, and did not know what I was about. Why couldn't I have waited until my father could have used his influence – that potent influence, that 'mention my name', which had become a byword and a scoff with some of us children – and procured for me a commission in due course? Her heart went out towards me, and for time almost in my life, I saw her scrawl as she penned the letters so full of affection and heart-ache, which I so churlishly delayed or neglected to answer. There came a time even, when my father's attitude suffered a revulsion, for, following upon 2 years or more on East Coast defence, in 1917, by my own efforts and some luck, I qualified for a commission in the R.F.C. This was an achievement his vanity was not proof against. A pair of 'wings' in those early days of flying really meant something and he took me to Doncaster to a first class tailors there, and without a murmur, paid out £30 to set me up with flying helmet, leather jacket, fur-lined gloves—anything that I wanted or might need to complete my outfit against the great day when I should be the first of



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the Halls ever to have left the ground.

When I joined up I was in receipt of 3/6 per week pocket money, out of which I had to maintain myself in socks, ties, and pocket handkerchiefs. As a private, I had immediately doubled that income, with no limitations, either, imposed to its application, As an officer I

leapt in one giddy jump to a pound a day, later increased by another eight shillings, when I qualified for my 'wings'. It was fatal against such a background as my childhood afforded. Within the first six weeks of my taking up my commission, I had spent £70 (including my uniform allowance, which was practically a free gift as a result of my father's beneficence at Doncaster). And I could now talk on equal terms as to sexual experience, with my late office colleagues, as well as match them in consumption of whisky and beer. I was the complete young blackguard – one woman was not enough, any more than one drink; and the women – or girls, rather – were not prostitutes either.

My mother's health was rapidly deteriorating, and in a desperate to preserve her to himself yet a little longer (there were occasions when she merited his respect for her tongue ; and it was perhaps a sadder day for us than we realised, when he was deprived of her controlling influence and we of the subtle championship of her children) my father moved the family to Birkdale, near Southport, in 1917. At this period he was the Chairman of the local shell factory in Barnsley (and as such had the privilege of telling Kitchener in person that his demand quota for Barnsley should be doubled), devoting all his time exclusively to the production of shells and still more shells, and refusing



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any remuneration for his services other than an occasional whisky and soda at a board room meeting. Perhaps they – the Government, that is, would reward him after the war with some sort of honour – say a J.P. His brothers ran the foundry in his absence, and saw to it that he in no way suffered financially by his patriotism. Meantime, I was found unfit for flying above 6000 feet – heart, or some such reason – and I was posted to a newly formed submarine bombing squadron at Bangor, for operations over the Irish Sea. And to all intents and purposes. I reported there a reformed character, having had a period brought to my promiscuous love affairs, in the chance meeting upon a Southport platform with my future wife, resulting in a mutual and permanent attraction which dated from the exact moment we first set eyes upon one another.

A new and most promising future now opened out before me. I must get back to the Foundry – it had all been a mistake; the Foundry, the dear old Foundry, had meant more to me than I thought; and I sent for technical books, took in a technical journal, and even solicited trial work from the office, in order to get my hand in against the day when I should return. My father and mother paid a visit to the squadron, and my father subsequently informed me as to the high esteem in which I was held by my commanding officer, and how he had blocked my application to go to France upon night bombing, because he considered me indispensable. I certainly loved flying and my work, and frequently performed the duties of other less enthusiastic officers, in addition to my own. Twice my engine failed me, and I came down into the Irish Sea; and once I sighted a suspicious swirl





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and oil in the leaden waters below, dropped my bomb, passed on the position to the Navy, and had the satisfaction later of hearing that they had finished off the job. A week after the Armistice, I was lying at death's door, a victim of the epidemic of Spanish 'flu', which developed into double pneumonia, and I owed my life to the strenuous efforts of an Irish Sister, who took compassion upon my apparent youth, and nursed me back to civilisation and what was in store for me.

I came out of the war unscathed, but with no particular bank balance to speak of, and returned immediately to the Foundry. In the absence of a home to go to, I went into lodgings (the house in Salisbury Street had passed into the hands of a local school-master, and out of the proceeds of the sale, apparently every other member of the family but myself had benefitted. Incidentally, I discovered to my horror, that the 'family tree' had disappeared in the removal, not being considered of sufficient value, apparently, to follow the family fortunes; subsequently I discovered it had been given to my uncle Tom, who kindly returned it to me, and at the same time I located other family memoranda in the shape of mourning cards and samplers etc., and centralised them in my possession. My parents were against me marrying for a year or two, but my poor mother soon began to fret about my being in lodgings, where my landlady was fighting a losing battle to marry me to her daughter, and my importunities did the rest. Upon my 21st birthday, I was presented with £1000 in Foundry shares (strictly limited to Hall males), producing a steady 30% tax free



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dividend annually; and I was in receipt of £5-10s weekly as salary, despite my uselessness to the firm for some considerable time to come. My father gave me close upon £500 in War Bonds, part proceeds of the half pay I had been granted during my absence at the war. In addition, he advanced me the £500 required for the purchase of a house (within three doors of the one in Park Grove from which I had wandered at the age of 4); and he financed, by loan, the furnishing of the house. The death of my mother, of pernicious anaemia and dropsy, within four months of my marriage, and the subsequent division of her property amongst we children, enabled me to repay my father almost immediately. I was now financially independent.

My marriage, which took place in Southport, in April 1920, proved a financial failure from the start. Coupled with my record of irresponsibility in matters financial, my wife, the daughter of a Wigan engine-driver, who had benefited by an education somewhat above her station in life, and had been encouraged to associate with such of her High School class-mates who lived in the Wigan equivalent of our Huddersfield Road, did not betray any symptoms of inferiority complex in the presence of the Halls, and was soon perfectly at home in her new environment; and she as little calculated the odds of our careless rapture amongst War Bonds, readily cashable, as I did. She was pretty, personable, sociable, and her taste in clothes was impeccable, and perhaps rather beyond our means to cope with. Not that we were in a position to spend a great deal,

for after all, apart from the War Bonds which were in diminishing supply, and the annual Foundry dividend which might not remain for ever at 30%, we only had my weekly foundry salary to work at and upon. But it is surprising how easy the signing of a cheque for £50 to meet the calculable and reasonably estimated expenses of a first baby, leads on to the supposition that a cheque for five pounds is a mere nothing; a new hat purchased in Leeds, and a few more old books to add to the shelves of a library which already threatens to invade more of wall-space than is convenient in a small house, should not be too repetitive; and the provision of a nurse from an expensive nursing-home, as well as a doctor for the introduction of the first baby, should not be determined upon considerations of what your wealthier brothers and sisters would do in a like situation.

We lost our first born, a sweet little boy, within four months of his birth, having, in our total ignorance of such matters, taken him to Scarborough with us upon our annual summer holiday, and watched, agonisingly, the swift ravages of infantile summer diarrhoea upon his perfect little body. My father (who, following upon the death of my mother, had returned Barnsley-ward, having purchased a house at Darton, a nearby village) consoled me on that occasion by informing me that he had known all along that the boy would die – Mrs Allen, the village busybody whom he for a period employed as house-keeper had detected the signs from the start! Within a few weeks of our marriage, our mutual hatred had flared into open war, and the sheaves of offensive letters I had written to him over the distance of the five miles which separated us, had only recently been burned, with



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some parade and ceremony in the greenhouse fire at 'Bloomfield', a gesture I did not resent so much as having to apologise to my sister and brother, congregated in the drawing room for the purpose. The truce was but a short one.

My marriage started a spate of such in the family. May was married at Southport, whilst my mother was upon her dying bed (my father had insisted upon the carrying out of the programme) to Claude Gray, a Huddersfield Road friend of her and my childhood. He was the harum-scarum son of a house and estate agent, and would in due course succeed to his father's well-established and lucrative business.

Edie was the next – we had begun to think that she would lose the substance by snatching at the shadow of her somewhat numerous affairs with eligible 'locals' (and such less eligible prospects as the army sergeant, and my impecunious friend, Gustav Weissenreider, another Barnsley misfit whom I had made the acquaintance of whilst in the army, and resumed it upon my return; and I involved myself in a particularly unpleasant scene with my father over an idle, and certainly innocently-intended remark about her engagement to the most certainly eligible, if unexciting, Stanley Pitcher of Derby, to the effect that having been anticipated in the marriage stakes by her two

younger sisters, she would now simply have to marry him. The twist my father gave to that have to marry, and the somewhat unnecessary parade of defamation of maidenly character by my sister, finally revealed to me that nothing I could henceforth say or do, would be free from the

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worst, the foulest, of interpretations. That the engaged couple were the least likely of persons to involve themselves in such an imputation, indicated the extreme ill-favour in which I was held at the time.

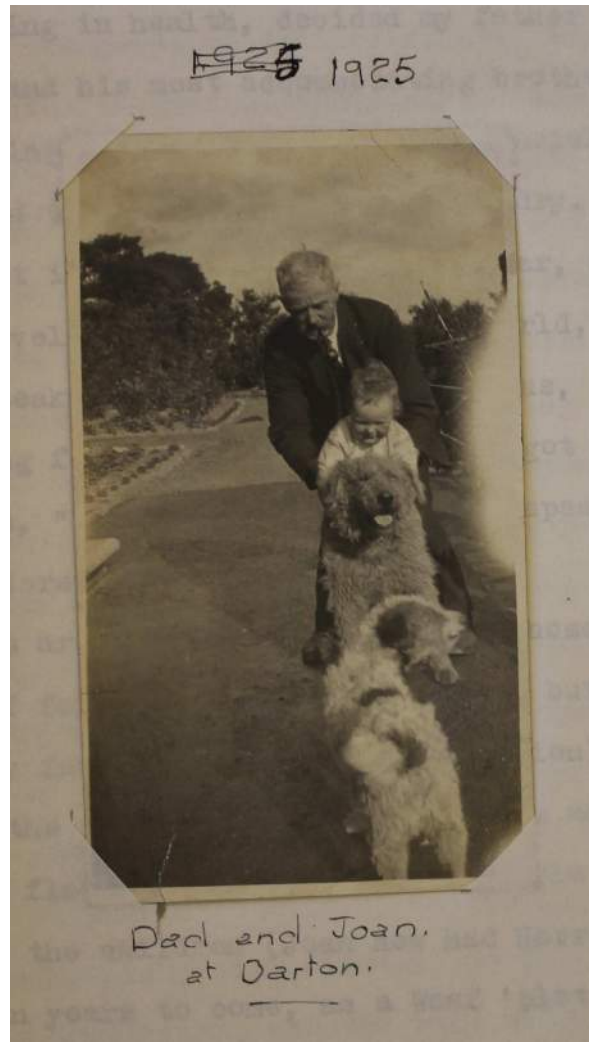
Ev had become engaged to Bill Ivers, the son of a retired Birkdale doctor, during the war. He was at that time an officer in the Royal Naval Division, and had seen service in the trenches. Left to our own devices, we three, Claude, Bill, and myself, could have been the best of pals, but the Hall taint was there, as also the inevitable jealousy among wives. Bill returned from the war, faced with utter dependence upon his father, consequent upon the reduction to nil of the value of his 21st birthday present, cotton shares in a market which promptly collapsed. He was studying, but on the strength of a retentive memory, and as a result of a touching faith in his ability to forecast and study up the requirements of the examiners a day or so before the date fixed for his periodical exams for the elusive M.B., his marriage and his career as a doctor were delayed year after year, until in the end he decided to take a sporting chance upon the former proposition, and he became my esteemed brother-in-law. His faith in himself with regard to the latter proposition was justified in the long run, the realisation of his medical degree, however, being deferred until he was absolutely upon his beam ends, and my sister's War Bonds had gone the way of mine. A better-hearted chap never existed, and though we inevitably drifted apart in subsequent years, little acts of unsolicited kindness, an occasional 'tenner', and a holiday (when such were a fading memory) in the Scilly



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Isles (where he held a practice for a number of years) for the kiddies as well as myself, testified to a positive reaction against the Darton discipline as far as he was concerned.

Between the recurring periods of my exclusion from the family circle, we would all foregather at Darton for Sunday Dinner, followed by either tennis or cricket in the afternoon. Bill would come over from Southport, and lodge with either Claude or myself (being a Lancashire man there was an ideal and defensive bond between him and 'Wigan', as he called my wife) ; and Edie, and sometimes her husband, would come over from Derby in their car. Dad really enjoyed and preened himself upon these visits, especially if we brought friends with us, when he would take the head of the table, and with no little unction declare that this was Liberty Hall, and help, yourselves to what was going; whisky and cigars were laid on ad lib (I was to all intents and purposes teetotal, not having drunk whisky for some years, following upon a dreadful experience and exhibition of myself during the war, when, as an officer-cadet, it took five men to hold me down in my bed, as a result of drinking a half pint tumbler of whisky, neat) ; and his car was at the disposal of all and sundry, a privilege which however I did not avail myself of, my loathing of cars still persisting from childhood, a motor-cycle combination satisfying my convenience in those days and upon which Em and I, with Joan, our consolation for the loss of our first born, used to arrive. Perhaps it was as well that I hated cars, having regard to the state of my finances at that period.



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The boom following upon the conclusion of the war, and an idea that he was declining in health, decided my father against returning to the Foundry, and his most accommodating brothers humoured him in this resolve, backing it with substantial financial indications of their generosity and the prosperity of the Foundry. As he had been one of the very first in Barnsley to possess a car, so he led with regard to the latest development in the wireless world, and I well remember the first loud-speaker we had inflicted upon us, and his reaction when, upon twiddling for a station, he finally got France, and spat out in exasperation, 'Why the devil can't they speak in a language which everybody understands!

None of us are ever likely to forget those pleasant Sunday visits – the house (of fairly recent construction, but promptly disembowelled as soon as my father entered into possession) set upon the hillside overlooking the colliery village of Darton and the huge chemical works in the flat valley ; the distant purple moors shimmering in the summer

heat; the children (Joan now had Harry Gray as a playmate – and maybe, in years to come, as a Waaf'plotter', she would plot his track en route to Frankfort, and death over that city) pushing their wheeled cart around, or playing in the quarry down in the field below the tennis court; the match between Miss Hall's XI and the 'locals'; my father walking around the garden (usually accompanied by Joan) in his working clothes and a panama; the cups of tea in the drawing room; the smell of expensive cigars, and the concentration on solo in the evening, in which they all joined with the exception of myself –that was Darton as it ought to have been on other days than a Sunday.

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But there was the ever present, menacing shadow. I had certainly won financial independence from my father, but neither he nor the others were blind to what was happening. How long before the inevitable crash – and how disgusting for a Yorkshireman, who could neither addle' brass, nor keep it! Claude, the idol of my father, with whom he discuss his own financial affairs over a whisky, and in whose capable hands he placed his insurance (to his ultimate sorrow, when, prior to something far more grave and far reaching in its complications and repercussions, he discovered that his'premiums' had been pocketed by his son-in-law), was making money hand over fist in his business, which now included the lucrative agency for the Halifax Building Society, but there were exciting rumours, backed by indications sufficiently positive in the way of fur coats and other expensive garments for my sister May, of enormous luck at the races = of £250 picked up on one horse. And how did Bill (who was by now in almost as bad odour at Darton as myself) manage his finances, if he too was not in the luck, along with Claude? My father positively gushed over his favourite son-in-law, and the rift widened between us on yet another account.

Meantime, there were three contending influences at work in my life –religion, politics, and old books. With regard to religion, I still accepted almost uncritically the Bible and the dogma of the Sunday School, but the church knew me no more. Vague stirrings prompted me at times to resort to the Bible or Prayer Book as guides and comforter in my troubles, but Barnsley could not stand a

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professing Christian; there was no place for such either, in the drawing office of Messrs Qualter Hall & Co Ltd, any more apparently than in Park Grove, among the domesticities and baby- was going on there with such success, despite the recurrent financial crises, –at present reducible by an increase in the overdraft at the Bank, where

the Foundry and its good name still stood me in such deceptive good stead.

With regard to politics, I came out of the war staunch for Russia – another nail in my Barnsley coffin. Politics had barely entered into our lives as children, apart from the singing of a pleasing jingle at election times and the swinging of paper balls in the faces of our opponents blue or buff – as for red, it had no election significance; just fancy the men at the foundry being so lost to decency as to fly in the face of their betters! It was unthinkable – at least, to us children, who really ranked the human content of the works as part and parcel of the belongings of the family, quite as much as the cranes and turning lathes at which the men worked. Why, some of them even touched their caps to we children, even as the older generation of them must certainly have done to the children of the founder of the works. On the other hand, there was that spirit of sturdy independence, as exhibited in the person of the foreman of the machine shop, who had dangled my uncle Willie in his arms as a baby, and stood no nonsense from him now, though now a father. And they would strike what they considered their rights; but political action was as yet in the future as far as they were concerned.

As for my father, of course he was a conservative – he must be; it

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was unthinkable that he could be otherwise – he a successful businessman, and a Mason. (there was never any suggestion of my being put forth as a Mason, though he duly sponsored Claude into that circle of the Barnsley elect). Undoubtedly there was much of a pose in my attitude over socialism and the rights and wrongs of Russia; and it was frequently put to me with some heat, and not only from my cousins but others much lower down in the factory scale, that I had a colossal cheek to draw my annual 30% dividend from the Foundry, whilst advancing and supporting such audacious theories and heresies. The single ex-conscientious objector in the employ of the Foundry, soon found himself out of a job, which put a stop to the frequent confabs between us; and my uncle Willie snooped around in the hopes of interfering in the animated discussions which went on in the Drawing Office, not particularly related to the business upon which we were supposed to be employed. A Hall, voting labour – and my aunts violently stirred their afternoon tea. It was rank ingratitude, to say the least. But that was Ned all over.

But my real absorption was in old books. In that, there was no pose; and in the mind of Barnsley, it was perhaps the weakest aspect of a suspect character. Chancing one day to look at a book-stall, I came across a shabby, leather-bound volume, dated 1678 –the life of a some French Countess or some such affair; and it was priced at 2d! I was amazed. I thought that anything dated prior to 1800 was

automatically valuable – and 2d for a book probably, nay indubitably, worth as many pounds! But it was not only the intriguing cash value

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of such a find; I soon found the contents were fascinating too. Why read historical fiction; why read even histories, when the source books were to be picked up thus? I had just consumed the whole six volumes, avidly, of Macaulays History of England, and I was gripped by the colourful period of the Civil Wars. Scott's Woodstock remained in my memory from school- reading- but historical fiction was henceforth anathema; and I remembered and re-discovered the joy with which I had sampled the one old book of my father's library in Salisbury street days – gone now, with the rest of the books he had collected at local sales, a present to the Red Cross during the war.

There were bookshops in Leeds; Em could go shopping or to a 'show' somewhere, and we would meet at Powlony's for a first-class high tea later. I was already spending quite a pound a week in the only second- hand bookshop that Barnsley boasted, and soon I was being greeted with a week-end smile in the better- stocked bookshops in Leeda, and allowed the privilege of roaming at will in back rooms reserved for privileged customers. Even my wife became uneasy, and more than once I was reduced to smuggling a book inside the house, shoved either down my trousers or up the back of my coat; but there was no hiding the expansion upon my book-shelves. Granted the books represented cash, but had I the remotest idea of collecting them from such a point of view? Obviously and certainly not. Then it represented so much loss. And in addition, was there ever a moment in the house that I had not got my nose poked inside a volume, or was engaged in the arranging and re-arranging of my expanding bookshelves, frequently until midnight?

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And we would go off to Leeds, and another 'fiver' had gone by the time we were sitting in the Majestic, enjoying, if not the pictures, the first class orchestra among the palms there in pre-talkie days.

Books led me to examine myself – could I write one? I joined the local Literary Club, held at the house of a doctor, and gave an appreciated lecture on old diaries and their writers, with exhibits from my own private collection, which was duly reported in the YorkshirePost. I was elected press secretary, and forthwith found myself in print – or as good as. But I would go one better; I wrote an article upon the derivation of the term Black, or Bleak Barnsley? submitted it to the Barnsley Chronicle, and lo, there at the weekend, it

was in print – unacknowledged, of course, and no payment offered. Still, there it was, an established fact – the first Hall to find himself in print (at least, for a generation or two), just as I had been the first Hall to fly. Others might look at their Bank books, with pride and confidence in the future – I could produce the clipping from the Barnsley Chronicle. It was a grand feeling.

I wrote article after article, some of which I submitted, perhaps somewhat too ambitiously as I came later to think, to leading literary journals, and coming somewhat lower, to newspapers of the provincial class; but apart from one success with the Newgate Calendar (paid for), the Barnsley Chronicle effort remained virgin. Anyway, why should I write, and for money, too? It was a prostitution of any talent I might possess. Money I must have, certainly, and from some source

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additional and independent to the Foundry; that was increasingly evident. Racing was one obvious solution, and, frequently in association with my pal, Gustave (many of whose forecasts by the stars suffered subliminal falsification by the apparent inability of the horses to start off exactly to the minute) I evolved schemes and methods of placing my bets, and frequented low pubs during the lunch hour in order to place my odd shilling or two – or more – and sometimes to receive an addition to my stake in return. But always it was that I had been working upon the wrong system, or there was a flaw to be eliminated. Wipe the slate clean, and start afresh. Em too was placing bets with our next-door neighbour, and winning regularly – according to her tale, but the day for payment of her accrued gains was ever deferred

At last, something had to be done – the Bank politely but firmly refused to extend my overdraft, and the house must go. I sold it with ease for £500, and moved further uphill towards the more select Locke Park district, into a larger house – by arrangement with a Building Society. Now I had their monthly repayment instalment to meet, as well as the rates; but at any rate, there was no bank overdraft; at least for the next month or so. But by now I was well gripped – the collecting instinct had developed into a mania, and I was becoming expensively selective at the book-shops, and was in receipt of book-sellers' catalogue, too. And my wife was finding the name of Hall (of Messrs Quilter, Hall & Co. Ltd) a sufficient talisman in the shops when her house keeping allowance failed to meet her commitments,

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domestic and bookie.

An unsatisfactory interview with my Bank Manager, following upon a year or two of this sort of thing, finally decided me; money could be got upon note of hand – so ran the advertisements in the so-called financial columns of the less reputable dailies – and I requested a visit from the representative of a Manchester money-lender. Laying in a bottle of propitiatory whiskey, and sneaking away from the Foundry during working hours, I met him upon appointment up at my house, and paid him the stipulated travelling expenses of one guinea before we got down to business. Yes, his firm would willingly oblige (his eyes had been roving around the furniture); say, £66 down, repayable in ten monthly instalments of £10? Even I was not so desperate or green as that.

There remained the Foundry shares – sacrosanct, limited to the Halls, and not transferable, much less saleable outside the family. I tried the Bank Manager, and he jumped at them –as well he might. I was alright for at least £350 against their deposit; but unfortunately I was nearly that amount overdrawn. Once again the house must go, and with it, the payments which I had made on account up to date with the Building Society –payments which I could no longer maintain. The times were not propitious for disposing of houses, now, though; the demand for smaller houses still persisted long after the war, but the better class of house, such as mine, with its bay-windows and basement, and its select position was quite another matter. I was between the devil and the deep blue sea; I could neither get a small, nor even a council house

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for myself (My wife and I walked miles, surreptitiously following up advertisements in the columns of the Barnsley Chronicle), nor find a prospect for our own. I shrunk from advertising in the Chronicle, for obvious reasons. Darton was ever on the watch. Then the solution happened with almost ridiculous ease; my wife heard by chance of a pleasant house in the colliery village of Stairfoot, and the Building Society sent up one of their own managers to treat for mine in Park Grove, upon his taking up residence in Barnsley. In the month of February, 1926, we were installed in the Homestead, Stairfoot, a modern detached house surrounded by its own garden; and for neighbours a charming old couple, the male partner retired from long connection with a nearby colliery.

But the overdraft was still there; and we now had rent to pay – very reasonable, granted, but still it had to be met, somehow; and in the meantime, there had been another addition to the family – John Anthony had arrived, and was somewhat weakly at the start and needed special foods. I cast about for alternative sources of income;

my books would have to go! There was no way out. I knew of one or two trade papers, and I had headed business note-paper printed, in order to establish my bona fides in the eyes of the trade.

It was a fatal move, I quoted my books, not always at a sacrifice, and the response was so immediate and so delusively gratifying, that I felt I had the solution to all my troubles. Why remain in Barnsley at all, where we were so unhappy and unwanted? It would be hard to abandon the Homestead, to which we had all become so attached .

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And where we had hidden ourselves, in a way from our persecutors and detractors; but perhaps, in some other part of England, miles away from hated Barnsley, the foundry, and Darton, we could yet find happiness, start life afresh, bring up our children in a totally different atmosphere, and I could bury myself in books for the rest of my life.

still had my Foundry shares – or at least, what would be left of them did I but dare to put my cards upon the foundry table. The sum they might realise on balance, would probably purchase a business for me somewhere. I advertised, and after a disappointment or two, I travelled down to Surbiton one week-end in September 1926, in answer to an advertisement, saw a narrow little lock-up shop lined from top to bottom with books, saw customers come in and go out, detected one or two old bindings, and heard of a wonderful market for First Editions (it did not strike me as remarkable that the proprietor had any left to dispose of, in the face of this insatiable market) and I almost begged him to give me the option –indeed, upon the stipulated price of £375, I wrote out an immediate deposit of £40, and, promising to take over the following weekend, departed gaily back to the Homestead. (the proprietor probably shut up shop straight away, his troubles over, and went away to get gloriously drunk)

The interview with my uncles was short and not very sweet. Yes, they would take the shares off my hands –they were of no use against an overdraft, in any case. The temptation to commit myself and to take a rise out of my uncle Willie in particular, proved irresistible;

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no use against an overdraft, indeed; why, I had one of £350 or more against mine at this very moment! My uncle Willie nearly had an apoplectic fit –he threw up his hands with a gesture of horror and loathing, turned away from me, and, observing that I was nothing short of a criminal to do such a thing, and the Bank Manager only a little less so, decided on behalf of both partners that the shares should

be immediately redeemed at par –a transaction highly in their favour; thrown upon the open market, how much more so in mine! I never approached my father at all.

A week later I was back in Surbiton; and the last of what available capital was left after settling the bank overdraft and tradesmen's debts in Barnsley (totalling over £600 in all) went towards the balance outstanding upon the purchase of the business. I literally had not a penny of capital left, to finance the business; indeed, I had been obliged to to redeem my life insurance in order to complete the sum required; and now I was utterly dependent upon my takings week by week, for the wherewithal to continue in business at all, and to provide a home for my wife and children! And I had thought that my losses at cards and horse –racing had taught me a lesson! Here was the biggest gamble of all.

Of course the business proved a swindle; its late owner, along with other sidelines not even distantly related to book-selling, had even dabbled in contraceptives, which I only found out by reason of

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the furtive approaches made in the direction of the small office in the rear of the shop, by customers obviously not interested in books. But I was upon my mettle; I knew sufficient of books by now to earn at least something by post; and I still had my fine personal collection of prints, as well as books – immensely superior to any thing in my shop, as I discovered when I performed a stock-taking which left me sick at heart.

There was never any lack of sellers of books, of quite good quality, in Surbiton, with the older, upper middle-class residents quitting the place for residential areas a little less prone to building development, so I was never under the necessity of closing down my shop temporarily in order to attend book sales. If I could have sold with as much ease and credit as I purchased, my success would have been assured; but my shop was badly situated for casual sales, and in the absence of local custom for my better-class stock, it went to the itinerant dealer from London, with correspondingly less profit to myself. It was certainly a tantalising situation, to have, say, a couple of hundred first class books almost thrust upon you, by people about to move out of the district, and who were not desirous of adding to removal expenses by the addition of such a dead weight; and to have to rely upon the conscienceless London dealer to remove a cream which, given the right pitch upon the right shopping side of the street (neither of which desirable foundations for success were mine) would have resulted in a profit of several hundred per cent. As it was, I was tucked away in a row of second-rate shops, just round the

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corner from the main shopping street, where I had to be deliberately sought out by the book-lover; in fact, I might just as well have set up shop in the desert, so far as my real ambition was concerned, for the genuine booklover was a rare bird, as I found to my cost, in Surbiton. What would I not have given to have had another Edward Hall among my customers!

As regarded the average person, I soon discovered that he, or she, would do almost anything but buy a book outright. They would borrow, even steal (I caught a retired colonel red-handed at that once), but certainly not buy, and reluctantly I had to develop the circulating library aspect of my wretched business, and soon became adept (to my horror) in pleasing old ladies and illiterates with my recommendations of books by such authors such as Bertha M. Clay, Oliver Sandys, Olive Wadsley, Joan Sutherland, Ruby M. Ayres, and Ethel M. Dell – how easily the names reel themselves off still! On one popular library title by the latter authoress, I cleared over a pound, at 2d a time, before the book fell grubbily to pieces – and then I sold it as it stood for 9d.

The men were as easily satisfied – perhaps even easier – with my recommendations among Westerns and Thrillers, though I never read the contents of one. I had made my bed, and would have to lie on it, but I never would sink to that level, please God. And I made another curious discovery; whereas I sought the old book and loved it for its literary quality, the subtle charm of its printing, the feel of its smooth morocco binding, the latest thing hot from the printer, in its

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hideously shiny red jacket, poorly printed, and unproved as yet as to quality of authorship, was snatched up immediately, whether recommended by me or not (some folk were prepared to purchase it outright, even!) Perhaps that was the most bitter pill of all – that, and the contraceptives. Yes, I was a bookseller, and must react to public tastes in these matters – but, oh God!

On the credit side, there was the thrill of anticipation involved in the purchase of another lot of books; would I call at number so and so, where there was a pile of old books they wanted moving? That probably meant the sacrifice of my evening's leisure. But no matter; would they prove to be the residue of a genuine, and probably deceased collector; would there be first editions of the right authors; would they prove to be art books, or another batch of music; or would they prove to be just another batch which had failed even to be bulked

together in the usual job lot of the sale-room? And would they be located in one of the very select houses up Southbank way, or in a back kitchen in Douglas Road, up Tolworth way? Should I need to borrow the truck from my second-hand furniture dealing neighbour, or would they go into one of my leather valises? And would the police shadow me, suspecting I was after the more valuable lead guttering from the new building estates?

Further upon the credit side, was the illusion of independence of movement – for, in theory, I could now push off from my work just when I liked,, and no Uncle Willie to cast venomous glances in my direction – which, at the age of approximately thirty, was a distinct

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gain for my self-esteem, though one which in practice carried the penalty of loss of custom; and I could now sit and read for hours, with (alas) no one to disturb me. And not every volume which came into my shop, was placed at the disposal of customers; once again I was building up a library, which, if not quite so choice and characteristic in old bindings, now began to include a selection of historical biographies and philosophical works dating back to the 17th century, with a generous sprinkling of source books covering the period of the industrial revolution – a period which was gradually to claim my almost exclusive attention. Finally, there was the call of countryside, to which I responded with ever increasing rapture, breaking out of the smear of building estates into a ravishingly new world which stirred unsuspected depths in me, and involved but the cost of a bus fare and an occasional soaking.

Em soon joined me, almost heart-broken at leaving the Homestead, and we took on a flat at 35 shillings a week; but soon I came to the conclusion that I must look around for something around about one pound a week in rental. There was no such place to be had, of course; but I did better – or rather, worse; for my next door neighbour but one to the bookshop, offered us some rooms at the rear of and above his furniture shop, and I leapt at the tempting rental – 12/6 per week! Why, that would enable us to get really upon our feet, within, say, a year. Admittedly the place abutted onto the railway, and its tiny flagged back-yard was darkened and overshadowed by its high embankment and the long blank wall of a laundry – but at 12/6



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a week! There was no going back, and this was a sacrifice to our pride and comfort which we must simply be prepared to make. Em looked round, and I read the unmistakable signs, even if the filthily dirty state, the pokiness, the inconvenience of running such a place,

had not already impressed itself upon me. But she knew now that it was this, or nothing – less than nothing.

My father had had the grace to admit that in Em I had secured a most excellent mother for my children – he always gave her at least that due, as did everyone else who saw either her home or her children. For myself, I had found in her my sexual complement; I never touched another woman after marrying her; and our very differences upon almost every other subject, only served to draw us the closer to one another. Religion was to her just pure cant; politics bored or irritated her, (not withstanding she was at heart a staunch conservative, she could take on the colour of my most combative socialism on occasion); as for old books, they had proved the bane of our life, and had mainly landed us into this mess. But I was the man of her choice, and the father of her children – and she hated Darton. Come what may, she would not admit herself beaten before ‘that old swine.’ So she set to work. Almost the first night of our entering into possession, we knew the worst – and in Joan’s little bedroom, too – bugs! One had only need to peel away the discoloured, dirty, age-old wall-paper, and there they were, nestled together. So this was the price of independence? Despite all the efforts of my wife, and despite two changes of residence and the

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eventual destruction of furniture and furnishings which harboured the pests, it was years before we saw the last of them.

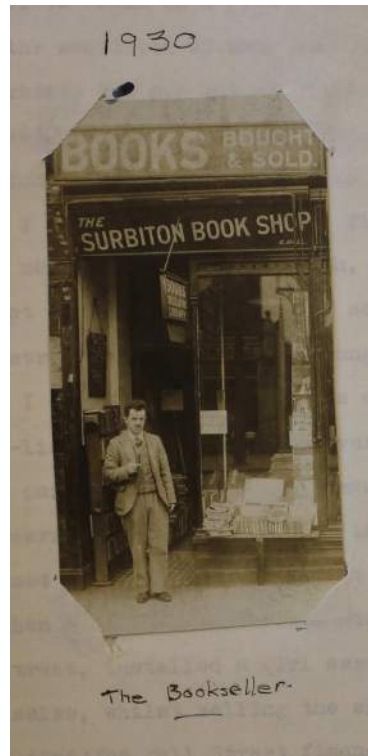
The first piece of furniture to go on another account, was the old water-clock, dated 1668, which I had picked up for a few pounds at Scarborough, the day before the death of our first-born. Then the fine old Jacobean sideboard went – so massive and roomy, that upon one occasion we had discovered Joan sitting inside one of its cupboards, eating toffee for all she was worth. Then the piano, the wedding gift of my mother. And within eighteen months, had the man who offered to buy the stock and goodwill of my bookshop, made his offer £200 instead of £150, I should have been out of business. Fortunately, perhaps, he did not do so, and it proved the turning point in my book-selling fortunes and the point of submission to my father. I wrote to him, explaining the how difficult it as to run my business without capital. And begged the loan of £25. A cheque for £25 came – a gift! And during the next two or three years he had given me outright a total of £100, and loaned me (along with Amy) a further £150, and the business was upon its feet, and I was repaying the loans in instalments. And I was persona grata at Darton. Success, though in a small way, was the open Sesame there – even as a despised book-seller. (Had we but known, economic forces were at work which would shortly cast me out, and subject his unearned income to shocks unprecedented, and draw the final line of demarcation between us,

even as the defalcations of Claude had put that gentleman beyond the pale – for Claude had decamped to Australia



John and Bunk

Dad, Joan & John



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leaving my father to clean up a pretty shocking mess, which would involve him in the sacrifice of many more thousands of pounds than the subsequently grudging hundreds to his son out of his superfluity.

Meantime, I added typing and duplicating to my business as a side-line, a side-line that which was to bolster up the tottering book side for a year or two. I specialised in library fiction, issued my own lists, and in one peak year sold over £40 worth, mostly to public libraries ; but there was not an unlimited supply of second-hand fiction in Surbiton and district, and I could not range beyond, so that particular hope died out. I circulated book-sellers and secured orders for duplicated book-lists, which worked out very profitably indeed, provided the booksellers paid their bills; alas, many of them were clutching at straw, and were pointers to what was in the economic trade wind. My stock increased to such an extent, that first I rented a loft over a garage, and then boldly took a wooden store, situated just off the main shopping street, installed a girl assistant there, and paid the rent by casual sales, whilst selling the cream of of its stock to the trade. And then came the Wall Street financial crash, followed by the slump in our own country, and the fiat went forth that books were a criminal luxury, especially second-hand ones. The dealers who used to pay me weekly visits and combed my stock for likely bargains which would interest the American market, faded out; public libraries commenced to stock their shelves with cheap reprints; no one wanted books any longer. Indeed, most folk were in an indecent hurry to get

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rid of what they already had. My stock steadily increase, my sales correspondingly diminished. The latest fad in library ventures, the chain library, stole my own customers in that line; and a new free Public Library was agitated for locally, and opened – and my application for the post of librarian or assistant librarian was ignored. I was yet again to learn that academic qualifications counted for more than practical knowledge gathered over many years, in the competition for established posts .

And if you did not read, there was the river close by, the frequent bus service to Kingston, or the almost as frequent train service to town. The country started at Surbiton almost, and the seaside was but an hour or more of a trip by car. The habits of the people were changing, and with them, my luck. It was as if a blight had descended upon the little book-shop; for hours I would sit in my tiny office, looking down the narrow alley-way of shelving towards the small patch of green visible upon the railway embankment opposite, or re-arrange my stock and declare bargain sales, which only served to remove that part of my stock for which I still had an outlet in the trade. My assistant at the store knitted interminably, or fell fast asleep, her head pillowed upon her folded arms across the table. I hadn't the heart to disturb her from her unearned slumbers. I closed down the store, but retained her – she was very attached to Joan, however insufficient a reason, among, for her retention,

And with regard to Joan (and possibly John) the first of a batch of letters written from Darton, (not destroyed at the time as was the fate of previous correspondence), reveals that such was our desperate plight in the year 1931 that we were actually considering parting with her for the time

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being – a wrench which the reception and treatment of the proposal by Darton, fortunately saved us from. Suffice it to say that the saving effected would have proved so slight (I forget now what was proposed by Darton for her keep) that we promptly – too promptly for the patience and sensitiveness of Darton – cancelled our application.

Thus my father upon the subject, followed as usual by the letter from Amy :-

Dear Ned & Emily

Monday. Sept. 1931

I think it is time a little plain speaking was done, to, if possible, make you realise your position. When I say you, I mean both and not one.

Your wire on Saturday made me think you meant what it said & I acted accordingly to the best of my ability & then was turned down once again. It would appear that I am going to make money out of my offer to take a child on (at my age) for an unknown time for a small sum (which would have gone in clothing), but this is not good enough for you. I never had such a chance given me in my struggles but won through, & then after hard work I gave my children handsome sums of money which in most cases have been wasted. Some have kept all, others are making good if possible for themselves, but you will not accept an offer to try and help you, with no benefit to me.

Your methods in my opinion are hopeless & without a drastic alteration, will land you on the rates, & then what? You have been living on borrowed capital for years and not income. Unless you mean to

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alter please do not worry me with rubbishy letters and wires in future. I am sorry to have to write this but I think it absolutely necessary for your own sakes. I am not going to be told I must take two children when I offer (like a damned fool) to take one, so unless you alter your views, please consider my offer closed.

Awaiting your reply

Dad

As an afterthought, which somewhat compensated for the uncompromising tone of the final sentence, he added 'but is still open' after 'please consider my offer as closed'

Then followed Amy:-

Dear Ned

Many thanks for your letter & enclosure which came this morning by the same post as Emily's, in which she turned down Dad's offer for Joan, whom I would have met at Wakefield willingly. (I thought how much she would have enjoyed helping us to gather Victoria plums & windfall apples in the garden & then to see jam making afterwards). There is little for me to add to Dad's letter – sooner or later you will have to face facts. You work hard enough, but, as you said in your letter, you have been living in a land of idealistic dreams. Like the official Socialists, you hope for the best & do not yet cut your coat according to the cloth, and then resent the fact that MacDonald, Snowden, etc. are no longer ostrich like & do not bury their heads in the sand.



Joan, John & Bunkie – Maple Road Days

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We got a letter from May today, but she admits straightaway that she has no news at all & is still hoping to hear news about Evelyn and the baby. We also have no news, since of course I wrote to you only last weekend.

Believe me, we are not unsympathetic & we would fain help you. But Dad is getting fed up with the changes that are rung. For the present, the offer to have Joan for an indefinite period still remains open; he is willing to have her here & will help to take care of her, but he will not leave the offer open for ever. You must decide without delay, & finally – you admit that he will not score anything out of it: & it is all planned for your benefit. Now you must make up your mind at once. We wish you the best of luck.

Love from Dad & Amy.

Meantime, if only to get Em and the kiddies out of that hell hole in Brighton Road, I had opened yet another shop, this time however with living accommodation, in a quiet shopping street – too quiet to provide much else than its own rent out of the selection of books which I placed in what had been a butcher's shop, and which still possessed the white marble slab in the display window. Here there were rats as a

legacy of the late owner, but neither they, nor the bugs (some of which we could not help but bring with us) got any rest from Em; and at least the place was quiet, clean, and airy, and the living accommodation more convenient.

The following letter belongs to this particular period – one of my

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own, returned from Darton, suitably annotated by Amy in ink at the side, and by Dad in pencil at the bottom. The letter from my father to which I refer, must have been destroyed on receipt

March

31st. 1932.

*Posted on March
instant
18th with two shirts.*

*We have two of
yours signed
just E.Hall but
we guessed it
was accidental
& did not flare
up.
done*

appearing

my

meant

today?

either

such a

know how

especially

suffer for

and I.

Dear Dad,

I suppose the lack of

*acknowledgement of a box of sweets
and a shirt warrant in your opinion a
letter signed G.H.Hall to your son. As
a matter of fact I have written twice
already, but could not post the letters.
But I now find that I was quite right in
resenting Amy's extraordinary
accusation that I show no gratitude for
past favours and all that has been*

for me by you all. At the risk of

sickly sentimental I have reiterated

gratitude in every letter almost – and

it, too, for how else should I be here

As regards Ev and Edie, I don't think

of them gave Amy any authority for

statement on their behalf, for they

I appreciate all that has been done,

for the kids, who in no case should

differences of opinion between you

*However, you don't want my letters,
and the
You admit you did not
either party.
post them
Amy, but
type I get from you do no credit to
I had hoped to remit a payment to
things are very*

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*bad with me and I must ask her to trust
to my
performing my side of the bargain as
best I can
in the near future
Ned*

If a business enquiry needs a reply like the above. Please do not write me again until you have learnt better manners-& why bring in Amy at all.

G.H.Hall

And now, most disturbing and feared complication of all, illness and temporary incapacitation not merely for one, but for both of us, descended upon us – in my own case, the appearance and necessary removal of tumours, one upon the breast, followed by a second upon the wind-pipe; and I Em's case, post-natal complications involving operation in a London hospital.

But once again we had bungled our affairs, according to Darton

Dear Ned

6

June 1932

Amy has shown me your letter & I hope & trust your new venture will have success but I am doubtful.

I am sorry to hear of Emily's trouble which apparently has been serious but along with you hope all will be well now.

In your letter you have a tilt at me not'showing ties of nature &c.' What do you want? When in one letter you ask me not to write again & then blame me for not doing so.

Then you wrote & told us you were going to have a slight operation & would be out of hospital in a day or two & next we heard from

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Emily was that it had been more serious than expected. She promised to write again but never did so, & as we did not know where to write

to, we could not. I sent you invitations to come up here for a change, by: Amy, Evelyn, John, & Edie, to none of whom you replied. Next you write to say Emily is going to have an operation but tell us nothing; so as far as we knew she might be only going to have her corns pared. It is a good job I have pretty square shoulders & can take a lot of thankless letters in return for what I have done.

You send us hopeless letters trumpeting your ideas on the State etc, but when in your case the State opens a Free Library you are the first to complain of their competition. You cannot have it both ways. I could say a lot more, but wonder!

Dad.

When I closed down my main shop in Surbiton, in June, 1932, the takings upon casual sales for the final week amounted to just 25 shillings! Four loads of books went to the pulp mills, as I could not get the £25 at which I had offered them to the trade – a stock, which in better times, would have fetched ten times that sum. The house-shop in Maple Road, too, had had to go some months previously, and with it pretty well all that was left of our furniture, for which we got a miserable £17!

But we got something far more valuable, had we but known it, in exchange – proof of real friendship in adversity. My wife made friends with consummate ease – witness the umbrella Halls and the furniture

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Pembertons, among others in Brighton Road. There was competition for her friendship, whether in Barnsley or Surbiton, and I well remember the amusing occasion when the vivacious and temperamental Nella Pemberton, jealous of her position in Em's favour, laid it down that she was to be her sole friend, or nothing. And now, our namesakes (yet another Hall, whose family building business in Maple Road, was decidedly groggy, too), fairly thrust a bedroom upon us, and housed the lot of us at the inclusive charge of 10 shillings a week, for the next six months.

And Mrs Kent, the ex-actress with the heart of gold and the stamina of a woman half her age, competed with Vi Hall for the opportunity to assist us, and for priority in Em's affections.

The repayments to Darton upon the loans had of course long ago suffered eclipse, and bitter had been the reproaches, the taunts, the accusations of embezzlement, or worse. Of my first library, perhaps a score or so of chosen volumes survived as a solace and reminder of former glories; and even of the manuscript diaries, as sacrosanct in my eyes as the Foundry shares were in the eyes of my uncles, one or two had gone to America, alas. Of our household possessions and of

the labour and love expended by Em upon them, there remained – just about nothing.

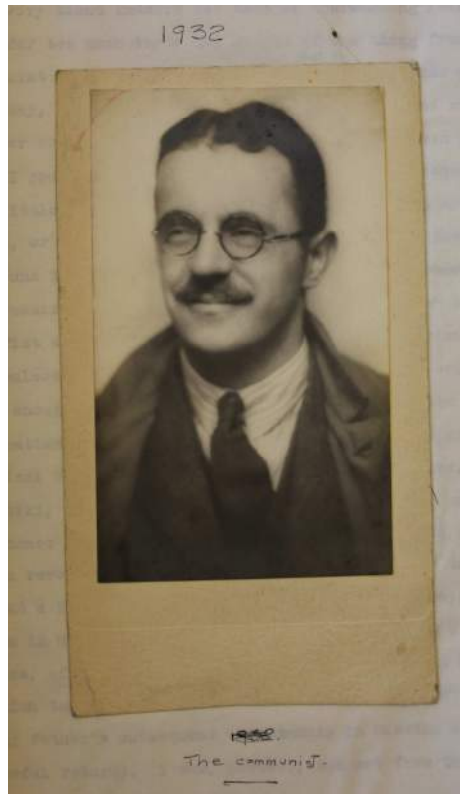
But we still had one another, and our three grand children – for our second son had been born to us in 1928 – and the measure of the reconciliation with Darton which was then in force, was indicated, at least on our side, by the Christian names he resentfully bears today – George

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Harry! He answers more charmingly to 'Bunk'.

What was I to do now? Not having been in insurable occupation, there was of course no 'dole'. I must either provide my own living, or apply for public aid – pauperisation! Every other channel of relief, official or other, was closed against me (I had already had £10 out of the ex-officers association). There was the wreck of my duplicating business; a wreck of a second-hand motor-cycle combination; and a stock of miscellaneous library books, ear-marked to attract what residue might prove loyal of my old library customers, to whatever solution, static or mobile, I might yet provide in the way of a circulating library. I decided to attempt a door-to-door service, and had I but possessed the guts, the impertinent self-assurance, and had I not been scared away from a front door by the sound of the reaction of my hesitant pressure upon the bell-push, I might have built up a sound enough connection in what was then still a novelty. The weekly call saved people the trouble of carting their library books to their local circulating library, and not every door was slammed in my face. I found, too, that suburbanites were still very easily satisfied, especially the women. Ethel M.Dell, Ruby M.Ayres, Edgar Wallace, Peter B.Kyne,—the whole sickening catalogue of popular authors, preference for whom had sounded the knell of my hopes in the book world. But having secured just sufficient of custom to enable me to meet current house-keeping expenses, I quailed at pursuing more. Wasn't it the lowest depth to which a man, an ex-officer, could sink, to canvas at front doors? And who would twice submit to the slamming of a door in his



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face, or to every sound indoors but that of approaching feet? Not me – for I entered far too much into the spirit of the thing from the householders point of view, which was fatal to that of the business point of view. And anyway, I had turned violently communistic, and resented crawling for a copper or two. My approach to communism had been unusual enough – so far as I could judge by the class of person who frequented the wretched little upper room which was our local communist headquarters at Twickenham or who marched beside me on May Day from Richmond to Hyde Park (I found it more satisfying to chat with the police escort on such occasions, than with the stunted enthusiast at my side, whose clenched fist did such symbolic execution upon the grinning onlookers upon the balconies of Bayswater). The 'comrades' were acquainted (superficially enough, I gathered) with the writings of Marx and Lenin, and the fulminations of the Daily Worker, whereas I had approached by way of the classical writers – Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Poushkin, Tchekov, the earlier Gorki, and such. Their cry had penetrated my soul and obliterated the chance boundaries of states; and I was steeped in the history of Russian revolutionary movements, and in particular that of 1906, of which I had a Barnsley memory; for in those far-off days, our next door neighbours in Hopwood Street had been Polish Jews (in a pretty good way of business, of course), and my father had contributed a 'fiver' towards a fund which they had brought to his notice, in aid of sufferers by the pogrom (my fathers subsequent investments in

Russian oil, produced a less grateful return). I was, however, suspect from the start – was I

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not an 'intellectual' (of sorts), and a bourgeois to boot? Still, there was no gainsaying my present qualifications as a down-and-out; and did I not duplicate fiery (and theoretically unsound) denunciations of the oppressors, upon my own duplicator, and nightly circulate them, using my own motor-cycle for the purpose, overcoming my repulsion to meet the householder in his den? So I was enrolled under the hypnotic eye of Lenin, a huge portrait of whom was the main feature of the dingy little room ; and I fully understood the implications should I turn traitor to the cause. We were few indeed, but power would be ours – or theirs – one of these days, and woe betide the turn-coat. But there was no fear of that, as I sat listening to the dialectics of a working man whose grammar was of the fear fullest, and scowled at the Union Jack which some misguided neighbour had flaunted in our very faces from the roof of his privy next door. (it was not removed, either, during the period of my association with the rebels against that symbol).

A curse upon the comfortable Dartonian swine who would grind not only myself, but my wife and darling children into the gutter – or at least, not lift a finger to prevent that possibility. I advertised in the Daily Worker, suggesting collaboration on party lines and terms in the running of a market bookstall somewhere, and a response came from the direction of Plaistow. That side-enterprise ended in my handing over the whole of the stock to my equally disillusioned partner, a postman, in return for a couple of quid and the opportunity to dissolve the partnership, and to escape from the clamour, the hideous atmosphere, of that awful market. If this was a sample of the proletariat – but no, they had never had a chance, and it was up to me to fight the idle,

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useless, parasitic rich on their behalf. I knew far better than they, just how much they were being victimised. Sad though, that Ruby M. Ayres and Edgar Wallace seemed to appeal to them, just as with – I had almost said, their betters! And my father, not unnaturally, but with scant courtesy, wrote in pencil and upon a scrap of paper, demanding that I cease attempting to ram communism down his throat; and on other occasions that I turn my attentions to repaying the balance of the outstanding loan; and my sister Amy obliged with a detailed statement, dating back to 1928. The foundry, too, through my cousin Jim, regretted that they could offer me no post on their staff –and he

added a private note, to the effect that I really ought to be more careful of my utterances, public and private, for the day might come when the Government might refuse to help me. The impertinence, the bloody cheek, of that confounded dividend sucker, to hint at the withholding of the 'dole'—to me of all persons – to me, who, alas, had not even qualified for it yet! That was the rub, did I but admit it.

My wife now took a hand, in her usual forthright manner. Next door to our good hosts, the Halls, there was an empty house – it had been empty for some years, damn its morose owner – and we might get it at a fairly reasonable rent, let out part of it or take in boarders, and so secure something of a home for our children again. We could get the furniture on hire purchase ; I could run a library in one of the downstairs rooms, in addition to my door-to-door service; and

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perhaps I could develop my duplicating service once again. We soon let the top storey to a couple of young fellows, by name Turner and Kitchener, who were scraping an addition to their meagre income, out of motor-cycle dabbling and repairs, supplementing Kitchener's wage as a van-delivery man, and the 'dole' of Turner. And in due course, boarders turned up, and we were forced down into the basement, where, between cooking for them and ourselves, and mounting seemingly endless stairs, my wife proceeded to justify her faith in herself; and had she been equal to her new role, in the accepted tradition of boarding house keeper, she would have been more amply repaid in cash for the attention she lavished upon her appreciative boarders; as it was, the small margin of profit derived from them went into the repayment upon the hire-purchase furniture, and the rest was up to me. No wonder her temper suffered at times, and that the concentrated clamour and exuberance of the children, or the unceasing struggle to balance accounts (the Hall name went for nothing with shopkeepers here and now) exacerbated it so frequently. But she had a home again, and the children were going to St. Mark's school, and doing very nicely. Food, clothing, and fresh air were at a premium in that basement, but with Vi and Mrs Kent to assist, and an address of one's own, life was worth living again. And so set to, and as fast as I typed out duplicating orders, she put the stencils on to the rotary duplicator (which I still retained from the wreck) and turned, turned, turned, far into the night, whilst the children turned in their sleep to the murmur of the revolving rollers.

Meantime, all was not well at Darton – or in Australia, where poor

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May was expiating the sin of flying in the face of the obvious, in having attached herself to Claude's erratic fortunes in that part of the world.

Dear Ned

17 Sep. 1932

From your letters to Amy self it would appear that you have never kept books & do not consider what you owe on capital &c, which should always come first. You cannot replace stocks without this coming first.

If you spend all you receive without thinking of this you will soon be landed. Have you ever remembered what you owe me & what you have paid in interest and capital?

I wish to warn you that owing to you and others I have been landed in for a huge sum for a damned rotter & all of you will have to suffer.

Dad

The continuation by Amy afforded no clue as to how far responsible I was in the affair of Claude:

Dad & I are glad to hear that the moving library promises so well & that the duplicating work still remains with you firmly – a valuable old friend when starting on a new venture. I can understand Emily not being equal to the demands of a few boarders in a large house – it was a big undertaking for anyone whose health was A.1 ; but I do hope she has strengthened in the delightful weather of this year, still with us.

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I have not seen Edie since the end of July – she must have past me on the train on her way to Scilly when I was on the way back, She may get up here next weekend.

John is away for a week's holiday in a motor caravan – it seems a queer notion where there is a young baby & when the nights are drawing in so rapidly. Also there was areal gale for the first two days & nights.

From the letter from May on Monday, written Aug.9th, she has not had any money payed into Court by Claude – he refused to pay, & after 2 remands, had that day been sentenced to 55 days prison unless he paid forthwith. When she left court to try & catch the mail, he was in the cells. Also she was expecting her divorce case to begin about Aug. 18th – undefended –& was only afraid it might get delayed a week, on to her wedding anniversary. She is getting a Poor Person's Divorce.

Life is very hard for her at present, for owing to the Depression, etc. she finds it difficult to get any work at all & is glad at present of a temporary job at 8/- for 5 mornings a week, housework. Also makes sweets etc. Harry goes out gathering wood on the beach for firewood

regularly & the neighbours are very friendly & helpful to the best of their powers. She gets 17/6 grocery allowance per fortnight from the State.

Gustave is known to be in Derbyshire this year – at least he was before the Court earlier on for selling muffins etc in the street without a licence & got a nominal fine.

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Bill has been treating some severe cases of varicose veins in the Scillies by injection, with complete success so far. He wanted Edie to give him a clear month to work on hers but nothing came of it – she came home after three weeks there & had not let him begin.

I had already got the pyjamas for Johnnie's birthday on the 22nd & Dad also sends him a pair, so give him our love & best birthday wishes then. The beads are the only necklace I ever bought myself. I thought Joan might like them. Isn't writing allowed nowadays? She used to send us such welcome notes but we have not had even one this year. Auntie Evelyn misses them, too.

The socks should be all right for you. I cannot say anything about any cast off apparel in Derby but they shall see your letter when they come. Yours is not the worst trouble though you certainly have had your share.

Love from Dad & Amy.

Do not cut off writing letters as well, please.

Going one better upon the socks, my father decided to provide me with a much-needed suit in replacement of the odd assortment of garments to which I was reduced. But he was taking no chances – I was to submit the enclosed slip to the '50 shilling tailors', authorising them to provide me with a suit, the bill for same to be sent direct to him at Darton. I indignantly spurned the offer, and for the time being, there was a cessation of correspondence between us; Amy, however, filled the breach.

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1926-1934

Nov. 2. 1932.

Dear Ned,

Once again I supply details for the Income Tax officials, on a separate sheet. With regard to those who are dodging payment, it is no use complaining to me; the above officials would be much more grateful for information or even just a hint, if you feel so inclined

Do not lose heart because your duplicating has slumped a little – everything has its periods & so far it seems to have served you very well. We hope it will pick up again long before Xmas. There is not much news from this end. May got her divorce from Claude in Aug, to be made absolute in February; also she has summoned him twice for non-payment of maintenance – the first time he got someone else to pay up for him, but the second time, no one felt inclined & as far as May could make out, he went to prison for 28 days. She gets in some work but of course conditions are bad over there, just as they are here & everywhere else. Harry is very fond of his Scout work & has also started collecting stamps. The ‘cutting’ about your old headmaster is from yesterday’s paper. It seems very likely that Herbert Smith will be Mayor next year; the Independents offered the Socialists the chance of choosing their own Mayor alternate years, but were curtly refused. However the parties are equal now on the Council & I think H.S. will be chosen in view of his long services. Are the children keeping well?

Yours – Amy.

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Dear Ned
19th 1932.

Nov.

We shall be very glad to see you at Xmas & only hope you will not come too late to see Stanley & Edie – they will leave here on Tuesday morning for Derby. It just left with you now to let us know on what day you propose coming – neither Dad nor myself wish you to think any more formality is necessary to come here. He likes you all to think of it as coming ‘Home’.

It is good news about your Duplicating work at present - it always seems to have been the best move you made in the South. About foreign work I am a little doubtful because there will be matters of exchange & possible delays to consider; whilst if a firm proved difficult, you might have to to expend a lot on postage, & even then, not get their money; & how could you sue them? You are not by any means the only Duplicator working & of course foreigners want to get the best terms & make enquiries, but the advertising columns of daily & weekly papers show how many do this work.

With regards to Dad’s Xmas present to the kiddies, I took Emily’s letter in to town with me so that I should make no mistake about sizes; but Joan’s were difficult – Barnsley shops do not keep half sizes in maid’s shoes. There will be 2 shirts for you when you come at Xmas, but so far Dad has not changed into winter wear. He wonders if it not be worth your while to work at shorthand?

Love from Dad & Amy

Some few months later I must have somewhat ingenuously remarked

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upon the improved relations then apparently obtaining between us – a comment (linked with an appeal for a loan) which fairly invited the sting in the tail in the letter from Amy, otherwise devoted to matters of only passing interest.

We were amazed & amused when you spoke of an end to the state of hostility; we had not known that there was one. Certainly your act in asking for a loan was not regarded as an act of enmity & the fact that Dad had not the money should be treated as such by you. I believe you think he is still wealthy, a very mistaken idea. He did not get a new suit at all last year and Edie & I have just bought him one for this, from M.Burton & Co, as the prospects were poor for him. I could tell you much more, but you seem to think no one here can have suffered, either by the wrong deeds of others or by the general depression

Love to all. Amy

Claude's affair had certainly hit him hard, and where it hurt the most; but the affair of the suit of clothes merely served, I fear, to excite a wry smile in me; as for his daughter-in-law, she had need to turn the duplicator handle, for the door-to-door library service was dying upon me, as the chain libraries secured their grip upon the suburbanites and London firms took up the idea of the mobile service. One had to have more than the gift of the gab in those days, to make one's way. I answered situations vacant by the dozen – mortuary attendant, bookmaker's clerk, clerk in a paper mill, anything but canvasser for vacuum cleaners, I

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even contemplated turning shopkeeper once again. There was a shop vacant between Norbiton and Kingston; How about fish and fruit? Turner and Kitchener, though not now so intimately linked in their fortunes (or lack of same) with us, having vacated their upper storey in our house, were interested, and their aid should invaluable. Kitchener knew something about the marketing side of fish, and Turner was au fait with fruit. Em would of course back me up, performing her famous smile upon the customers; but who was to provide the initial wherewithal –the Capital? Provided I could secure the signature of two guarantors, there was an obliging financial corporation prepared to advance some capital, with absolutely no risk to themselves.

I can honestly record my entire gratitude to my father for not involving himself in certain disaster, and myself in loathed contact with slimy stinking fish, and the objectionable sight of fruit rotting upon our hands. As for the alternative proposals he made in the course of his refusal, suffice to say, with regard to Em's parents, her Mother was almost bedridden with an ulcerated leg, of many years standing and expense, and that her father, at long last, was about to retire upon his hard earned savings, so there was no superfluity to be looked for in that direction, even had we considered it proper to our purposes. As for Bill Ivers, he was now a father – and anyway, to come nearer to home, had I not a brother, who might have benefitted sufficiently out of the surrendered Foundry shares? My business ethics might not be economically or financially sound, but at least they were not shady or indefensible on my part.

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Dear Ned

23 April 1934

Yours to hand with enclosure returned with this. No matter how favourable or not I should consider it, under my agreement with the Foundry I cannot sign any such document.

I hate reaping up the past, but as Emily had a large share in your past, why not get her father or brother to sign it, as, unless you again go down, they will have nothing to pay?

You might ask Bill (who is the best off in the family) as a second witness. I helped him get his present position when his father would not.

As in your past letters you say the Bookselling & Duplicating are no use, I wonder why you want to waste more money & time on it again. Why not take a leaf out of Gustave's book & strike out in something fresh? He has made good & always has some money & pays cash.

Again wishing you good luck

Dad

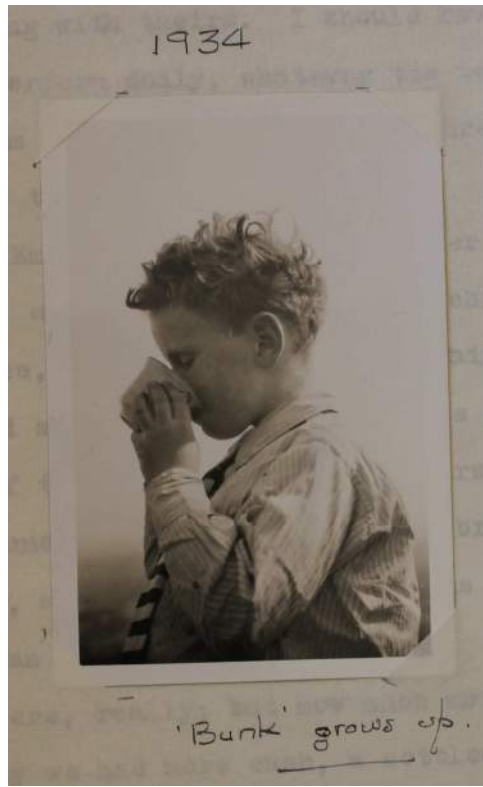
Apparently this was his last letter to me. Meantime, we were at the end of our tether, utterly at a loss which way to turn, when my wife spotted a 'possible' – a motor-cycle roundsman required by a photographic firm at Hampton Hill – applicant to supply his own machine, upon mileage basis of repayment, and a small retaining wage. The wage proved to be 35 shillings a week – for the present – with a penny a mile riding expenses. Still that was something definite, tangible, above all, weekly – no more wondering if I should make either £2 or £3

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1926-1934

this week or next. Here was something I could place upon the table, and no argument or question about it. Granted it was a sheer imposition and robbery of the worker, but that would be altered, all in good time. Our day would come, and we would then sweep away those wretched little struggling firms, cutting one another's throats and grinding the worker down in the process, swindling him out of a fair wage, and throwing him aside when it suited their book. God, how I hated them – or thought I did.

In addition to performing the motor cycling round, calling upon chemists and other shop-folk who collected spools for developing from their customers, which the Walton Photographic Company processed, we roundsmen (there were three of us in all) had to set to work and superintend the process of developing, commencing with the dark room and so through the various chemical bathes to daylight – or at least electric light, for it might be midnight before we had completed the operation, when our day's work was over and we might go home. But at least it was a job, with regular money attached; and we all, necessarily, had other irons in the fire, to make ends meet. Fortunately, too, the pressure of night work during the busy summer months which followed, justified the provision of extra staff, and we fell back solely upon our rounds – with a corresponding reduction, of course, in our weekly wage. Two or three months after my being taken on, by a stroke of luck, I managed to double that income, for I secured parallel employment with an optical frame-making firm, in Surbiton, who not only were prepared to pay pretty much the same wage, but also provided a brand new motor-cycle



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- a most timely gesture, as mine was upon its last legs. Further, I secured permission from Messrs Poldens, to work in the Walton Photo Company's round along with theirs, I should have considerably more than 100 miles to perform daily, whatever the weather. But that was a mere nothing; the minimum I had set for myself – three pounds a week at least, to pass over to Em – was secured.

Dear, illogical Em! Cash, spot cash was her argument where the running of a house, and the rearing of three children was concerned – from whatever source, fair or foul, it may come. Such a mother! and still personable, still desirable, despite the toil and worries of the past ten terrible years or so. No one could cook like her; no one could have made such a brave show in the matter of dress, than her, and upon so little; no one could have put up for so long with such an awkward devil as myself. At least she loved me. Oh, how happy we were, really, but how much more happy could we, ought we, to be. If only we had more cash, a settled income, commensurate with our needs and desires.

'You will live to regret it,' had been my uncle Willie's parting shot at the close of that foundry meeting in 1926. Surely we had learned our lesson, and paid the whole bitter price – perhaps more! Was I not even now wearing my father's cast-off suit; and which of my children, apart from the results of endless knitting by their mother, could boast an entire rigout of clothes, purchased over the right sort of counter? Dear, dear Em, she demanded so little, deserves so much.' Are the

lodgers good to you, Ned' had quavered my poor aunt Annie during the course of one of my recent visits to Barnsley (I was

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conditionally in favour once again – conditional upon the retaining the respectability attendant upon a job, with pay). 'Are the lodgers good to you!' Poor Em – poor dear Em.

The months passed, and I was qualifying for the 'dole'; and curiously my communistic fervour was trailing off. The solution evidently did not lie in that direction. I put down Huge's Russian Within Three Months, read my last short story by Chekov in that language, and took up my long forgotten Diary.

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1934

Tuesday 18th December 1934

In the course of my round at West Byfleet, crossed over the junction of the Porford & Station Rd. when I met with a nasty accident. I was travelling at no more than 20 miles an hour past the line of shops on the Old Woking Rd, when a little girl darted out from between two stationary cars and ran clean into my machine. There was not the slightest hope of missing her, although I was on the crown of the road. She got a terrible blow from the front of the forks, it seemed, glass flew out of the lamp, and she fell on the road with a cry. It was an awful moment. I drew in the side of the road, dropped the machine, and looked back. The child was a motionless pathetic bundle in the road. The shoppers stood spellbound and I rushed to her and gently turned her over, fearing she might be terribly injured. There was blood on her lips and cheek and I saw her legs all blood too. I picked her gently up, muttering my sorrow, and took her to the roadside, where her mother, who had been in Sainsbury's, received her. I then ran to pick up my machine and on coming back, found that the mother had rushed to a nearby surgeon, where I followed. The doctor, after asking the mother why she had not gone to her own doctor set to work, but I went outside. Later, I saw the mother outside.

Wednesday December 19th 1934

Wondered how I was to get money to buy the little child a present. This morning my Aunt Edith sent Joan 5/- p.o. This Joan and the kiddies decided at once should go to purchasing a doll and sweets for her. Poldens sent a present—a book. Punctured between Chertsey & Staines. Mended two punctures in light of lamp. Arrived Staines at

7, right opposite A.A.box with tyre flat. Was able to phone Em from there. Lost my back lamp Must have left in changing after mending the punctures. Fitted the one from the old Sunbeam

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1934

Thursday December 20th 1934

Put advert at Station & Books Unlimited for job of morning work in library or antiquarian research work. (One month at station—a week at Books Unlimited)

Friday December 21st 1934

Wage is now 30/- plus commission from Polden's

Saturday December 22nd 1934

Another 2/6 knocked off wage from Waltons because of the cessation of morning round, bringing me down to 23/6 a week. Therefore shall have nearly enough to pay Em and rent as usual.

Sunday December 23rd 1934

Too much wireless got on Em's nerves at dinner time. But we went a walk down to Teddington weir in the afternoon taking kiddies and the dog Messiah on Wireless at 9-30

Monday December 24th 193

A 1/2d in pocket and promised Barbara an Xmas present. Em provided this. Motor car, on starting off outside Sherring's at Walton did a preliminary 'back' on to my machine which was leaning against the causeway edge. No damage done. Thomas Traherne out of Public Library. Saw three books at Books Unlimited which I could not resist, Trollop's Dr Thorne, The Warden, and an anthology of Love Lyrics. Price 1/- the lot. Promised to pay after Xmas. Em had the offer to put in a couple of hours behind Tom Kent's counter in the evening. He gave her 5/- of which she gave me 2/6. She spent the other 2/6 on Xmas stockings for the kiddies – the one Xmas item lacking. Managed to get a few bits of berried holly on roadside for decorations today.

Tuesday December 25th 1934

No present for the kiddies from Tom and Beatrice. Neither of us said anything. During the morning a parcel arrived from them. Turkey for dinner, cooked a treat. Beautiful cards by Belgium children. 19/-

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1934

cheque arrived from Norman. Shall be able to send this to Gamages.

Wednesday December 26th 1934

Really felt the inner meaning of the Poem of Infants by Thos. Traherne. Little Women film in afternoon. Profoundly moved 'Holy Night' by German children.

Thursday December 27th 1934

Although it would be no use to do either the optical or photo round, owing to most shops shutting down after 1 o'clock, I decided to call at Hampton and see Mr Hepworth, Took Joan and John with me. Bunkie confined indoors with a bad head cold. Called at Boots at both Kingston and Surbiton but no photo work. Walked up the Thames to Hampton Court and told the kiddies somewhat of our married life and financial crises and how we had tried to avail ourselves of the experience gained thereby in avoiding those mistakes in bringing up children which maybe largely contributed to our disasters and gradual recovery. Walked along the Staines Rd. and through Bushy Park, through a pretty wood, to Hampton Hill. O.K. with Mr Hepworth. Returned in the rain, through Bushy Park to Teddington. Caught bus at Old Teddington Church. 8 mile walk. but back at 2 o'clock. Tried to settle into Huxley's Religion without Revelation, but no good. After Traherne's poems I can't face cold reason, however necessary and convincing. I must cling to what I have gained.

Friday December 28th 1934

Forshaw, chemist, Addlestone gave me 2/- as an Xmas box. I had wondered if he would before Xmas as my predecessor on this round received a gratuity on finishing his summer round. Farnham turned up trumps with optical repairs, 7 from Leighton Eye Services, 3 from Kafman.

Called on Barbara. Knee bandage off her right leg and running about in A1 style now.

Joan ill during last night – bilious through much choice of sweets, dates, figs etc. Slept in our bed. Disturbed night for all.

Dec, 29th 1934

Demand for payment of £7 bill from Gestetners for Oct and Nov, materials. Herbert Kitchener soon after breakfast came along with new lamp parts and fitted them on for me. He offered to give me £3 for the old Sunbeam, which I joyfully accepted. his will help keep the wolves at bay – yesterday, Mr Phillips and Duplicating Services 1£ each. Cleared out the office and set the table in a different position

thereby giving much more available space and avoiding the previously terrible muddle. Also cleared out the books under the kitchen table and sorted them out into classified lots in the office. Beautiful sunset over Mayford Common. Old fashioned horse caravan on roadside Roads dry for a change and I got as far as Guildford before Lighting up. Home by 6-30. Joan still pecky but getting better. Declined a party invitation today. Honor Pitt. Bunky and John prancing about when I got home. 30/- work from Poldens this week. Mr Phillips called about his account this morning. Promised to pay something off as soon as possible. He told me that Mr Packer was dead, of perforated bowels. The kind of man to whom it would seem a presumption on deaths part to lay hands upon.

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1934-35

Good solid business man type – a fixture, comfortably well off.

Dec. 30th 1934

Stayed in all day, Enjoyed the intro to Courtney's Literary Man's Bible. Also selections. Started to read Coleridge's Ancient Mariner to the children. John cajoled his mother into allowing him to wear his long trousers again.

Dec. 31st 1934

Beautiful weather – no rain and road dry. Typing job came in this morning. Also cheque from Robinson for nearly £10. Arranged to pay part of Gestetners, Valler, Duplicating Services bills off. Also Phillips and Wireless Licence, and 1£ for Em which will take up Herbert's £3 also. Got Mr Polden to cash the cheque for me. The machine has developed a worrying thump in the engine. Piston shaft probably due to using cheap oil. Asked Polden if I may go back on good oil and he agreed. Saw a beautiful bird lying injured on Chertsey Road with ineffectual flapping of wings in attempts to rise. Ran over it. Kids all got colds now. Em has sore chest. Wrote this morning to Tom Hall, Amy, John and accompanying letters for money to tip people. Barbara alright. The doctor had advised taking off the bandages too early it appears. Em and Vi went to see Richard Tauber in Blossom Time tonight. I was to have gone but felt tired and little inclined. Am now listening to a Prom Concert – Sir Henry Wood conducting Wagner's music. Joan just gone to bed. She is half way through Uncle Toms Cabin. John has finished Treasure Island. Herbert came in tonight and paid the £3. Ran about 300 copies off, of revised Duplicating Price List this morning, for sending off to bookshops. Late tonight a well dressed man, supporting a drunken woman against the wall opposite, pursued by a crowd of taunting women with babies in their arms. Pitiful to see and then, wonderful sweet chimes, playing hymn tunes

from some German station. Goodbye on that note to the Old year for us all.

Jan 1st 1935
No Entry

Jan 2nd / 35 Wed,

Typed 7 pages of Robinson job in morning. Re-read Wordsworth tonight, particularly his Ode on Immortality and Happy Warrior, what vision & how encouraging.

Jan 3rd / 35 Thur.

Last night I had a dream. I only remember finding myself in a modern cemetery, sat on the marble edging of a grave plot.

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Nearby the slab top of a grave caved suddenly in. A woman stopped in her walk, bent over and peered into the cavity. She hastily averted her gaze and hurried away. I looked in and saw at first a shocking sight – a child's coffin, with the lid off, and inside a little child, white and glistening in the face like candle wax, face fixed and expressive of the dreadful calm of death. At first I shared the feelings of the woman but reason came to my aid and though I cannot remember how I restored myself this I did and felt how far I had advanced in my philosophy. Finished the machine this morning, thoroughly cleaning the piston, which I removed from the connecting rod for the purpose. The coke was hard as iron almost, but otherwise no damage. Re-assembled it and was ready at 12 o'clock. Honor, Chris and Joan tormented John all morning till I had to intervene. Tied him up in a box, to a tree stuffed him in a box, spread-eagled him on things they could not have done to Bunk. But John is at a queer age and rather invites what he gets, poor kid. Chris left her Tiffins school hat on the gate post and of course, it fell into the street and was picked up apparently by some boys and after a futile search she had to go home and face her mother without it.

Jan 4th Fri. /35

Finished typing Robinson's job this morning. Em ran it off and folded it this afternoon, 300 off a 16 page Booklet. 48/- Some glorious gramophone music from Paris, an organ piece of Bach's, & a lot of Chopin's piano pieces, followed by Russian popular music.

Another job arrived from Robinson this morning, 700 off a 20 page Booklet. Em paid the Water Rate and the Wireless Licence today. Somebody threw Christine's hat back over the garden fence

yesterday. Joan nearly finished Uncle Tom's Cabin. Much exercised at present on the question of faith in God, and what God. Uncle Tom's or mine, as that of her own visions. I told her to prize her childhood visions as a direct link with immortality.

Lovely cold day today – a break with a record mild winter. The machine running

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perfectly, but brakes need attending to. Paid commission on 109 jobs today – a record and Polden shook hands with me on it. Had a hard job to leave for the run during a trio of Chamber Music by Handel during the lunch hour.

Herbert just returned my machine having put on the new leg shield & made my electric horn work again. For the last day or two I have gone about with a big old bulb horn stuck in my belt, reminding one customer of Harry Tate in motoring.

Jan 5th / 35 Sat.

Paid Dr. Pope his long delayed account £1-6-0 and entered myself on his panel. Tried to impress on the kiddies at dinner time that they must try to agree better among themselves to settle their arguments among themselves. It is just a phase they are passing through Joan inclined to boss, John contemptuous of girls (even his beloved Doany) and Bunkie to side with Joan in arguments. Fine bright and freezing weather – did the round in just 4 ½ hours today, 1-45 to 6-15. A record- as also was the fact that on the whole round I only picked up one job, at Staines! Took out Wordsworth's Prelude, 1805 reprint, Oxford edn. & renewed Traherne's poems. Paid 4½ each for a small pocket edn. of Thackeray's Virginian on India Paper, and a collection of old 17th century Plays, edited by Havelock Ellis in the Mermaid Series, at Books Unlimited. Just been out on the machine to get Em some wool, and at 8 there is a Prom Concert. John is reading Coral Island and Joan is varying her reading by a dose of school girls mags – shocking things – lent her by Christine. I hid them, but it was no use.

Jan 6th / 35 Sunday

The recurring charm of Traherne took me to his poems and I read the first book of Wordsworth's Prelude but did not enjoy them as I do his smaller pieces. Invited out to the Brown's for tea, so took the kiddies along with Em about 5. Kiddies excited over the piano and after tea I introduced Joan in simple five finger exercises, in which she showed great interest and expressed a wish to learn. She has the right fingers too. But I can't see how it is to be brought to pass. When we brought

the kiddies home at 8, Doris and Mr Brown came back with us, and spent the evening here. Brought some of their records to try out on the radio gram and the kiddies stopped up to hear Tiger Rag –their old favourite when Mr Brown lived with us.

Jan 7th / 35 Monday

Ran into showers of cold rain at Byfleet, then the bitter and painful sleet at Guildford. On top of Bagden Hill, snow

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on the fields and hedges, pretty scene. Made up a snowball for the kiddies, but lost it on way down the hill. Saw some kiddies fighting at Lower Hallifield with a lout urging them on, Stopped them and clouted him. Joan came down stairs after going to bed, to express her regret that we had so much to do, whilst she did so little. Reassured her. Picked up a nice lot of jobs today. Mr Evans, the Bank Manager, walked into Surbiton Boots whilst I was there this evening. Very awkward, and I had to cut him and got out of the shop as quick as I could. Must try to square the arrears somehow. It has been outstanding long enough and he has been very tolerant.

Jan 8th / 35 Tuesday

Cheque from Bailey Bros for £7-10-0 and another duplicating job from them. Part decided how to disburse this money on various bills but I find Em wants to furnish the spare room to let to old Mrs Copeland. This will no doubt be a good idea, but I wish I could square my debts now there is a fair opportunity. Mrs Kent in at tea, also Christine and Bobby Hobbs. Noise proved too much for Em, and I made things worse by trying to correct Bunky. Miserable evening as a result, sitting by the fire, mute and unhappy. It is hard to steer clear of rocks on all sides and I know how difficult it must be for Em.

Jan. 9th / 35 Wed.

Typed 7 more booklet pages of Bailey's list and finished checking Robinson's List with Joan. I like her to help in checking, as there is no doubt of the educational value in my eyes even of going through titles of so many and varied books. Em ran off part of Robinson's job on the new Gestetner Bunkie came home with a 'cracker' given him at school for good work.

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My reading this afternoon brought up memories of Bagden Hill on dark nights – the majesty of the heavens. Bach – Handel anniversary concert tonight conducted by Sir Henry Wood. The finale to the occasional oratorio of Handel moved me to rising from my chair and standing in tribute & gratitude to the composer

Jan 10th / 35 Thurs.

Copy for list, 350 off, came by post last night from Norman of Tottenham Ct. Rd. Work is coming on well. In Dorking before it was really dark. I arrived home in time to take Em to the Coronation to see a fine Arctic exploration film, of the Courtauld expedition of 1931. Excellent There was also an amusing coloured burlesque of Napoleon and Josephine (with Voltaire taking press notes) Mrs Kent gave Bunkie one of David's tailored coats today – a cast off, but very acceptable. She is a good sort Joan went to her party today. Can't settle down to any reading but Traherne – he has thrown a spell over my thought and I hope my actions too. I can't remember a line of his poems but the effect is there.

Jan 11th /35 Friday

Bunkie at first refused to wear David Kent's coat. But was at last persuaded. He loves the old rag he has been wearing which incidentally was originally one of Davids. Bunkie as furious as ever if he cant get off to school half an hour before school time. Rainy journey today, Mended two small punctures en route and shortly after that the machine was running so badly I stopped under a lamp, in a perfect rain storm and adjusted the tappets. The machine would not even start after I had done the tappets. I found the plug would'nt spark at all, and eventually pushed

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it a mile uphill to a garage, where I got a new plug. Arrived home at 8 o'clock, wet and cold but glad it had proved no worse. Em gone to pictures, but I see she has folded half of Robinson's job and I am about to tackle the remainder now. Surrounded with drying clothes and listening to organ music from St Lukes, Chelsea. 72 optical jobs this week, so wage £1/16/- from Poldens

Jan 12th / 35 Sat.

Called at Books Unlimited and was handed the booksellers reports for Poems of Vaughan, Traherne & Donne. Mostly too dear- but as I looked round the shelves picked up an anthology which gave selections from all three! Coincidence or providence, I wonder which! Also picked up a modern Cambridge selection of Bacon's Works edited with a prefatory life.. The two 6d each. I wanted an edited

edition of Job, but I picked up two fine O.U.P. editions with photo illustrations, Clarendon Edition of the Bible – St Luke & Acts, for 1/- each recently published. With the rush of duplicating in I felt I could treat myself. Good run today with no trouble. On Pinfield Common saw a red coated huntsman with others on horseback returning from the hunt, winding slowly along bridle paths – a pretty splash of colour. Slight indications of snow on the Hogs Back today.

Jan 13th / 35 Sunday

In the afternoon, despite drizzle, went with Em, the kiddies and Mrs Hall next door, by bus to Richmond Park. Walked to Ham Gate and back. In a nasty mood at starting but the gloom somehow of the

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weather dispelled my gloom, as it often does. Can't settle down at present to reading anything but Traherne. I feel I could part with the whole of my library, with the exception of this one book (which isn't mine, being a Public Library book), such a disquieting and yet comforting and helpful influence it has had over me. It seems to be a positive landmark and what I badly needed. I turn again and again to almost any poem of the collection and the magic is there as ever, and I am a child with Traherne, but a long long way from his utter abandonment of the world and his confident answers of his godlike origins. Vaughan stands next in my esteem but he is cold after Traherne, and the ecstasy is lacking somehow. Crashaw holds no appeal for me, from the little I have read yet of him

Jan 14th / 35 Mon

Paid Holden's £1, month's installment on hire purchase of the radio gram.. Bunkie is very keen on the fairy story book I gave him on Sat, and a tussle between John and Joan as to who should read Swiss Family Robinson after their bath. Called on Barbara today. Nasty blue scars on her knees and where she had her leg stitched, otherwise quite alright now.

Jan 15th /35 Tues

Em has been to Dr.Porter who has prescribed potatoes in her diet and given her a sleeping draught. Joan has a secret – she and Chris want to take their dinner to Esher Common on Sat. and sit up a tree to eat it. Told her somewhat of the embryo in the mother's womb at dinner time and she was surprised to hear that the unborn baby was alive. Bunkie sick in bed tonight. Just been up to change the bed with Em.

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Jan. 16th /35 Wed

Gestetner representative called this morning and demonstrated electric duplicator to Em. would like to take it on as some times the turning so many thousand times of the Rotary Duplicator is too much for Em. He left it for trial. Only picked up one job on the round. Hurried home to hear Handel and I remember smiling at the thought which came to me that Handel has been dead so long and there was I hurrying home on a motor cycle to listen to his music. However, when I got home there was no Handel. The duplicator was in full blast, no tea ready, fire nearly out. Unpleasantness ensued, and I lost my temper and went out very miserable. Sat on the Queens Parade for half an hour, thoroughly miserable, and the beauty of the river, the softened light in the mist, the trees opposite failed to charm my mood away. I walked to Kingston and took a slow train to London – a place I loathe. Arrived there. I mooned along over Waterloo Bridge (the river looked a picture fit for Whistler to paint) and through Theatre-Land where I was accosted by a prostitute and shadowed by another. But my utter misery must have put them off. I couldn't conceal it and I just strolled aimlessly along, looking in shop windows, making no plans, and wondering where Trehearne and all my months of effort had gone. Then I saw a Picture Hall showing topical films, into which I went about 10p.m. Saw some excerpts from old pre-war films which I found myself laughing. Came out at 11 & then continued street wandering, trying to enter into Dicken's feeling and to share the experience of vagrants like Mrs Chesterton. The night was cold but not uncomfortably

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so. About midnight, made for Whitehall and Waterloo but near Admiralty Arch saw a queue of homeless ones, of both sexes, lined up for free tea and a savaloy sandwich drawn up against the park. Two policemen kept watch and so did I for half an hour studying faces, dress, and the squabbles, the bad language, and above all the apparent lack of sense of their wretched lot. Obviously superior classes and absolute degraded tramps, and the queue moved ever so slowly. One evil looking dago was caught with a newspaper taken from his neighbours pocket and things looked ugly for a while especially when the owner of it snatched it out of his hands and with a gesture threw it over some area railings. Here again a young prostitute with glassy pathetic eyes hovered on the throng and seemed popular and well known. A cigarette came her way from a young clerk and no one molested her. There was even a cry of 'language' when the swearing got a bit thick. From here, I walked solitary down bare Whitehall. I watched the tall sentry in his red nightdress looking greatcoat doing duty behind the closed gates and

there were two policemen at the top of Downing St. Curiously though I glanced at the adverts for soldiers enlisting outside Whitehall, the Cenotaph might not have been there for all I saw of it as I walked to Westminster. I walked towards the Abbey, past a grisly plot of grass, spouting an unpleasant vivid green after the cold weather and heavily fenced in. The Abbey was dead and I imagined what a welcome haven of rest it would be to beggars, and how its doors ought to be thrown open to them despite all arguments against such a course by Christians. Then about 12-45 I

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took a seat on the Embankment . Here as I tried to make out the outlines of County Hall opposite, in the half fog, and watched a tug chug past, I was joined by an old bearded beggar, who spoke with almost a cultured and certainly a pleasant soothing accent, who asked if he might take a nap with me. I was in no mood to talk –already a youngster had quickly avoided me after my attempt to converse and discuss his lot – with a cheerful note as he got up to leave me. That he had at any rate the dole coming in on Sat. But the old boy lapsed into an attempt to sleep, having drawn his coat up over his shoulders, crossed his legs and propped his head with one hand – a curious and obviously characteristic pose. He muttered about Winter and Summer, and at intervals broke into snatches of conversation. Before he arrived, a young Salvation Army man passed me, stopped to look over the river, and then came up to me and asked if I was out for the night and would I like a night shelter ticket. I told him gratefully that I was only waiting for a train, and he apologized, bade me goodnight and God bless you. Later a sergeant came up and as he wakened the old man and asked him why he didn't apply for a ticket before 2 o'clock, he eyed me and then approached me on the same subject. I told him I was awaiting a train and he smiled and left us. Shortly after I accompanied the old man (who discussed quite intelligently about the Almighty & Darwin & evolution) to a tea stall, where I left him. He chuckled when he reminded me of my story to the sergeant of catching a train! Under Waterloo Bridge I saw an old man

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being helped into an ambulance after suffering head injuries whilst trying to board a tram car in a rush, Arriving at Waterloo, I found there was a slow train to Kingston at 2-30 which I just caught arriving there at 3-45 and had a solitary and weary walk home. Passed the rest of the night on the couch.

Jan 17th /35 Thur

Gesetners rep called and after consideration decided to take on the electric duplicator. £60, at £1 a month until May & then £2 a month until paid. The machine is £80 but he allowed £20 on the old one. Em ran off Bailey's job during the day – 880 off 14 facing pp. our biggest job yet, which would have been cruel to do by hand. It doesn't save a great deal of time, but oh, the labour & weariness it saves! Extremely funny humorous singer on the Wireless had Em in fits of laughter, whilst singing Its Grand to be a Dadda! Sent off £2 to Copley's bank towards final installment on loan.

Jan 18th /35 Fri.

John full of items of Mr Lamb's teaching and good teaching too. A socialist & free thinker I should imagine, though teaching at a Church School. The kids still squabble like children will, but gradually we are instilling into them notions of honorable conduct amongst themselves. The three of them still have to share the same bedroom much against our will, but a partition shall be put up to screen off Joan's sanctum as early as possible. Bitterly cold today. The lights on the S.O.S. almost dimmed to nothing at times between Dorking and home and it was a bit nightmarish driving against the powerful headlights of today. Had a talk with John and Joan on various aspects of history and architecture and later expounded

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some of my views on the Power which operates our lives, and the aspects of time and space as an influence on our conduct and aspirations and hope of immortality. Mac had a fight with the eiderdown hanging up on the line to air and bore away trophies in the way of feathers and a beating from a naturally enraged Em later. So I found Joan in tears and John righteously indignant when I got home. Only collected 53 jobs this week, so am short to pay Em and will have to make it up later.

Jan. 19th / 35 Sat.

Spent morning in typing up to page 25 of Trahearne's Poems. Can't afford a new copy. Em went to Bentall's sale and spent her 30/- for the purpose of getting things for the spare room, to let subsequently. Ran into traffic bound for the Rugger International match at Twickenham, both going and returning (via Hampton / Wick) on round. Line of traffic at 6 p.m. extending 3 lines thick right from Hampton Wick Stat. to the lights at Sharpe St. Tried hard to beat down an inclination to purchase a finely bound limited edition of Shorthouse's John Inglesant, which I saw the other day at Staines at a second hand furniture shop. Could not resist the 2 vols at 3/- and have since read sufficient to make me feel rather more justified in my action. Books, especially beautifully printed ones are my bane as well as my joy.

Jan. 20th / 35 Sunday

Carried on reading John Inglesant. Have dropped Don Quixote for the time being, I find I can only stand a few pages at a time, being out of tune for masterpieces of this sort. Gesetner's sent a confirmation of their agreement yesterday, but made it appear that I have in addition to the £60 agreement to pay £8 down. Wrote, refusing this, & asking for an amended agreement.

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Jan 21st /35 Monday

Collected a lot of optical jobs for Polden's and had to wait 20 minutes at Leighton Eye Service place at Farnham. Collected a Rare and valuable china plate depicting a balloon in flight with two passengers using wind oars. This had been most skillfully repaired after having been dropped accidentally. John rebellious at going to bed at 7 p.m. and threatened to tell us what he thought of us to our faces—funny kid, he is starting to open his wings. A proper boy, with all a boy's natural propensity to love of untidiness and lolling about at meals, and rowdiness with a heart of gold and ever ready to prostrate himself at the feet of his idol Joan.

Jan 22nd /35 Tues

Em non too well nowadays – bad nights and pains in her chest. Good job after all that the electric duplicator came along, as it will save her much drudgery. Lovely ride first part of afternoon, mild and spring-like but turned raw and inclined to fog later on. Guildford a picture with a red gold sunset flooding it. Had to listen to another lecture on the misdoings of Polden's from a customer of theirs. Sometimes I wonder how long the job will last. Customers are so easily lost these days. Feeling like something light, I read the first chapters of Pickwick, laughing heartily as ever at the humorous situations and characters.

Jan 23rd / 35 Wed.

On way to Staines, in perfectly lovely spring like weather, spotted a fresh second hand furniture stall with books outside, and though I had resolved not to purchase books this week, I stopped and paid 2d each for Fredric Macdonalds A Book

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in a Nook (a series of essays, very entertaining) and a history of Corpus Christi college, Cambridge. Went with Em and Vi to see a picture on the Orkneys at the Odeon, Arrived in the middle of it – not particularly interesting – other commenced a putrid picture – the Du Barry, which I could not sit through. Left Em there and spent an hour at Kingston Art Gallery and the Reference Library. On my return, the kiddies had left no room to move about, toys littered all over. John was so exasperating and cheeky about moving some of them that I lost my temper and hit him. He is at an awkward age and stage of his development, and it took some coaxing to drive away his sulkiness later. It is difficult to steer a right path with such an impressionable child and I know my real deficiencies as a guide and example. Doris came in for tea. Joan absent from dinner today, practicing in the school choir.

Thur Jan 24th / 35

Letter from Gestetners demand immediate payment of balance due on Nov. paper and ink a/c. Typed more pages from Traherne's Poems during morning. Pointed out some of their beauties to Em and Vi. John still argumentative but in a more genial mood, and I endeavored at dinner time to impress on the children the real value and necessity of good table manners in later life. Bunk in excess of spirits, must bellow now and then. What a volcano he is. John and he spend most of the time scrambling with toys, or one another, on the floor. Cold and stinging rain at times on the round today. A marvelous shade of blue in the sky as the clouds broke and grouped themselves around the setting sun. I shall at least

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remember for years the opportunity this motor cycling job has afforded me of studying weather vagrancies and the beauties of sunsets and winter background to nature. Nearly knocked down a foolish woman who ran across the road from behind a stationary bus in the dark at Leatherhead. Fortunately she did not hesitate, but it was a narrow squeak for both of us. Joan doing 'dismals' (decimals) for homework and I had them as an accompaniment to tea. Em confesses that she has now not the slightest desire at all to return North. It took her, as it did me, a long time to tone down our love and home sickness for the Homestead at Stairfoot. Our milkman won £58 on a ½ d football coupon. A few months ago our Coalman won several hundred pounds in a racing sweep.

Fri. Jan 25th / 35

Typed 20 letters to various book firms soliciting duplicating work. Bunkie sick again last night so stopped at home from school busy unsticking stamps from envelopes to form his collection of philately.

After maps, he loves stamps. Looked heavy for rain as I started off on my round but escaped bad weather apart from one or two stinging showers. Despite the heavy and lowering sky visibility was marvelous on the Hindshead side of the Hogs Back, and the forest horizon was clearly distinguishable and I stopped for a minute or two to drink in the beauty of the view. Had a long talk with Joan and tried to impress her with the need for discipline and usefulness in her life and a background of ages of space and time for her outlook and judgment of earthly affairs. Started reading a 19th Century Childhood by May McCarthy. An entertaining and interesting picture of late Victorian Eton & Windsor.

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Sat. Jan. 26th / 35

Heavy gale of wind during night. Had to get up to close window and heard a milk bottle crash outside the kitchen door. Bitterly cold bleak day and the gale continued. Letter from the house agents demanding payment of over £6 arrears of rent. Bitter journey in afternoon, but made good time despite some snow storms en route, which fortunately were not lasting enough to cover the roads with snow. Dangerous driving in dark either with goggles on or not in heavy snow. Bought Bunkie his first 1d packet of foreign stamps today. I've finished the 19th Cent. Childhood, an excellent book and have been chuckling over Pickwick Papers, feeling somewhat of the first sensation of sheer joy at such a literary discovery as when I first read it, as a Cadet and Officer at Pirbright Camp in 1917. The world was before me then, miserable though my circumstances and prospects – now the world troubles me less and less and my ideal of life more and more. It was a case of a world to conquer in 1917 –now to conquer myself.

Jan. 27th / 35 Sunday

As we went to bed last night the snow was coming down fast, looking exceedingly pretty in the lamplight and already there was a white covering to roofs and road. However it cannot have lasted long as most of it had disappeared though enough was left here and there in the garden for the kids to revel in and make a small snowman. Mac managed to get under a car, for the third time, and again came off with a frightening. In rather a nasty mood at breakfast and was needlessly oppressive about my lack of opportunity to visit museums, and though sincere enough, was heatedly assertive as to my ability to live, if necessary on a Means Test allowance of 15/- a week. Em reminded me about the long deferred making of a screen for the back to

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shield her from the back door draughts. Ungraciously enough I was driven by my better self, to attempt it, and eventually made a much better job of it than I had deemed possible, spending most of the morning on it. It proves very effective too. Spent the whole day indoors. The snow thawed away, and the kiddies had a fire in their bedroom and Joan set up a notice outside intimating that this was a school of which Miss Joanie was the Principle . They had their tea up there and John could not get to sleep later, so excited and thrilled was he with the luxury of a fire in the grate. Commenced studying Websters History of the Ancient World, and found it most absorbing, and not difficult for me to stick at.

Jan. 28th / 35 Monday

Typing from Traherne's Poems most of morning. A longer job than I had anticipated but in addition to the pleasure of reading the poems slowly as I type, I realise that my copy of the authentic poems will be infinitely preferable to Philip Traherne's corrected version. Beautiful organ music from abroad, and Handel's music from there as well as on the organ of Glasgow cathedral. Bitterly cold journey, and had to take care in places where shingle had been spread over icy roads. Got work from Leighton's at Aldershot but none from Farnham. Joan tried to give me 2d of her money to give to any beggar I saw on the road, after hearing me talk of the pitiful sights of beggars I see here and there. Eric Coates conducting his own music on wireless tonight. And Bunkie could not get to sleep thinking of a broadcast of one of Walt Disney's Silly Symphonies which he would have dearly liked to listen to. A suspicion of black fog on the way home tonight.

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Jan 29th / 35 Tuesday

Chopped up a basketful of firewood. Fog came on before dinner and when I took out the machine, visibility was a few yards. However, I started out hoping to get as far as Woking, but after travelling slowly as far as Ditton, I gave it up. Herbert had not arrived back from his morning round by that time 2 o'clock. After tea rode over to Hampton to collect the photo work for Richmond and found that the fog must have been narrowly confined to the Thames valley. Went up to the Library and took out an art book. Saw a very prettily illustrated edition of The Water Babies at Books Unlimited and secured it at 1/3 for Bunkie's birthday. John is permanent monitor in his class at school.

Jan 30th /35 Wed.

Rode over to Staines and back through Chertsey, Addington, Weybridge and Walton. Serene calm day and as I waited in Cherry's shop at Staines and looked out of the window the beauty of the sky and cloud setting behind the Town Hall clock tower swept me into a passing vision of happiness. Whilst passing through Walton, having the afternoon on my hands (Em having taken John to the pictures he having a holiday) I decided to look round Walton old Church and came away well rewarded for my pains. And the quaint 17th century brick superstructure to the old 12th century wall first dragged me to look at the outside first, and then to have another look on leaving the church. All of us have colds in the head and Joan came down at 9-30 as she could not get to sleep because of Bunkie's coughing.

Jan 31st / 35 Thurs.

Head still muzzy with cold. Typed poetry until 11 & then, on Em's suggestion, the morning being particularly lovely and inviting, I took ferry across the Thames and walk across the

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Park, up the Long Water, to Hampton Court. Though quite a warm sun was shining and a stiff breeze, not a ripple was visible on the black sheet of water – it had a thin coat of ice, and the effect was rather uncanny, but beautiful. And at the top end it had overflowed – a thing I have never before noticed in connection with the Long Water. Paid 1/- and spent an enjoyable hour in the Picture Galleries, mostly on my own. I only saw five visitors the whole time. The bulk of the exhibits only have a vague sort of appeal to me, but about 20 or 30 of the pictures I could look at almost daily with increasing love and appreciation. I had a peep at the Royal Church from the Royal Pew, and could not help wondering how anyone with a real appreciation of the meaning of church service could tolerate distractions of any sort. To see the furnishings and the crimson upholstery, the superior position overlooking the congregation – well, without arrogating to myself any sort of superiority, or being considered a prig for my opinions, I felt glad I was an ordinary being. The wonderful blue of the stained glass window in the Banqueting Hall was obscured by scaffolding but I stood a while by the clear window and was happy. Walked back along the river and arrived home about 1-15. Joan very curious. There was a gorgeous sunset tonight as seen from Mayford Common and later when I stopped for a few moments on the top of the Hog's back. The horizon was distinct, and the sun went down in a blaze of red gold clouded glory, behind a clump of fir trees right over by Farnham. The shades of approaching evening could be seen settling on the landscape just perceptibly.

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Whilst negotiating a bend against oncoming traffic on the road by Horsley, a woman walking in the road with friends, turned her head, and nearly tumbled over her companion at the sight of me tearing towards her, apparently one of those mad motor cyclists so often the cause of terrible accidents. I had to smile at her precipitous and obvious alarm, though I had perfect control of the machine. But often enough I realise how hazardous motor cycling is and sometimes I realise my debt. Some of my happiest hours, in good weather and bad, have been spent hurtling along the roads – some of my most priceless visions and thoughts have made motor cycling an eagerly looked to solace and escape from the jars and jolts of everyday life, The 2£ which came from Salkeld, came most opportunely as I still owed Em 10/- housekeeping money. Although I had anticipated trouble at the Walton Photo Works because of Tuesday (apparently there was no fog there at all, all day) Mr Hepworth accepted my story without any unpleasantness.

- Feb 1st / 35 Friday

Demand from Gamages—£1-10-0 overdue on 10/- monthly installments of the £6 account. Will send 1£ today out of Salkeld money. Cut off the straggling branches of the old plum tree. Tiring work with a poor 6d Woolworths saw, but got it done and there's a nice bonfire heap awaiting the kiddies. Told by Poldens definitely not to call at Leightons Eye Service in the course of my round

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from Woking to Aldershot & Farnham—an hours riding, which was put on to the round when I was taken off morning work. Leightons justifiably annoyed with Poldens who certainly are being casual in their dealings with new and valuable customers. A sustained power of wind as I stopped for a few minutes at Barden Hill. Rather depressed tonight. Music nor books appeal. Maybe after effects of stubborn head cold. Bad chimney fire in afternoon during my absence. Mr Sexton from the top flat helped Em control it. Joan finished Hereward the Wake and commenced Wuthering Heights. She thought some spots on her cheek might develop to chicken-pox, but they haven't and it is hard to make out whether she is disappointed or pleased! 73 jobs this week.

Feb 2nd /35 Sat.

Typed the poetry for a woman in Grove Rd. Poor stuff but heartfelt enough. Final installment of 4/9 arrived from Kent of Guildford for a job done in 1932.

Marvelously clear day and the wind no doubt cleared the mist away. Stopped to drink in the beauty of the view over the humped hillocks between Pirbright and Ash –all winter they have looked so forbidding and weird but today the sun had given them a beautiful brown tint and so clear that the picture must long remain on my mind. Guilford from the descent of the Hog's back was spread out like gaily painted orderly arranged dolls houses, with the old grey castle clearly distinguishable. It is so rare that Guildford and beyond is clear of a blue grey haze. It was impossible to face the

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setting sun on the Hog's Back and the hills & valleys were a painful glare of golden light and misty splendours. Made a point of calling at Rathall's second hand shop to try and find some records – Handel in particular- and the first I picked up was a double sided H.M.V. recording of two anthems from the Messiah! Picked up Symphony Pathetique as a piano solo, a Brahms record and a humorous one which the kiddies used to like—and myself too – all for 1/6 . The Messiah I got for 1d because it was cracked. Joan had Hannah and Chris in for tea. Em had intended taking them all to Richmond Park but did not manage to get there unfortunately. Finished Pickwick tonight.

Feb 3rd /35 Sunday

Tried to get the bonfire going for John, chopped some firewood to give it a start, but it was no good. After dinner we all went on the bus to Richmond Park and walked across the Park to Robin Hood Gate. A wild gloomy sort of day but lots of people and cars to be seen. Started to rain as we waited for a Kingston bus. Showed Bunkie Kingston Hospital where he was born. Later at tea he wanted to know how people were born and though I tried to explain without embarrassing them, the fact of existence at one time in their mother's stomach, both John and Bunkie openly scoffed – was the baby born out of the mouth then? It was hardly possible in front of Joan, and considering they still all sleep together to explain further, though of course, Joan has been told, and they shall know later. 16 years ago today since I left the R.A.F.

Monday Feb. 4th / 35

Turner arrived during morning for a chat with Em, his first visit for some weeks. Quite like old times to see him laughing about the kitchen and swapping housekeeping experiences with Em. Perfect weather as far as Woking and it was a sheer delight to amble

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along and admire sky and countryside. Called at Aldershot and Farnham, though it is hardly worth such a long way to go for so little – one job from Orange of Aldershot. Two cars involved in a collision right at the A.A. control box on top of the Hog's Back. Both extensively damaged but did not stop to enquire if anyone was hurt. Bunkie brought home an exercise book containing specimens of his writings – most excellent too and far beyond what I could attempt, and he is only 7. Joan having heard that Mollie Sullivan, aged 18, having secured honours in Languages etc. has got a job at Dunlops with a commencing salary of £2-10-0, hardly knows whether she should be overwhelmed with desire to emulate, or fear of not approaching her example. Once again heard a rumour today of Walton Photo Co. not being able to finance another summer's work.

Tues. Feb 5th /35

Called at Polden's during morning to see whether there is any use calling at Aldershot & Farnham. It appears their Don Polden called there again yesterday in connection with their orders and a curious coincidence came to light during our talk. He told me that Don's car was smashed up yesterday. I told him I had seen a nasty smash yesterday on the Hog's Back. It was Don's car! It appears he had stopped to ask some question of the A.A. man there, and had moved off in error and was responsible for the crash. Rather bitter journey today, and cold wind and dull sky. Overtook some baby lambs on the road near Clandon. A pretty sight, and it was charming to see

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how careful drivers were going past them. Brought home a big magnifying glass for the kiddies, given to me at the Walton Photo Co. Gave Joan a ride round the streets on the carrier at dinner time. John wearing the new suit, with a waistcoat, of which he is very proud.

Wed. Feb 6th / 35

Joan at home today with a cold. She spent most of her leisure time reading Wuthering Heights, which has gripped her and increased her appreciation of the classics and made her less inclined to defend her natural childish taste for School Girl weekly type of literature. The policy of letting her read both and choose her own books for reading is bearing fruit. Imperceptibly she is acquiring taste and discrimination, and at the right age too. Polden has arranged for Mr Bulford himself to go down to interview Leighton's of Farnham on Sat. Just rode to Staines and straight back today. Em and Mrs Kent went to the pictures, and Joan and I had a symphony concert all afternoon. Mrs Kent in for tea, big, loud and as good natured as ever. She idolizes Em and the kids love her and find great fun in her boisterousness – at

52! Started out again to tackle Sorbey's The Med. Life, and this time got into it and was gripped by its appeal to me on questions very absorbing to me in my quest for the ideal of conduct and wisdom. Em is taking in a new weekly publication for John –Wonders of the Railways Weekly.

Thur. Feb 7th / 35

Joan still at home and as the morning was tempting, though cold, I persuaded and Joan begged Em to let her accompany me on a walk to Hampton Ct. She was delighted to go and so was I to have her with me and we, or rather I, talked on many subjects all the way and stood in admiration over a virginal crop

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of crocus on the banks of the ornamental water in the gardens. And lining the Rosamund's bower walk was a row of crocus full out and a breathtaking vista amid the barrenness of a February bleak morning. Would have liked to take her into the Mantegne but could hardly afford the 6d—and besides we had Mac with us. As we returned down the river bank, it turned very bleak and I was glad to get her home. It was obvious, as I talked to her, that the problems of life, and home life in particular, are not escaping her notice, and I tried to make her see how necessary it is, not to judge from appearances, often deceptive, and above all, not to be hard on parental failings. Bleak and bitter ride today. When I arrived at Aldershot, I was glad to take the opportunity to revive circulation, whilst watching a picturesque march past of a full military band in dress clothes on one of the barrack parade grounds. I could allow myself to indulge myself in the appeal of colour, music and martial pomp, but could hardly help reflecting how dangerous the appeal must come to unsuspecting minds and what a menace it all is to youth. Still it was inspiring and I permitted myself to enjoy it at its face value.

Friday Feb 8th /35

On the way to Staines the machine ran so badly that eventually I was reduced to second gear on corners, so I stopped and found the brake of the back wheel was almost seized up and smoking furiously. The depleted staff at Walton have nothing whatever today. During dinner hour there was a programme of gramophone records of Handel's music, including the

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famous Water Music. Poor old John arrived home captious and on conclusion of the music, he asked with an assured indifference and contempt, what was that 'noise'?

Feb 9th Sat. /35

Final Demand note for payment of rates. Cleared my office of books disarray and picked out one or two to read and found a copy of Stephen Coleridge's Letters to my Grandson, which I gave to Bunky and which I think he will read in his own surreptitious way. The tidy arrangement in which he constantly stocks his books is a hopeful sign at his age, and with the untidy example of Joan and John ever before him, with their cellar full of books in all stages of decay and distress, filed anyhow. Went up to the library in the evening and took out Gosse's Father and Son (a book I have long wanted to read) and Amiel's Journal. Joan wrote yesterday to Darton and to the girl she befriended there last year. She is keenly looking forward to the possibility of another invitation up there this year, and would like to take a pal, or Bunkie. John is booked for a holiday at Harwich, with David Kent, Bought Bunkie a 1928 Rainbow Annual tonight for 6d.

Feb 10th / 35 Sunday

Unpleasantness during morning arising out of moving our bedroom or the kiddies to the top of the house, in order to let another room – to which I objected as being financially unnecessary and too much for Em to take on, with two rooms already let. These two, with the top flat and my money brings in at the least between £5 to £6 of which £3 is my contribution- every

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penny I earn. This she finds not enough to manage on—rent, hire purchase on furniture, wireless, household expenses, clothes etc. and is a theme of constant difference and irritation between us. To avoid further discussion and recriminations before the children, I went out, nowhere in particular, but eventually decided to go to London, and after a bitter hour of thought and battle with conflicting passions in there, I made my way to the National Art Gallery where I spent a couple of hours principally among the Dutch 17th century pictures and early 14th & 15th century painters. Once again, too, I looked at Moonlight on the Yare. On leaving there, dropped in on the tail-end of a popular service at St. Martin's in the Fields, but was still in such a rebellious mood that I somewhat ungraciously refused the proffer of a share in the hymn book of a bystander and could not bring myself to kneel at the final prayer, despite my desire to seek help. Came to Waterloo along the Embankment and took a good look at the demolition of the bridge. Came straight home as I did not want to advertise the fact of our difference to the children, especially Joan.

How happy we are most of the time. It seems such a tragedy, this wretched money factor which constantly arises to wreck our happiness. Was greeted on my arrival by awkward questions from the kiddies especially John, who wanted to know why I went out so suddenly, just because I had quarreled with Mummy! Joan, too, when I frankly told her I had been to the Gallery was innocently inclined to reproach me for not taking her—and God knows, I could hardly have given myself a greater pleasure than that. Em never spoke all

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night, save in forced unnatural monosyllables – but I'm glad I came back. Finished Gosse's Father & Son – reminded me of Butler's Way of All Flesh, though of course more of a really heartfelt spiritual revelation, What a pity Gosse does not give his spiritual reactions as they were in 1907, instead of finishing off at the age of 21.

Feb. 11th /35 Monday

Heavy atmosphere most of day. Em uncommunicative and a match would have started a needless explosion. She must be so short of cash as to be really concerned as to the immediate future. I cannot do more than give her all I get. Advice and sympathy count as nothing against hard cash with her. Mild weather and a beautiful sunset. I found the gate of a field open on the most impressive section of the Hogs Back & enjoyed a superb view from there. Some sheep, curiously situated in what appeared to be ploughed field, and the long trail of smoke from a fire in a distant valley somehow gave life to the prospect. Commenced reading Amiel's Journal—or rather read the intro. to the edition of it by Mrs Humphrey Ward. I think I shall find myself much in sympathy with Amiel and I hope it will prove a landmark in my search for a philosophy and religion of life. I seem to find in work and self discipline my nearest approach to my ideal so far. I am happiest on a long and lonely ride, communing with myself – which may be a fault as it indicates either a fear or impatience of company uncongenial or openly antagonistic. Still, I try, and knowing ones weak spots is part way to conquering them. Joan back at school and her place in the choir kept open, by popular accord of her fellow choir mates. John enquired today as to the reason why boys voices break and I told him it was a feature of puberty, and tried to make my explanation lucid without puzzling him with a problem too advanced for his years.

Feb. 12th / 35 Tues

Joan had a long newsy letter from Aunty Amy this morning. Em has ideas at present of renting cheaply a

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bungalow at Sandown sometime this summer, of which she has heard from our top flatite, Mr Sexton. The kiddies have yet to have their first holiday with us. A shower or two of rain today. I notice that the builders have designs on the foot of Box Hill. Camilla Lacey is apparently destined for bungalows, and Burfod is offered to the public at 10,000, to save it from a similar fate. What stupidity it is to see the countryside going and how I am sorry for posterity who can never realise the beauty of the Surrey I entered into possession of 9 years ago. Carried on with Amiel tonight. What a help, what an inspiration and what an attack on materialism and my old pet Socialism. And yet, how true are his prophesies of the leveling on man and the resultant disappearance of individual greatness. Chopped two boxes of firewood and cleared out garage this morning. Spent rest of morning at Kingston Museum and in the Ref Library where I read part of the preface to Dean Inge's Bible Anthology, a copy of which I would like for myself.

Feb 13th / 35 Wed

For some days, as the day for payments to Gestetner and Houldens approached I have wondered, rather less than worried, as to how I should find cash to meet them. This morning Robinsons cheque arrived for over £7, and as he usually is long-winded in paying, the satisfaction I felt in my growing ability not to plan nor to fear for the future was keen. Took a price list of duplicating up to Books Unlimited, where I had half a dozen Ruskin booklets put on one side until I can find the 1/6 for them. Spent rest of morning in the reading room

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of the Surbiton Library, and soon became absorbed in Well's Outline of History, a copy of which I took out on loan. My patient study of flints in the Kingston Library yesterday was rewarded indirectly by the study of early history. To read such a book is to me as if I were at last entering upon my rightful heritage, having at last the right mind and attitude towards studies. I read with as open a mind as ever (or never) before I have had and how different, with what a release from prejudice and preconceived notions as a year or two ago in my very genuine but biased communistic sympathy. I feel happier, and am happier, and yet I am deeply socialist, more truly loving of fellow creatures – so much so that I can at last feel pity without contempt, envy or hatred, of rich and powerful folk. Polden rather queer in his acceptance of my account of Leighton's reception of me yesterday. He phoned Bulford, and in his conversation, remarked that my round was now not worth doing, having lost Aldershot and Farnham! As I use their machine to include Walton Photo Co's customers on the

round, if I lose their job I automatically would lose Walton's too. However, we shall see. Whilst on my round to Staines I saw a thin bank of fog over the Thames at Hampton Ct, which later spread to the road past the water works, but then passed into an ordinary mist. Lots of racing men mounted on trees and other points of vantage outside Sandown race course. What a miserable waste of life – most spectators were middle- aged and obviously should have been able

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to command the price of entrance as a result of their obvious acquaintance with racing.

Feb 14th Thurs /35

Spent all morning Hoovering the whole house, stairs included, with a machine left on trial yesterday by a canvasser from Bentall's. Not greatly struck with machine and in any case we have no intention of committing ourselves to purchase, as Em told the man, who, however, persisted in us giving the machine a trial. It certainly fetched a incredible amount of dust out of the various carpets. Mr Polder suggested, or rather ordered me to call on a newly opened optical shop of the Horstman group (at whose shops in Woking, Guildford & Dorking I used to call last summer) at Esher, but I suggested that they had better get permission for me to call first in the regular way. I arranged though to call at Martiners of Epsom. I always detested the run from Leatherhead to Epsom for some reason or other, principally the fact that having got so nearly home at Leatherhead, the straight and quick run home always appeals in contrast. This evening though I was at any rate treated to an indescribable beautiful evening sky outlined against the clock tower and the market place, with a evening star next brilliantly shining alone in the deepening twilight—a twilight which, with many and swiftly gradations of beauty, lasted until I was crossing Kingston Bridge.

On arrival home, found Mrs Kent and David. She had Em, Joan and I in fits of laughter at her boisterous recollections of girlhood and the war. Then there was uproar in the

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direction of kitchen where John, Bunkie and David were playing at marbles, David and Bunkie were in streams of tears over a marble which David had presumably taken from Bunk, It turned out actually, that they had one marble each, and John had – about 40! Later, Mrs Kent came back – she had lost the cigars she had bought for her mother! And cigars are more than a luxury to Mrs Kent senior, they are a necessity. I remember when she used to come into my

bookshop, and I could have sworn that her breath smelt of cigars. Em paid £5 off the overdue rates yesterday out of Robinson's cheque and I was able to pay her the 5/- I owed her of housekeeping money. I will pay the Gestler and Houlder £1 each with the rest. Bought a copy of the Prose Works of Milton for 6d at Epsom.

Feb. 15th /35 Friday

Found a small spell in the crook of one of my finger joints – try as I might, my sensitiveness to pain amounts to absolute cowardice. Polden quite distant with me on reporting after dinner. I had 75 jobs in the week, which is not far short of the totals I used to have for both morning and afternoon rounds. My round is now approx. 65 miles. From Bugden Hillside I watched for some time the marvelous concerted wheelings and evolutions of a flock of birds over a wood. It was just like some extremely involved drill, they were performing and at times they just seemed as if they turned themselves inside out. Mrs Kent in again tonight, it appears that her mother commenced at the age of 20 to smoke cigars, and has smoked 3 a day since,

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and has never had an ache or pain till the other day when she wondered if it might be a headache she had! we were in fits of laughter as I had supper – first Mrs Kent had to ruefully unravel an attempt of hers at a knitted jumper on which Em had accidentally sat, and then in one of her mad moods she shot up, knitting and all around her, and did a mad dance to the wireless, the jumper wheeling around with her. On having this pointed out to her, she kicked it across the room. Passed a couple of hours this morning with the Outline, and an amicable evening listening to Handel's music to Milton's L'allegro and Il Penseroso. Then more Amiel –after Traherne, Amiel, and I wonder what God will place next in my path to the higher life and disciplines of self. I feel I must again read Well's Mr Polly. At dinner time both John and Bunkie fairly bombarded me with questions. Very depressed and felt rather seedy on the round today. Found it difficult to avoid speculating on the future. I realised, too, how foolish it was to commit myself to God's guidance and security, and yet to feel my little family was outside his scope and that their happiness and security was purely my affair and worry.

Feb 16th Sat.

Called at Fairbrother's in Kingston but nothing there. I looked at a microscope, for which of late I have developed a desire but it was 9/6. Picked up for 3d. Renar's Life of Jesus, a book I have long been curious to read. On my journey this afternoon I stopped at West Humble and examined the remains of the ancient chapel by the roadside – found it devoted

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to sparrows and the resting place of tramps, who had left evidence of recent cooking. I wonder what is its history and if there are any graves there. Bought a pocket microscope at Epsom for 1/- and spent a good deal of the evening examining things through it. Tomorrow must try and get some stagnant water. Joan went to Putney today to sing with the school choir. She got full marks.

Sunday Feb. 17th / 35

The gale of wind completely evaporated overnight and a beautiful day followed. I managed to get hold of an earwig or two out of the pot at the bottom of the garden and was absorbed in the microscope study of these during the morning. John, seeing them so large in the microscope, got quite upset and begged me to let them go. Read Time & Tide by Ruskin. I can always return with pleasure to him and other writers of what I may call, wisdom literature and stately prose. Avial I revel in, here and there, but I have slowed up with the Outline – it seems I cannot compass or concentrate on such a vast scheme, much as I want to. And my memory plays me such tricks that I have constantly to go back, often indeed to read and re-read single paragraphs. However, I hope to go right through it and retain some lesson from its study. The dog swallowed a rubber ring from off a preserve jar tonight whilst playing with it. He seems none the worse for it so far. I overwound the clock upstairs tonight, with the result that the weight broke away from the string and plunged through the bottom of the case, much to my consternation.

Monday Feb. 18th /35

Joan did not arrive home to dinner until 1 o'clock

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kept back with rest of school for gym inspection. We tried twice to get a phone enquiry through and I had actually started off on my machine to the school as she turned the corner on her way home. Managed to get some hay today, to steep in water for the purpose of breeding microbes and animalculae. Em keen on going to the pictures, and as there seems to be a bit of a coolness between her and Vi, she asked me to accompany her. I could hardly refuse, though I had more of a desire to stay at home and read. After a long motorcycle journey, I never feel like going out after supper. Incidentally I missed a Handel performance of Harpsichord music and an organ concert. The picture we particularly went to see was entitled – I've forgotten what, but

there were some good pictures of American Navy, and the dirigible Macon in flight. The other picture was a terrible gangster, newspaper journalist, Wall Street financial juggling sort of thing. I came out feeling I had been cheated of these good hours, as well as having to pay for the wretched show out of some typing money paid to me today – not that I mind that so much as I do having to forgo my reading and music for such stuff, and hearing the dog barking (he was tied up during our absence) I took out my feelings by kicking him into his kennel and retiring in dudgeon into the Outline. So thin and threadbare is my armour against the pinpricks of having to consider other peoples pleasure in preference to mine, I find it easier to do 100 miles in bad weather, than to conceal my irritable feelings in forgoing my favorite recreations. It is no consolation to know,

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either, that Em would feel pleasure in my taking her to the pictures if I could only pretend to some pleasure in the act. I simply can't, though I do struggle.

Tuesday Feb. 19th /35

Wrote a letter to Uncle Jack Atherton of Warrinton, who has just lost his wife, his Lancashire companion of probably 40 years or more. She never seemed to hesitate where her affections were engaged – perhaps I am more fond now than I was then, when she kissed me as lovingly and even more heartily than a mother. Officer or no officer, I was one of the family, – eating the whopping big Lancashire meals and listening to Uncle Jacks rather too broad stories at the same table, and drinking as much beer (or'yale' as he and Dad call it) as both of them could force into me. They were a devoted, thoroughly Lancashire couple. On my round this afternoon, stopped and cut Em some sprigs of palm. She likes flowers and such about the rooms. Saw a curious and rather beautiful piece of pottery or porcelain at a second hand shop in Hampton Wick which I eventually risked 2/- on. It was a sunk platter, in the form of a submarine garden, with weeds, water plants, beatles, shell fish, a very realistic snake and lizard, and a central fish all beautifully modeled & painted. Little bits here and there had been chipped off, but these blemishes were not apparent in a superficial glance. All delighted with it at home, especially John who almost fell down and worshipped it. Read a good deal of Aviel during evening. I almost feel inspired to try and cast up an article pointing out how prophetic he was of the growth of materialism, the dreadful sameness resulting from the

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leveling of the species etc. But I particularly feel in communion with him in matters spiritual. I may not possess his talent and great and varied learning, but I have sounded the depths of the heart and felt even as he felt, God is no respecter of persons – even the laborer can plumb depths which only an Aviel can express in living words.

Wed. Feb. 20th / 35

I am very grateful for some things in my lot, not the least being a period put by means of wireless to musical starvation in my life. Em went to Tolworth Odeon with Mrs Kent in the afternoon. I listened to Horowitz, the pianist, and then set about scrubbing the floor of the top room, which Turner and Kitchener used to have and which we intend making the bedroom for John and Bunkie. After doing half of it, my'innards' gave signs of distress and I had to give the job up. At tea had a long argument with Mrs Kent, trying to persuade her to take her son away from Galloway House school where he is really learning very little and send him to St. Marks. Picked up the letters of Dorothy Osborne, an annotated school edition of Bacon's essays for three pence each, at a furniture shop in Brighton Rd. A well dressed man called today and asked to see the young lady who lodged with us, who left us over a year ago, and whose male admirers and mode of living were not disclosed until she had installed herself with us. We did not turn her out in fact, we liked her and pitied her (though obviously this sort of life was her own free

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choice and gave her no compunction) She was particularly handsome, rather commanding personality and though springing of quite poor stock, could grace it with the most select and wealthy of her callers, some of whom implored her hand in marriage. But she was a votary of freedom and free love. She never allowed any caller into her room, and gave us no trouble, and we were quite as sorry to lose her regular income as her company. when she suddenly left us.

Thurs, Feb 21st /35

Had a revolting and distressing dream about Joan – that she was about to have not one, but three babies and I tried to soften her distress and mine by dwelling on the fact that, young enough in all conscience as she was, 16 years old, still that was better than say 15 years and then, the dreadful truth flashed on me that she was not even 15, nor 14, nor 13, but 12! It is curious neither of us gave a passing thought to the origin of the babies and Joan had not the slightest idea of the impropriety of her situation. Finished scrubbing the top room floor this morning and then carried on with the Outline. I'm glad I persevered with it. Saw a tree today flaming with beautiful red blossom and I gathered a fine piece of broom for Mrs Kent. Picked

up a job today, at last, from Mortiners of Epsom. No work in at Walton, save what I bring in, and that is little enough at this time of the year John'tied' with two other boys, top place in his exams and is the youngest in the class! He says very little, but it is obvious he is plodding along in a quiet way and I have great confidence in him. The other two were very bucked with

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the news and I noticed he returned from a shopping expedition with Em carrying a box of toy ships. He is still a boy, a little lovable boy – there he is, lying in his bed this moment, with Joan at one side, and his old 'FELIX' cat in his arms at the other side, Mr Pennycook back again after another spell of illness at his home. A letter from the Kingston Typewriter Co. demanding another remittance for the typewriter supplied last summer. Duplicating has slumped.

Friday Feb. 22nd /35

This morning I became absorbed in Wells and history became real, visible and tangible to me. I may not be rich, or a leisured creature, but I doubt if either state of life could be preferable to the opportunity this lack of morning work has provided for me. Only 52 jobs this week. I am exercised in thought and conjecture at present as to what Polden will eventually do about my round. Will he cut it out, and will he put me onto the old city round in the morning and sack Herbert? I do worry, try as I will not to plan or fear the future – but I hope, come what may, I shall have courage to face good or evil in my lot, and know that the ultimate result of my trial will depend on the faith and self discipline. In a material way, I have so far been the gainer since I adopted a rule of life and acknowledged a supreme Power and a new Law of the Universe. But material gains I trust will not prove to have been my conscious aim. Bunky was found by John at dinner time, outside the gate, fighting with two other boys. He defended himself on the grounds that one of them had hit him last week!

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This evening he brought here with him a pal, by name Shearer, who turned out to have a pair of girls slippers, almost minus soles, Em gave him a pair of Bunkies and has repaired a pair of trousers for him tonight.

Sat. Feb. 23rd / 35

Letter from Gessetners demanding payment of bill. And tonight on calling at Surbiton Boots for photo work, I once again encountered Mr

Evans, the bank manager. I avoided entering into conversation with him and no doubt he must have thought me a thorough twister. I wish I could pay all I owed. Every penny I get in wages goes to Em for housekeeping and rent and the money from duplicating goes towards reduction of bills. I don't smoke now and rarely indulge in a book bargain and though neither of these former pleasures I now really count as deprivations, as I have trained myself to find happiness in taking life in as it comes and not to set too much value on pleasures even of an aesthetic value. What is permitted I enjoy to the full – what is denied is no doubt for my ultimate good. Joan has a nasty swelling in her thumb and a sort of boil on her groin which Em is poulticing with antiphlogistine. The week's silence between Em and Vi culminated this morning in a passage of arms between them, including Mrs Kent. Em is the bone of contention; there is no doubt that Vi has her faults, is selfish, but she has been Em's friend too long to be tamely passed over for another. And Mrs Kent is much to be sympathised with – she is very fond of Em and does not like Vi. She wants Em's friendship exclusively and that is all. And if Em can keep them both it will be an excellent thing for all concerned.

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Sunday Feb. 24th / 35

Read solidly most of day. The Outline is marvelous; I simply could not drop it today. The weather was bad, otherwise I had intended taking the kiddies to Hampton Ct. to see the last of the crocuses. All of us seem very happy at present—the kiddies particularly love this house and the cosy living room.

Monday Feb. 25th / 35

Bad weather today at Dorking, heavy black storm clouds over Box Hill and an ominous yellow on the horizon which developed into rain and hail at Leatherhead. I had a nasty wobble on the way to Staines pulling up sharply behind a van on the narrow bend near Chertsey. Optical business very slow at present. We had a laugh at breakfast today. John had a rotten nasty throat and it was decided he should not go to school today. Mister Bunk was silent a while and we guessed what was afoot. Suddenly he blurted out 'I've a cold in my nose, a sore throat, and an abscess!' We had to roar but he made his point and the morning was spent by both of them on the floor with a grand lay-out of forts and such, and much drawing of aerial combats. It is curious –both of them have heard so much against war, not particularly aimed at them, and can intelligently follow discussions directed for their benefit and really should have the seeds in them I trust of a rational attitude to wars imperialism but whenever they have a pencil and paper, the usual flood of aerial and sea combats, jungle warfare and cowboy and Indian fighting is the inevitable result.

Feb 26th / 35 Tuesday

John and Bunkie back at school. Chopped two baskets of sticks, made out statement of duplicating a/c's (nearly £30

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owing to me) and carried on with the Outline. John and Bunkie arrived home in fine fettle and having begged to use their bedroom for marble playing, on condition of perfect behavior, they soon broke out into quarreling and noise so I had to go up and confiscated the marbles until tomorrow. Neither were much perturbed – in fact the idea rather tickled them I think. Yesterday on the Lower Sunbury Road, I stopped and watched the felling of a huge tree (holding the red flag against the traffic meantime) and today I see the last of the line of fine old giants has gone. More building I suppose. I wonder, but hardly dare to visualize, the appearance of much that is still left of the countryside I travel through, in say 50 years. My sympathies are all with posterity and I hope they will rise and scatter the clutter of shabby buildings a present rising and despoiling their birthright. John brought home his school report today, countersigned 'excellent' by the headmaster. His love for Joan is a beautiful study and it is absolutely an obsession with him and rather embarrasses Joan at times. Finished the Outline and am carrying on with the Clarendon edition of St. Luke.

Wed. Feb. 27th / 35

Did the shopping for Em who was down with flu. This afternoon whilst on my journey to Staines, I stopped at a second hand junk store at the roadside to look at books and my eye was taken by an obvious 17th century small Dutch peasant scene after Jan Stoer's style.

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It was badly and tastelessly framed and I got it for 1/- . I wrote later to the Bazaar & Mart asking whether they would examine it. It may turn out to be a copy of an original, or something quite mediocre, but in any case it was not to be left there, though it took my last shilling.

Thurs. Feb. 28th / 35

The dog wakened the echoes with tremendous barking shortly after midnight due to Mr Seddon deciding to ferret about for his milk before retiring upstairs. It was distinctly comic to hear him expostulate in hushed tones with the dog and having awakened the household creep noiselessly and with exaggerated care, close the front door and

mount the creaking stairs. Set to work on the garden with a spade and did about an eighth of it before my hands were blistered. Mrs Kent arrived meantime, bursting with the news that at last the long expected legacy from her deceased aunt had materialized – a cheque for £100 which forthwith she was all agog to blue. I must have a present – a cigar – the kids must all go to the Zoo. David must have a new yacht and John could have his old one so they could play together, and Em was presented with a box of cigarettes as an earnest of better to come. It was both amusing and pathetic. Joan not content with a poisoned thumb, a boil on her leg and a sty on her eye, came down to breakfast with two styes on the same eye! Poor kid. She went to school but only in the morning as her teacher told her not to come after dinner. So she stopped in and rested whilst Em and Mrs Kent proceeded Kingston-ward to see what could be done – one result of their joint

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endeavors being 40 yds. of cretonne or such like material for curtains and upholstery. A rather pleasant day and I found some daisies on Borden Hill. Picked a few of them. Floods out, and I noticed the Mole had flooded the meadows right up to the roadside hedge near Dorking. Picked up 5 piano records at Teddington for 3d each and a good pair of goggles for 9d which I paid for out of 2/- lent me by Em. Read more of Mr Polly tonight and had another pleasant read of Amiel this morning. How alike we are in thought and religious outlook and apparent uselessness on the earth.

Friday March 1st / 35

Read more of Amiel and then, after assisting Em with the dressing of Joan's thumb (I lanced a nasty yellow swelling and squeezed the pus out, Joan bearing it very bravely) I took Joan and the dog across to Hampton Court. The crocuses were a little past their prime but were still glorious. The river was still in flood, but abating somewhat. Saw a girl trying to entice her horse back after it had thrown her. He decided to let her walk back behind him to his stable. Paid on 75 jobs this week – much better than I had hoped or expected. Found that the floods had left hardly a sign – a very rapid change of scene from yesterday. The Mole was back between its banks and very little trace in the meadows of yesterdays inundation. Read more Pride and Prejudice to Joan after supper as she can't read at present with her bad eye. Tried to give her a clear notion of the enormity of Lydia's offence against the maidenly proprieties and how far responsible were her parents for her committing such an error.

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I'm glad she can intelligently appreciate these classic novels –they will supplement and illustrate much of the teaching which I am endeavoring to give her, to guide her in after life. It is a sacred trust, the bringing up of children. Joan is more advanced of course than the boys but I find I can be of help in little ways already with both John and Bunkie. It is all I can give them.

Sat. Mar. 2nd / 35

Last night read a booklet on Copernicus and a portion of Ingersoll's Life (that spirited denunciation of the horrors of the vengeful God of the old testament, whose vengeance however dies with its object, and the infinitely more horrible vengeance of the New Test, where hell and damnation and eternal fire commence after death) to Joan and she really was keenly appreciative, especially of the Copernicus Life. Read more Amiel this morning. I am taking this marvelous book by short stages, reading and re-reading as I go along, Every line is precious and necessary to me at this stage of my emancipation from old errors of life, Oh that I could memorise some of it –but still the effect is there and must influence my life when best I can recall the source of some timely mention. Bit of a flare up at dinner time with Em, who I find is looking forward to another 10/- extra housekeeping from me this summer, whereas I had counted on a problematical increase in pay to meet overdue bills. Em's life is perfect misery due to chronic incapacity to consider herself or her life in relation to anything else but money. The real and the material only mean anything to her. The ideal and the spiritual

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are whims and she cannot understand the type of mind that can live for such. Picked up 1 vol only of Montaignes Essays in the lovely little Temple Classics edn. For 6d, at Epsom. Montaigne, Sir Thos. Browne, Amiel, Treherne –what a help they have been to me. Joan stayed up tonight to hear Will Hay in his schoolmaster humorous broadcast sketch. Her eye is still bad but getting better and her thumb is not right yet Am trying to persuade her to give porridge a trial– she looks a bit too thin at present. John made us roar today–he either bumped himself or in some way came in collision with some object and in his own inimitable way came out with –'Did tears fall out of his eyes'! For days after hearing he had come out top in the exams he would come out with 'Did he come out top of his class' –apropos nothing in particular and quite without any intention to swank or to draw attention to himself – which latter he loathes to do at any time.

Sunday Mar. 4th / 35 [should be 3rd]

Mr Salkeld came during the morning and brought copy for a new list, 400 off 16pp. He owes me over £4 but promised to pay something off this week.

Monday Mar. 5th / 35 [should be 4th]

Received £2-50 from Lamberton in payment of his Nov. a/c. Sent £1 off to Gesetner and intend another £1 of it for Phillips. It came very opportunely, as I hardly liked facing him with Salkeld's list to staple, still owing him over £8. Gave Em the remaining 5/- as I owe her 5/- housekeeping. Joan gave me 6d towards her payment for a seat at the Mayer classical concert next Sat. morning.

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A most beautiful day for riding, and I noticed some marvelous cloud pictures and a perfect sunset. I see Burford is now advertised as 9 acres for sale, not 35 as previously. Does this mean that the public have succeeded and contributed the £10,000 required – or has the / builder got it. Big splash in the papers tonight about the Governments'grave' concern about armaments and their intention to heavily contribute towards defence.

Tuesday Mar. 6th / 35 [should be 5th]

Re-read part of Amiel –oh that I could follow in his footsteps. However, our line of thought is akin, despite the years between us and maybe I shall proudly, or humbly, write that 29 years have passed since I commenced my diaries—and all in the service and pursuit of his and my God, and perfect submission to my God, good or ill. David and the kids making whoopee in the garden when I arrived home. Mrs Kent and Em had been a walk to Richmond. Joan upset because she did badly in arithmetic today but I told her it could only be a temporary set-back. She finished Pride and Prejudice tonight, and I observed with pleasure and satisfaction that she has a keen sense of the absurdity and folly of Mrs Bennet's behaviour..

Wednesday Mar. 7th / 35 {should be 6th}

Em had a poor night again, though surrounded with bottles and nostrums and shawls and pullovers. Letter from Bank Manager with Pass Book: Sorry to hear I am on half day work only, but hopes I will make an effort to reduce the overdraft (£3 odd). I dug more of the garden up, the perspiration running off my nose end meanwhile though I took off my coat, waistcoat collar and tie. The children and the dog have laid it utterly waste.

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It seems a pity to ban them from their playground but summer would not be summer without a garden for Em. Trying to recollect what I did this afternoon I remembered that Amiel recognized with sorrow and fear that as age grew on him, he could not recollect what he had written the day before – neither can I at 36, what I did a few hours ago. Mrs Kent called in at dinner time – with a new vivid crimson hat for Em, and a blue one for herself. Em tells me she has had the utmost difficulty in preventing her loading her with presents. Tonight they have both been to see Will Hay at the Kingston Empire. I helped Joan prepare a lecture she is to give on the possibility of life in other worlds, and later fetched her out of bed to listen to Hamilton Harty conduct his arrangement of Handels Concerto for Organ & Orchestra a beautiful piece of music. As I kissed them all goodnight, John came out with – Did he love his Dad. Nice to hear that. Somebody shoved a blackshirt newspaper in our letterbox tonight. A year ago I should have sat like Mr Polly of Eatanswill, reading it in pieces – Thank god I could dismiss it tonight with a cursory perusal and with less of contempt and more of understanding (though still without appreciation or agreement) Politics interest me less and less. I realize that the ideal rests with the human material which composes the state, whether Socialist, Fascist or National, and the signs are bad.

_Thurs. Mar 7th / 35

Bunkie got up at 6-30 and was downstairs and had let the dog in before I could stop him. However he set the table

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before Em got up. Very despondent and restless today, especially on my round. So many things seem to go wrong and I was in a poor mood to battle with the adverse happenings and to arrive home and put up with half an hour of David Kent at his wildest, upstairs and downstairs was a trial which my philosophy collapsed at rather, try as I would to be patient and sympathetic with childhood. Mrs Kent brought Em the curtaining for the bedroom in the top floor, so Em can now get on with it. The moon was lying clean on its back, embracing the old one in its crescent, with a brilliant star far below it, a beautiful and to me, an unusual sight! I find I can beat John at Pancake eating – four against his two Joan and Bunkie don't like them at all.

Friday Mar. 8th / 35

Slight fog when I got up but the day proved to be most bitterly cold with whirls of snow at times on my round this afternoon. Chopped two baskets of sticks. Mac meantime digging holes in the little bit of garden available for him, big enough to bury himself in. He is an utter

fool, he does it straight under ones nose with exited little yelps of sheer abandon as he progresses. Cheque arrived for £7 odd from Robinson out of which Em paid the rates & left 5/- for herself, which I owed her from housekeeping, and 5/- which I took. Joan and I went up to the library, and on our way back, I picked up a Wilfred Annual for Bunkie, at 9d. Snow was falling as we arrived home. Read some of Dean Inge's Lay Thoughts.

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I like him less, the more I read him, though he is obviously sincere. I returned to Montaigne's essays.

Sat. Mar. 9th / 35

Another bitter day. Took Joan to the Robert Mayer Classical Concert for Children at the Regal this morning. It commenced at 10-45. I wondered how it would be supported with a programme of music by such composers as Bach, Weber, Mendelssohn, Mozart & Rossini and I supposed we should sit in a quarter full house at the most – instead, troops of school- children were already gathered in queues when we arrived and they kept arriving in charabancs, trains and walking in crocodiles—an amazing and inspiring sight. I got a 2/- ticket for myself and a 1/- one for Joan (to which she herself contributed) and soon the house was packed with a buzzing crowd of children from 5 upwards, and their appreciation was very real too. Dr Malcolm Sargeant conducted the London Philharmonic and his manner of introducing the items was well suited to a juvenile audience. Joan obviously enjoyed and appreciated it. Mrs Kent treated Em and the kiddies to the pictures in the afternoon. A bitter journey again and the same headwind between Guildford & Bookam.

Sunday Mar 10th /35

Spent whole day indoors, the bitter weather still continues. Read most of the time, various books. Joan had Honor Pitt in to tea and the kiddies had a fire in their bedroom where they played all day. Em went down to Mrs Kent's for tea, and was back at 7. Later she bathed the dog's front after I had

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sooted his nice white waistcoat with a lump of coal.

Monday Mar 11th / 35

Unpleasant scene after breakfast, following Joan's having mended my old torn sports coat. Rather strained atmosphere all day – but just how to do otherwise than I do at these times is beyond me. It is hard, with the job of guiding a young impressionable child's mind aright, and all one's efforts so liable to misconstruction and positive opposition at times. But some good must come of it for all concerned. It is example, not talk, which will tell in the end. To show oneself often without self-control, and then to complain at outbursts of temper and naughtiness in one's children is, to say the least, unfair to them. Went out shortly after breakfast, took the ferry across to Hampton Court, and walked up the Long Water. A bitter day, and I had it absolutely to myself. Sat on a log and read a little Sesame Booklet of a collection of wisdom brevities from Solomon etc. Could not but feel grateful for some obvious indications in my lot, of a guiding and beneficial providence. Spent rest of morning in the Reference Room at Kingston studying Inge's preface to his Bible Anthology. Another bitter journey, though there was a sun out all the time. Must have lost the bag holding some work which was handed to me by a customer in Bookham.

Tuesday Mar. 12th / 35

Rather an amusing accident and coincidence today on my round. Passing a couple of workmen on the Chertsey to Staines road my fish tail fell off and one of the men picked it up and found it too hot for the bare

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fingers, much to his discomfiture and the amusement of his mate. On my return it came off again just at the same place so I set to work and fixed it on properly. The work was indeed lost which I collected on Sat. and it may be difficult to fix this customer. Read Bacon's essays most of the evening. Joan has a bad eye again and bewailed the fact that she cannot read at present. Em got her a blood mixture today. Bunkie and John thick as thieves at present with toys and cocoa drinking (to collect the little Bakelite toys given with each tin). Mr Brown in this evening, and Mrs Kent sat to him for a new set of false teeth. She came with a headache but soon forgot that as she rambled back into theatrical recollections and a fire in a tenement lodging in Glasgow. We roared at her capers. Complaints from two optical customers today of bad service from Polsons. I made a serious note upon the subject for Bulford.

Wednesday Mar 13th /35

Staines in the afternoon and on my way, a feeling took possession of me that to see nature as I did with my eyes and soul was to possess something beyond price – it was only a fleeting vision but all I was doing and have done of late seemed justified and rewarded in that

indescribable glimpse of the ineffable. Took the machine up to Herbert to have the stay bolt put right for the footrest. Things seem none too bright with him in his motor cycle repair venture – but he is more the Herbert of old than he was recently, I'm glad to perceive. Vi called for and took Em off to the Pictures. I read

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the whole of St. Mathew – the first time since I was young, I believe. Joan went to bed early – she seems to have a touch of flu and is none too well or bright at present. David came after tea and the kids retired to the bedroom and their eternal clutter of toys on the floor

Thurs Mar 14th / 35

Woke up feeling seedy with a bit of a headache. Joan remained at home today. She looks very pecky and her eye is inflamed. I read her the opening of The Story of An African Farm which she obviously enjoyed. Letter from Amy to John. Saw one of the new 30 m.p.h. speed limit discs outside Woking and I don't like the idea as I have no speedometer, otherwise I should welcome it, I saw two accidents today, and narrowly escaped one myself – a boy kicked a ball across, or diagonally across the main road at Epsom and it it crossed my path with a dangerous proximity to my face; and there was a stream of traffic about. Decided to try once again to get into bookselling, issuing lists of books for sale first of all in a small way in the Bookseller's Weekly to see what chance there is. I have quite a good few books I could experiment with as a start. If of coarse were I successful, I should be in my element.

Friday Mar. 15th / 35

Typed out a list of about a dozen second hand books to be inserted in next week's Book-Dealers Weekly and sent 5/3 to cover cost of same and a quarters subscription. Read more African Farm to Joan who showed a brief appreciation of the character of Bonoparte Blenkins. I read to the beautiful chapter

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of the death of the German overseer. I tried to get into the habit of the 30 m.p.h. but often forgot. Letter, a long one, from Ev this morning in which she says she has purposely refrained from writing feeling hurt over some thing or other I have said at some time in a letter to Darton. She wants me to try to get her a maid – what a job, to find anyone willing to bury themselves in a Scillies, for 15/- a week. Only 59 optical jobs this week. When I called at Hawkins at Bookham the customer, a

young man, whose photo work I had lost called at the same time and I apologised to him. Picked up Barrie's Tony & Grizel (1900? 1st edition) for 6d today in original binding. This I intend for a future book list.

Sat . Mar. 16th /35

Digging and raking in garden most of morning. David Kent came and when he was about to leave at dinner time, he kissed John and on attention being drawn to it (not by John however who naturally was rather embarrassed) he quite naturally retorted that 'why shouldn't he kiss his best pal John'. On Em asking why then did he not kiss her, he said – Oh you're too old—an answer rather disconcerting and unexpected, but quite without intent to hurt Em I'm sure. Hunters & Lambert, the booksellers who took over Bryans shop in Eden St., are closing down today. Bookshops are in perilous waters nowadays however well run, or capitalised.

Sunday Mar. 17th / 35

Spent all day taking down and cleaning machine, grinding the valves (badly needed) and decoking the cylinder Took some overcoming of my aversion to decoking, before I settled into the job;

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and yet I find the job not so unpleasant in reality as it always is in prospect. My objection too, to apples (a natural aversion with which I was born and which includes most other fruits) led me to breakfast in solitude in the kitchen, and try as I would, I could not overcome a feeling that my position was both ridiculous and not by any means an example of tolerance and endurance before any of the children. I loath the smell of apples therefore all the more reason I should overcome my aversion or at least hide it.

_Monday Mar. 17th / 35 [Should be 18th]

The weather was mild. It was strange and rather comic to see the careful progression of cars under the shadow of the new 30 miles limit on roads where one had become accustomed to see cars racing practically all out. When I had paid out Em this weekend I had no where near enough left to pay the monthly installment on the wireless. Tonight, like a bolt from the blue, the secretary of the Kingston Ladies Swimming Club called with a 13/- account to pay – an account I had forgotten, Mrs Kent bought Joan a manicure set, and Em a set of underwear today. Joan broke into tears before Em tonight complaining of feeling unwell. Em is to take her to Doctor Pope tomorrow. She went back to school today. Her throat has broken out again and she has a racking cough. I read her more of the African

Farm tonight before she went to bed. As for my own reading I am not now noting it in this diary as my aim is to strengthen myself in life's battle by all I read and I turn from one book to another, and vary bible reading with books on subjects from re-incarnation to war, new and old world essays

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and listening to the music of Handel & Bach particularly whenever I get the opportunity I am at present reading Thesaurus Waldings. Em has just been talking to Mr Sexton and he told her of an amusing thing he saw today—one of the 30 m.p.h. signs at Putney, had been altered to read 80 m.p.h. and I saw a printed notice in the window at the back of a saloon car(female driver)'This is not a Police car', at Sunbury today.

Tues. Mar. 18th / 35 [Should be 19th]

Em took Joan to Dr Pope tonight and he says she is thoroughly run down and must cut out home work. Hall's, the builders, next door, in Liquidation and have the bailiffs in. Vi tells Em that all will now be rosy, wages assured etc. I hope so, but I fear not. She has asked if she can have our spare room if things come to the worst, and seeing that for 6 months after we sold up our home after leaving Maple Rd. bookshop we were taken in by them, children and all we could hardly refuse them such a little return for their timely kindness. Ours would have been a hard case had they not helped at that difficult and distressing time. Paid the wireless today. Threat of proceedings from Duplicating Services, to recover their £7 odd bill, and also from Gamages, for £1 due.

Wed. Mar 19th / 35 [Should be 20th]

Em went to see Joan's headmistress today and she was most sympathetic and kind about Joan and has arranged for her to take the afternoons off until the end of the term, and also to have no homework. David Kent in for tea, so there was much'whoopee' then and later. John prefers gardening when he is around, though they are

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really quite good pals and David is quite tolerable when properly known. Honor came in to dress up with Joan after tea. I was to have gone to see the War Film'Forgotten Men' with Em, but I was too fagged, so she and Vi have gone to the Coronation. I must see this film, as I hear it is pretty straight and rather too ghastly in its propaganda against the realities of war horror.

Thur Mar 21ST / 35

John now complains of lassitude and not feeling too well and is keen on going to Denton as also is Joan. We must endeavour to get them both there this summer. Mrs Kent in tonight setting about fitting up Joan with a summer dress, and one for Em.

She was at a private party at the Strand Palace last night and came home, on her own confession, quite drunk. But one can forgive her a lot.

Friday Mar 22nd / 35

On arrival at Polden's there was a message that I was to see R.E.P himself, who preceded me into the office and then without further ado other than a short pause told me I was to serve a week's notice – not for any fault of mine but simply that they were uniting the two rounds into one. So I naturally asked, though I guessed the true state of affairs, who was to do the two rounds? Mr Kitchener. And why had I not been asked, as of prior right. Because K. was possessed of superior mechanical knowledge, that was all. And had they realized how unfair it was to a married man with three young children? All of which was brushed aside as of no consideration against

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the business side of the question. I then asked what authority he had for presuming on my supposed lack of mechanical knowledge, considering that for nine months I had run the machine perfectly satisfactorily & without a break, and on Sunday had spent all that day and Monday morning too in taking the machine thoroughly down. Kitchener himself could do no more. But I could see I was kicking against the bricks and I bade him goodbye and walked out of the office. It was a great shock, and of course, so it was to Em, to whom I immediately conveyed the news. John was present (he has been away from school today). On my way to Hampton, fighting hard to submit my will to destiny, I thought out a scheme to put before the Walton Photo Co. Of course the Norton goes with the Polden job and consequently I shall be without a machine or money to get one. Mr Hepworth was absent but I proposed to Mr Faithful, the manager, that he put it to H that they employ me on summer basis, and provide me with the cash, repayable over the summer, to get a second hand machine. And if possible, put me on a short morning round, as obtained last summer. If they can do this, I shall not have to go on the dole, at least until the end of the summer season and shall earn between £2 and £3 clear money – a little less than at present, I shall have a long hard day of it but that can be endured so long as we are free of the greater strains of financial worry. All the round I fought to

get the right frame of mind, and in my mind I too sought out the right motto – To understand all is to forgive all – Polden, Herbert and myself too, and on Bagden Hill I had a few moments

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of peace and self recognition. Naturally Em is annoyed, but she can see that Herbert was placed in an awkward position through no fault of his own, for as Polden said, had he not accepted the job, it would soon have got another man. It was a hard job to bring myself to call on him tonight with the photo work for Boots of Richmond which he delivers for me. I imagined at the interview as the myself as the injured one, the tolerant one, the hypocritical one (the easiest pose of the lot and the most difficult to avoid) and then as I came up Brighton Rd. I placed my attitude and behavior in other hands, and arrived—to find the house in darkness. I put the packet through the window and came away with once more evidence of the folly of planning too confidently in advance. Joan has been to Jean Poole's party tonight. She seems much better. Bunkie had Bobby Hobbs and David in at lunchtime & such was the commotion, that Em had to pack them both off home. Bunk is the limit. Mac was set upon by a terrier this morning, and though I welshed the terrier for all I was worth, he did not let go of Mac (who has a most powerful jaw and set of teeth, he could well have fed his size) until Nutting's man threw a tin box at him.

Saturday Mar. 23rd / 35

Letter from Gesetner demanding £5 on account of outstanding bill. I wrote to Ev asking her to keep an eye open for a job for me. Then I took the ferry across to the Park and though a cold rain was falling I found it pleasant enough and suited to my condition. During the walk and all through my ride this afternoon, I was pursued with thoughts of yesterdays catastrophe, and try as I would, self pity and commiseration would creep in and hardly a ray of hope or help seemed to penetrate

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and cheer me, and I was mocked with the call of Christ in his last extremity -'My God why hast thou forsaken me?' Yet like Job 'Even though they slay me yet will I put my trust in thee'—for I know from experience, the battle gained by myself, the victory will be accompanied with signs only too evident and well worth the seeking by the victor. Besides, this calamity may yet be a blessing in disguise – obviously I couldn't all my life be a motor cycle messenger and the break must come sooner or later. How hard the struggle or how weak I may prove in it may I come out a little better in character; that is my

great hope— so be more strong and fit for the next encounter. Polden's sent down my wages this morning which was forgotten when I left yesterday I suppose. Have seen nothing of Turner or Kitchener. When I arrived home from my walk, I found the house in an uproar, mostly springing from Bunk and two of his pals, and David. John was drawing aeroplanes and Joan fiddling with the wireless, and it was a good job I came in and not Em — though she arrived in time to scatter her thunder- bolts around. Consequently, the kids went through a battery of complaints and warnings from both of us all dinner time.. Bunk meanwhile complacently eating his dinner as if it were little of his concern — in fact he disclaimed all responsibility! Joan went out to Honor's for tea, and Em did not encourage Mrs Kent to send David up again today. Vi asked as to the disposal of some books today and yesterday she sold some old cloths, so it looks as if things are looking rather serious next door.

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The kiddies did not want to take their Saturday pennies today because I was short of money now! Em wrote to Mr Newall of the Ministry of Pensions yesterday to see if he could place me in a job.

Sunday Mar. 24th / 35

Helped Em and the kiddies in moving the children's beds up to the top room, so that the bottom room can be done up and prepared for a boarder. The kids enjoyed it fine, especially when I sent them into Miss Johnsons room below and Em and I demonstrated by stamping and shouting, what Miss J. would suffer by like behavior on their part. As soon as I can, I shall have a partition made for Joan. The afternoon was spent in a trip across to Hampton Court, where we left Joan and Honor to do the Picture Gallery, whilst Em, John and Bunk and I came back leisurely through the Park. John has a settled habit, which irritates Em and myself of holding his sleeves in his doubled up fist, and I rattled his knuckles eventually after repeated warnings had failed in effect. Poor kid, he broke into a stream of tears and dashed straight at me and hit out for all he was worth. It took some cajoling on my part to get round him but eventually we were walking arm in arm, and I found that some, if not most of his anger and emotion, was that Joan had been left at the Picture Gallery, and we were going home without her. What a boy, and how hard it is to be the father he deserves. Em and I enjoyed thoroughly Walford Davies old English Church Music half hour tonight. I read out

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to her the Women's Insurrection and march on Versailles out of Carlyle's French Revolution. I ought to have gone to see Mr Brown about borrowing his motor cycle today but did not manage it. Must do so tomorrow, Time flies.

Monday Mar 25th / 35

Spent morning staining the floor of the kids bedroom. Saw Mr Hepworth at Walton Photo Co and the upshot of the conversation was that I let him know how cheaply I could do the round for the next six weeks – the period interspersing between the 'dead' period and the summer season proper. He can't advance anything towards a machine and I suggested I would try and hire a machine from a friend – Mr Brown. I shall see if I can do it at a wage which will realise about £2 for me – but I fear this will prove too much for the Photo Co as it is in a queer financial way. Em and Vi gone to the Pictures and Joan was preparing my supper. It was rather amusing. She put the two eggs into cold water, lit the small gas jet under them, and was ready to take them off in three minutes! Em has got the curtains up in their bedroom. The room looks cheerless enough with its patched and dirty wallpaper left by the Turners, and the miserable threadbare carpet – but the kids are happy in it. Joan has nearly finished the African Farm, and hopes that there are not such cruel people the world. I must get her onto something lighter and I thought of Handy Andy as a light relief.

Tuesday Mar. 26th / 35

Wrote to Geseteners, putting the circumstances

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before them and asking them to take back the electric duplicator and to return our hand machine. Had some fun chipping John and Bunk off for not preserving order in their bedroom this morning and Joan perforce had to put in an adverse report upon them. It is hard in one sense on them, but we could not afford to lose Miss Johnson's money now. Called on Mr Brown and found that he did not intend taxing the Sunbeam this quarter but I could if I wished, He seemed more inclined to sell it than let me hire it – a proceeding more to my liking too, if I could afford it. I heard at Hampton that the postage only costs them approx. 15/-, so it looks hopeless for me to ask the summer rate of £2-17-6 and yet if they leave their customers in the air at this time of the year it might do them a lot of harm. It is rough on all concerned. I did not pick up a single job for Polden's today. I wonder if they will suspect malicious work with their customers on my part. I have only told one customer so far that I have got the sack, and he sends little work in any case. Picked up for 6d, an Oxford edition of Shakespeare's complete works, 1926, almost in new condition, which

I gave to Joan, much to her delight. On talking things over with Em tonight we decided that we cannot raise the cash for a machine. I must write to Mr Hepworth to that effect. She got on the telephone to the Superintendent of the Labour Exchange this afternoon to enquire as to the feasibility of drawing the dole on part employment. He was very nice

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and told her to ask me to call & see him tomorrow morning. Have considered writing to the Secretary of Brooklands aerodrome for a job. I worked out tonight that to purchase a machine at 10£ and to put it on the road and pay for petrol & oil etc., out of the £2-17-6 wages there would be only about 34 /- for Em instead of the £3 I have been paying her. I must endeavor to get a job in another line, less dependent on chance accidents.

Wednesday Mar. 27th / 35

Cheque for 1/4/- from Sauvani's. Intended it for Phillips though Em wanted it for the reduction of outstanding rent. Wrote to the secretary of Brooklands Aerodrome for any job going—and Em answered an advert in the 'Comet' for a secretary assistant to a Dentist. Then I went down to the Labour Exchange and made enquiry about yesterdays telephone message and was directed to the Superintendent who denied all knowledge of the call in question. He referred me to another department but by that time my small stock of courage in the face of officialdom had run out and I departed from that dreadful atmosphere of fusty humanity and hopelessness, with the almost certain prospect of a closer and more intimate connection with it next Monday. Called at the Public Library and spent half an hour looking at an exhibition of photos in the museum which opened today to the Public free admittance and I had the place entirely to myself. Picked up a copy of Baron Munchausen's Travels for 2d—a book I have wanted for the children. As Herbert did not call in, in answer to a request to do so (I sent John this morning), I called at his place after lunch. Em saw Turner this morning, and he told her that Kitchener had had no

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option in the matter (as I guessed) and that the trouble really was with regard to my working for the photo firm, which evidently rankled Poldens. I arranged with Kitchener for him to call upon the more

important customers of the Photo Co. for me and I will both deliver and collect the stuff at his house for the next 6 weeks, by which time I can be taken on for the season by the Co. He kindly offered to loan me a pedal cycle, and also to fix me up cheaply with a machine when or rather if, I start again. I hope though, to get another job in the meantime. On seeing Mr Hepworth he agreed provisionally to the proposed arrangement and will pay me 22/6 – of which K does not want a penny for his services, so after all, with the dole, we shall for the next few weeks be little worse off. It will have to be done quietly, and the Photo Co., are entering Kitchener on their books as their employee. I went to Staines as usual, but collected nothing, it was a lovely day. Em and Doris Brown took a walk to Hampton Court. She is expecting a baby and has tried to get rid of it, but it is now too far gone. That possibly explains the mystery of Mr Brown being ready to sell his machine. Went with Em to see the remarkable war film 'Forgotten Men' – a ghastly record and a painful experience it was to see how quickly certain of the audience could switch from awed and uncomfortable silence at a particularly ghastly scene, to laughter of no nervous kind or significance on seeing men de-lousing themselves and their clothing. God preserve us from the thoughtless and criminal folly of the leaders

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of the world policies which fling us once again into such horrors again. I feel sick at heart, though I needed no pictures to convince me of the brutality and futility of war. Poor Joan had two difficult problems today – she was exercised as to the ethics of my accepting the dole and taking 22/6 from Walton too in defiance of the law; I explained that I did not consider myself very culpable where a battleship building country could consider 2/- a week sufficient allowance for a child. The other case was that I had to tell her to write to her Darton friend, Margaret, to put off, or postpone, her visit. I also wrote to Darton and asked them to have Joan if possible this Easter, if only to buck up her health. Em had a possible candidate for the vacant room today – bed & breakfast, but is undecided whether to take it furnished or unfurnished. John pleased us today with a rather remarkable instance of his honesty. He came running in at dinner time, rather scared, with the tale that he had seen a 1£ note on the pavement outside the café in Maple Road. Em asked why he had not picked it up, and he said he didn't like. Later two men were seen to pick it up. I commended him for his attitude and defended it.

Thurs. Mar 28th / 35

Went down on the Norton to the Public Library to go through the Situations Vacant columns exhibited there – what a mockery! Later whilst gardening, Gesetner's man came about my letter. He was really very nice and tactful,

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and after satisfying himself as to the genuineness of the case, he took away the machine in a taxi and cleared us of all the fees for it in the matter and will send along a rotary machine. I promised on my part, to make a reduction in their outstanding bill for stencils as soon as possible. It has been a relief for both of us to see the last of the machine, especially in such a pleasant position. That is one big worry the less. Today has been a queer one for me, pursued with a succession of moods, mostly despondent and uninspired – as if I had abandoned all I have fought so hard for and God had abandoned me. Often on my journey I found myself racing madly and dangerously to relieve my pent up feelings, and near Epsom having seen some acutely bad and recklessly foolish riding of a girl motor cyclist, an exhibition culminating in her cutting across the bows of a car going at over 30, and a horrible moment for me behind as I saw his mudguard touch her machine. I relieved my soul with a burst of invective against the girl rider, who had pulled up, still with engine running ready to move off after a perfunctory apology! The car driver got out, obviously shocked and yellow and was glad of my outburst, which saved him giving her a telling off, richly deserved. Actually his mudguard neatly wrenched off the very footrest on which the pillion riders foot rested, and twisted the chain case into the chain itself, forcing the chain off – and the innocent rider was ready to ride off without suspecting

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the damage. I put the case right and insisted on the pillion rider riding on my hard and spring-less luggage carrier, to Epsom where the two girls entered a garage to have the chain adjusted. As I write this there is an enormous mouse in front of me on the carpet. Joan has another sty on her eye. Bunkie (or Boisterous Bill as Em calls him) after asking why we had let the Gesetner machine go and being told it was because we couldn't pay for it, suddenly came out with 'Well then Daddy, you're broke!' We had to laugh.

Friday Mar. 29th / 35

Wrote a long letter to Dad and Amy. They have sent along an invitation to Joan with 1£ for her fare to Darton, and a nice letter quite free from any gibes such as I expected. Did some more gardening later. Cold windy day and the round seemed unending and tedious. I tried to work up a feeling of regret at performing my round nearly for the last time, but a stony indifference possessed me and I also felt that I was possessed with a touch of my old nature- a mask of hard hate of my ineffectual self and of the world and I could not summon up any vision of a better nature at all. The recent past seemed long past, and that I had only been dreaming and avoiding my real nature. Oh,

how hard it is to lose all one has struggled so hard to gain, and hardly to be aware how it was lost. Still, there is something struggling still deep in me and I shall come back to firm ground, please God. Got my last wage today. Commission on 47 jobs only. This would have been a shock a fortnight

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ago, but now I can only wonder how Herbert will manage with Polden if the rot sets in. Great doings next door – creditors meeting up in town about the building job, and Vi had the landlords agent down this morning to go thoroughly into the matter of two years arrears of rent of their house and the builders yard attached. He also called here and Em thinks he will have our hall and staircase decorated. It is 30 years since it was done—and looks it too. Paid for Bunkie's birthday present—a nicely illustrated edition of the Water Babies, at 1/6 & 9d for the 1930 edn. of Pip & Squeak, from Joan & John – all the kiddies love this annual. I ordered and paid for Amiel's Journal, quoted at 1/3 post free to Books Unlimited

Saturday Mar 29th / 35 (Should be 30th)

Spent the morning digging and chopping firewood. John Shearer called a number of times for Bunkie, but they had all gone to Esher Common. They called to take David with them, but he was still in bed and his mother too at 10 o'clock. The friendship, a rather disconcerting one at times, between Em and Mrs Kent seems to have wilted for the time being and Vi is again in the ascendancy as of old; Mutual misfortune has brought them together again, and perhaps Mrs Kent's £100, however kindly disposed, has harmed her. It certainly has done her health no good. She seems quite knocked up these days, a weary, aging woman. Did my last trip today, thoroughly and conscientiously, though tempted strongly to skip parts of it. A little more cheerfully disposed today, but the spiritual element is practically dead at present. To do an unpleasant duty is to feel the unpleasantness and little of the after reward. I feel that it is better done so, but how blank my life seems just now. I am distressed in that I cannot settle down to read aught

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but Essays – a novel or history I soon tire of and I can't tackle a new work. Surely this phase is but a passing one and I hope so. I should loath to fall back – I was so unhappy, so really and sincerely ashamed of my life, so perilously near wishing and hoping to be rid of it all. At my worst and blackest, I often saved myself by saying 'Well and where will you be then; who will help you. Stick to God, even if he seems to have abandoned you. It may well be a trial, and you are bound to

come out rather better than worse.' I fail often, and my successes are often mere mechanical achievements, gestures in the face of past and the future. Mr Cherry, of Staines, asked me about losing my job today, and confessed himself disgusted when I told him my side of the affair, afterwards, I wondered had I not better write and ask him not to let my relation affect his business relations with Poldens. And then I thought there would be a smack of hypocrisy in such a letter. It is hard to steer a clear path. Dumbness saves us much, but a trial spared is not the way to achieve character. Brought home nine vol. of the incomplete edn. of the post war Childrens Ency. edited by Arthur Mee. 5/- the lot (one vol. only missing and nicely bound). The children are delighted

Sunday Mar 30th / 35 (Should be 31st)

Cleaned the Norton thoroughly and then took it round to Herbert – the last of about 25,000 miles on it. Somehow I did not feel the parting too keenly. I am not particularly

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fond of motor cycling, and I certainly loath motor cycles, and their care. As a convenience, I have found them greatly useful and as a means to securing work and a living. Herbert received me quite nonchalantly, and I gave him a list of the optical firms I called upon. He lent me a strong mount of a pedal cycle, for which I was grateful and upon which I felt not a little strange and unsafe. Finished Strachey's 'Queen Victoria' - about the forth time I have read and enjoyed it. Bunk enquired at dinner why an orchestral conductor must have a baton stick—why couldn't he conduct quite as well with a banana in his hand! We sat in the garden after dinner, and noted that at last the grass seed was coming up in tiny spouts here and there. John watered the garden. Bunkie read the Encyc. and the dog eyed us very enviously (& rebelliously) from his side of the fence which had been erected to keep him off the grass.

April 1st / 35 Monday

An important day in my life – a rung of the ladder of life descended or ascended? Walked down to sign on at the Labour Exchange. Tried to analyse my feelings, and found that secretly I was rather elated at adding this experience to the catalogue of my varied life. As for the disgrace or stigma, I know this that one can be absolutely starving with no prospect of the dole, and there is in that no disgrace, but to be on the 'dole' is a definite label and maybe it will even stimulate Darton to get me into work of some sort. The outlook is pretty hopeless. I am so utterly unqualified, so lacking in push and initiative, so scared of the clever and successful ones of the world, so distrustful of myself, as much a seeker

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of the ideal and spiritual than the real and material in life. I sat in a chair and alternately studied the characters there and read one of Montaigne's Essays, whilst a man at my side steadily picked his eyes and examined his fingers after each probe. After about an hour, I was called up by a clerk who was really quite civil and though by no means hopeful when I gave my profession as bookseller he put it down for reference. I was given my card and a form to fill in to claim the dole. Found Turner at home when I returned, with a note from Polden's, which turned out to be a reference—an extraordinary if fulsome epistle, making me out to be a paragon of all the business virtues and qualifications and a desirable addition to any firm! Then why did they not keep me? After dinner took the cycle out and pedaled down to Hampton and collected the bags for Herbert who I found Turner busy upon my Norton upon my arrival there – Kitchener was adjusting the throttle, which had given me trouble. Obviously he is the more suitable chap for the job, but that is little consolation. Did some more digging in the garden after dinner, and at 6 o'clock collected the bags from Herberts and rushed them down to Hampton. John has a couple of pimples on his face. Bunk wants to know why the teacher who tells them about the Garden of Eden and creation, also talks about the man of the stone age! I told him to ask her to reconcile matters.

Tuesday April 2nd / 35

Em has cancelled my Morning Post for the Telegraph which has a long list of situations vacant mostly for skilled labourers or canvassers, wrote about one job today.

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Joan very keen on trip north tomorrow and I noticed her making entries in a small pocket diary tonight. Busy underscoring the more interesting lines in my Amiel tonight, and it has struck me that perhaps an edited and abridged edition from Mrs Humphrey Wards excellent translation might find a publisher. I have in mind the thinking working man. Wrote to Fields today to get them to reduce the rent—and have mislaid the letter. Both Em and I crabby tonight. The strain tells at times but so far we have both maintained cheerful exteriors and hopeful outlooks.

Wednesday April 3rd / 35

A wintry, wild, blustery sort of day with sudden storms of hail and snow and forbidding clouds. Did a couple of hours raking and cleared the paths in the garden, Then carried on with Amiel. Mr Taylor arrived with a duplicating job, and I suddenly remembered I had no duplicating machine. However, it is promised for tomorrow, and after dinner got Em to phone up, and accordingly this evening a machine was delivered – of an older pattern apparently, than the one they took in exchange for the electric variety. I went down and reported at the Labour Exchange at 3p.m., and there they made enquiries as to the two boarders and what they paid. Em set off with Joan to the station, and I saw them off. I gave her 6d which was all I could give her. We had some fun over an old- fashioned black valise, a very heavy piece of furniture which Darton' loaned' Joan last time she was there and in which she insisted on packing

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her cloths much to Em's disgust and amusement too. I had an order for 3 books from my advert in the Book- Dealer also an enquiry for duplicating, and a threat too, of a summons within two days from Duplicating Services. And Mr Phillips called this morning with his £10 account. I wrote this morning after a'smart' post in a Library in Kingston. I hope, if I get it, it is not in a chain Library but I fear it will be

April 5th / 35 (Should be 4th)

Came back from Hampton in a rain storm after dinner. Em went to Pictures with Vi (who treated her) . Came back and found fault on three counts with the wireless – it is too loud, too much used and too expensive. So, without huffiness or resentment if possible, I must temper my love for this recreation and seriously cut down my allowance. After all, I do rather overdo it and much as I love good music, I defeat my own end by too much indulgence. So perhaps it is as well—and Em is so worried that little is needed to try her nerves at present. Bought two books at 1d each today—Hiram Macini's life, 1920; and Sidney Webb's How to Pay for the War 1916, at Teddington. Herbert has got the Norton in first class mechanical trim, and today he had it all out, at nearly 70 – which in my hands it would never have achieved. This is not false modesty or hypocrisy – it is simply a fact, & now the pain is over of my dismissal there is no doubt that abstract justice has been done.

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Still, I did my best and I am no mechanic, either by nature or inclination. We should hear from Joan tomorrow. I hope she had a good trip and is happy now she has got to her beloved Darton, black bag and all.

April 5th / 35 Friday

Another cold and stormy day, but brighter on the whole. Did a bit of gardening and edited more Amiel. I rather think that Em has not only not sent the rent off, but has had to dip heavily into it for current expenses. It is a pity, but it can't be helped. And I had a blow when I applied at the Exchange for my dole. I hoped and expected payment on one day, but was told that my time was 6 clear days from the day I signed on – last Wed–and therefore I should get paid next Friday and upon three days only. How some poor blighters manage between the date of their losing work and their first dole pay is beyond me. Things are serious enough for us. But I have not lost faith in providence. I believe something will turn up to help us and if it does not, then it is in the plan of things and good is intended by this trial, I was tried almost beyond endurance by David Kent during the absence of Em and Mrs Kent, out buying Bunkie his birthday present – but I came through with but one reproof to him. A card came from Joan saying she had arrived alright. I called at Fairbrothers bookshop in Norbiton street and pursuant to my plan of trying to get back into the book world I picked out a few bargains which came to 5/8 and I promised to collect and pay for them next week. I hope I can. I picked up out of his junk box a quaint recipe book–Victorian in essence, for nothing, for which I should get 2/6.

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Sat. April 6th /35

Bunk's birthday and he was down early for the occasion. A parcel came for him from Darton of cakes and David Kent emptied his money box in order to buy toys for him as well as bringing some of his own – a nice trait in the boy which I have noticed before. Mrs Kent bought him a fort and Mrs Hall next door gave him money to buy toy soldiers. A letter from Joan for us and a birthday letter for Bunk. Took the two boys and the dog across to the park, where we saw some new baby lambs, much to their delight, and Mac had a grand scramble after ducks and swans at the head of the Long Water and

refused utterly to obey my call for which I gave him a beating. But he is past learning—and this afternoon he tackled a brown loaf foolishly left on his kennel. The kids went to Turner's for tea. Em got a 9d rabbit for dinner. It was very good but she loaths both cooking and eating rabbit.

Sunday April 7th / 35

Discovered quite accidentally that Bach's St. Matthews Passion was to be broadcast this morning and afternoon. John Scherer came to invite Bunkie to tea but Em managed to swing the invite the other way round after a scene with Bunk.

Monday April 8th / 35

Another stroke of ill fortune – apparently. Received provisional notice from Walton Photo Co, which is closing down, and only holding on a little longer in the hope of selling out as a going concern. A day of stormy downpours of rain again.

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Another order for two books at 4/6 – arrived this morning and I feel confident that I ought to give the idea of a mail order business full attention and scope. I will see how this week's advert in the Book-Dealer goes. I told Em we are actually no worse off than at this time last year, and are not faced with so much debt – or at least, pressing debt. And with Mr Sexton in the top flat, Mr Pennycook and Miss Johnson as boarders, we are able to face the rent – so it remains for me to better my circumstances somehow, and this I hope I shall do. I wrote after a book Assistant job at Ringwood this morning. My income Tax papers arrived tonight and I reported at the Labour Exchange this afternoon. They have altered my time now to 11-15 every alternate day. I had to fetch David and Bunkie down from their bed cum toy room – it was like Bedlam once or twice. Em tells me that Mrs Kent has offered her a free holiday, rail fare included, if she will go with her – to Penzance of all places, this summer. I urged her to take this kind offer. A holiday will do her good and she has earned one.

Tuesday April 9th / 35

Done practically nothing all day except read and trip over to Hampton. Saw Arthur Pemberton today – he has been out of work for a year and is still on the dole not the Means Test, either for some unknown

reason. He quietly tells me too that the dole now lasts for 360 days – If so I should have ample time to build up my book business. I hope it is true. I must employ myself as it is hopeless for one of my lack of special qualifications to expect a job of any reasonable remuneration.

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A letter from Susy this morning. She has developed another styte up there – the sixth. She seems to be enjoying herself and has a proper disgust for the silly conversation of a party of girls she went a walk with. John is deep in the Water Babies. He loves it obviously. My first money for book sales came to hand this morning– 1/10 for the Marryat's Kings Own, I gave it to Em. May it be the forerunner of many such and the foundation of a new business and interest for me after my own heart.

Wed. Apr. 9th / 35 (Should be 10th)

Another blow today. On reporting at the Labour Exchange (where the queue stretched out into the street) I was told to report to the Supervisor about the matter of letting rooms to boarders and there after a long conversation (during which with an effort and with the help of all that is best in me, I kept calm enough), I discovered that as the law stands, Em is not entitled to the allowance on the dole. Simply and absurdly, the law says if you sublet rooms without board or attendance, you qualify for relief on the 'dole'; should you however, by giving either attendance or board, you are drawing income by labour, and are not entitled to government assistance If you do this to pay a big rent (as we do) the only alternative is to take a house of low rent as best you can. The Supervisor said that if for instance I had a house with 15 rooms and I sublet 12 of them, I could draw the dole for my wife but if I let one room to a boarder I could not draw the dole. Of course Em went properly up in the air when I told her, but she realises now that there is no appeal in that court and she is keen on

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moving to a house of less rent–though here again, unless she can take the whole household, she may plunge us into a worse mess. She paid for me in the 7d seats at the Odeon, but I was glad to come out before the second picture. Oh, for another 'Man of Arran'. There is gale is on tonight.

Thurs. Apr 10th / 35 (Should be 11th)

If any of the kiddies read these entries and find a difficulty in the badly written scrawl, let them share part of the blame for it in but rarely I have a decent pencil or can find a knife to sharpen a stub point. Today has been a queer, depressing, sort of affair – Em has sent two weeks rent off (with the aid of £1 sent by her mother) and neither of us have a copper to our names – save a shilling she borrowed from Vi to put in the electric meter. I spent my last halfpenny on a stamp to send off a book report tonight. It is hard on Em. Like most of her sex, she is at the mercy of circumstances, and few women can face with equanimity the prospect of a reduction in housekeeping money. Still, she has indeed tried to do the best possible, but it is not for her to keep up a sustained battle and tonight, when she dropped a plate from Mr Pennycoates tray, I thought we were in for a hysterical display. It is hard – hard on us all but God will stand by me, I hope, and I shall see yet in this trial only another evidence of character forming not only for myself, I hope. Joan has not written and this too preys on Em's mind, I can see. I hope we get a letter tomorrow. An order for a 1/6 book arrived this morning, and another ditto tonight as well as a Duplicating Enquiry.

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Em is still all for moving, but I hope our affaires will brighten in time to cool off this notion which might help a little but could easily ruin us, on the other hand. I spent the afternoon sorting out books to report upon and list down at Farebrother's shop in London Rd. It is my plan to utilise his stock for this purpose, and he is quite agreeable, so long as he gets a fair deal. Whilst going through a pile of miscellaneous books I came across two books I dearly wanted – Lyly's Euphues and Vaughan's Poems, both in excellent Arber reprints, and at sixpence each. Is this a sign to encourage me, a providence, or mere coincidence. At any rate I felt the double stroke of good fortune as coming at the right time, and I only wish Em could have a sign to help her. I hear that the photo firm may last out another week. Finished a re-reading of de Goncourt's Renee Mauperin tonight – a fine book. I forgot to mention that Christie's returned the old picture, declaring it to be of so small a commercial value as not to be worth including in their periodic sales. So that's that.

Friday April 11th / 35 (Should be 12th)

The book list has not been a success so far, with but two 1/6 books sold from it. Wrote after a Library job in the Midlands. A long queue again at the Exchange but I eventually got my money, 11/6d,—3 days at 3/10d per day. This, all the same, I was glad enough to get. Wrote to two firms who trade in financing the purchase of new businesses. Perhaps I shall land a plum yet. I shan't be swindled so badly, any how, as I was when I came down to Surbiton, and if I could toil

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and struggle for over 6 years to keep that desperate venture on its legs, I hope I could make a better result out of a more carefully studied and fresh venture. We shall see. Vi came in tonight and reminisced a lot about her terrible childhood with a drunken father. May the day come when we shall no longer be faced with 'Beer is Best' & 'Beer for an A1 nation' etc. upon the placards. I heard today that the Walton Photo Co. are definitely closing down next weekend. I shan't be sorry to cut out my cycle trips over there.

Sat. April 12th /35 (Should be 13th)

The kiddies invited to dinner and tea by Turner. He took them on the motorcycle over to Ealing in the afternoon and brought them back about 8 o'clock. Mr Brown called at dinner time and together we went to a jumble sale held in Balaclava Rd. As I had only twopence he lent me a few coppers to complete a purchase of ten books at 1d each. Among these was a first edition of Stevenson's Kidnapped, but it had been backed in brown paper and the paper gummed down inside. A letter from a firm which lends money, on businesses approved by them for purchase. If I can't build up my business by post, they may prove an excellent start again.

Sunday April 14th / 35

Em has arranged after all to go to Wigan on Thursday and the kids are full of instructions for cakes to be made before she goes and Jim as he settled down in bed tonight, in his own inimitable way said to her 'Did she make nice cakes without Chinese eggs'. We are going to make one side of the lawn into a vegetable garden.

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Monday April 15th /35

Reported at the Labour Exchange then rode along the Thames to Teddington Weir. It was a nice morning and the scene from the footbridge was delightful and perfect on both sides. I called in at the old Teddington Church to find Thomas Traherne's tomb (which I failed to do) There was an oppressive damp charnel house feeling in the place but I felt strangely contented and near to God, much more so than usually I have in a church. The whole place seems to be crumbling, neglected, unearthly and repellant and yet attractive to the pensive mind. Signed for my last weekly wage at Hamptons.

Tuesday April 16th / 35

Letter from Joan. She has evidently been greatly moved and affected by the Gospels in Art, a copy of which is in Amy's library: and her letter is a bold declaration of her faith and love for Jesus, the lover and comforter of little children. On the other hand she declaims against Amy's meanness in making her buy her own stamps and refusing her permission to see the doctor about her styes. I was somewhat alarmed at the tone of her letter though of course it was obvious only a phase she was passing through and one which may easily be the stepping stone to something better and finer, Joan is a good kid, no prig, and is at a trying age.— she will come through.

Wed. April 17th / 35

Planted some potatoes this morning. John and Bunk broke up today. Bunk brought home some amazingly good examples of hard work (crayon drawings and paper-cut outs in picture arrangements) and

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exquisitely neat printing. I spent rest of day disinterring the books out of the office, much to Em's disgust at the dust which I did my best to avoid raising. Called at Books Unlimited and earned a shilling fetching two cases full of books from a house in S. James Rd. Am going through a wretched spiritual conflict at present. My small material successes, despite my desire and struggle to avoid their submerging me, have dealt blow after blow at my philosophy and religious outlook and I feel so deserted at times, so far from happiness. There seems no end to struggle, and God – as if there was no God – seems to look as unconcerned and apart. And of course there are times when I utterly forget him. The battle is always on, the struggle never ceases, and one gets neither help nor sympathy from the world Oh that a religion like mine had its support in another Christ – but I cannot

accept his divinity, and I actually get more help from such people as Montaigne, Job (particularly) Ecclesiastes & Wisdom of Solomon.

_Thurs, April 18th / 35

Wakened up during the night after a shocking dream of Joan, poor kid, she was touched with the hand of death. Between us we had tried to convince ourselves that there was hope though we knew a fortnight would see us utterly deprived of the light of my life as poor Mauparin was of his Renee. Perhaps the reading of that book was responsible or the dream, God protected her. Em went off to Wigan as planned. We saw her off from Surbiton –hadn't the money to go up to town to see her off from there.

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I hope she has an A1 time – she has thoroughly deserved it and needs a change. Went down for my'dole' and on being asked – any work– and answering, no, the clerk emphasised that I must tell him even if I only earned 2 or 3 shillings. I think my misery at times at present is the fact of my having to do underhand things so necessary to preserve our existence. The kids are sleeping with me downstairs tonight.

Friday April 19th / 35

Good Friday, a queer sort of day, no Em, no Joan, and the children depending on me. However it has gone off alright. Spent the morning and in fact all my free time today in indexing my books and was surprised at my large collection of Russian literature, the legacy of my communistic phase. I feel sure that my future lies in books and that if I can avoid taking a shop, I shall be happier and less tied. I intend first of all to list my Russian books and to send a catalogue of them to a Moscow firm. I have been driven right off Amiel for a week or more. I am not in the right mood for him. My chief task at present is not to sink into materialism, to waver between intense satisfaction and deep depression at my prospects. Have enjoyed a few more chapters of Mark Rutherford's Deliverances. I expect Em is thinking about us and also Joan. I saw Phillips yesterday in his car and he actually pulled up to enquire about his account. Duplicating is absolutely dead.

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Sat Apr. 20th / 35

Em has written, she had a bad journey – a crowd six deep at Euston. Her Mother not well, but her father as fit as and breezy as ever. It seems a week since she left, and I miss her often.

Sunday Apr. 21st / 35

It is 11-15 and I have just recollected the diary, after an evening devoted mostly to undisturbed listening to Easter music including the 2nd part of Handel's Messiah. I did not feel in the mood for reading and was out of patience with myself after several displays of uncontrollable temper, mostly directed against poor old Mac. The animal in me comes out, and an hereditary trait or streak of cruelty to animals is in evidence still. I must not put the blame for this on parents; my faults are my own and I know them only too well. The kiddies had lots of Easter eggs to tackle and John Shearer even brought a 6d one for Bunk. He looked as if 6d on buttons to Bunk's old coat would have been a better outlay, poor kid. Took the kids to Hampton Court via Kingston Bridge. Saw a swan sitting on an enormous nest in a pond in the park. The new Town Hall, caught by a truant sun seen from the Ditton bend was a thing of beauty – one of the rare examples of modern architecture worthily replacing the old it displaces.

Monday Bank Holiday April 22nd / 35

Wrote to Em and then took the kids to the fair at Hampton Court. Mac would come too, though I knew he would be scared stiff with the noise and bustle as indeed he was. Am reading Trollop's The Small House at Allington – I find I have not read it before, always confusing it with Franley Parsonage. Poor dear old Jim – it appears that two boys interfered with their play up at the gardens and one 'swiped' Bunk on the jaw (to use his own expression) this evening when they were up there. John had not wanted me to know this,

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apparently feeling he himself ought to defend himself & his brother. But I will take an hand and follow them tomorrow, and woe betide the bully I catch at his games. John is the soul of good nature, a boy in not a hundred, but ten thousand, for sweetness of disposition and though Bunk is pugnacious, rampageous and impatient of control, he is neither mean or quarrelsome. The way these two (and Joan) play hours on end is a marvel to me who can remember a very different atmosphere among a family of youngsters in his own young days. Ev and myself were ideal pals but how we used to battle and fib one another into good hidings! I sometimes fear for John that my counsel

of hatred of oppression, cruelty, false religion, may make his already too compassionate soul still more unfitted for the hurley burly existence ahead of him. Curiously enough

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[E.H. inadvertently missed out number 163 when numbering the pages]

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he seems to be indifferent to religion, though 'Bunk' will spend hours with a bible, and seek out bible stories in the Children's Encyclopaedia.

Tuesday Apr. 23rd / 35

Letter from Em to say she was returning today instead of tomorrow. Went up to the Station, and met her with the kiddies. All glad to have her back and the house seems normal once again. A stroke of unexpected luck today, when, passing Shaw & Duvals Coach booking place, Duval stopped me, and after enquiring what I was doing now, he asked me to supply him with books for his circulating library, which he started a few months ago. If I can supply him with a dozen or more a week I should have a certain 10/- profit or more weekly.

Wed. April 24th / 35

Letter at last from Susie. She is apparently having an A1 time and her letter was full of her escapades and happy times. She doesn't even mention coming home at all! I went up to Duval's this morning; took four books for which I got 7 shillings. The girl secretary there will prove the snag, I am afraid. She doesn't particularly like the idea, I can see. She, at any rate, scouted the idea of anything like £1 worth of books a week- at any rate, now the summer season is here

Along with my hopes of Duval and his library, there the diary terminated for the time being. And to what next could I turn for relief? Kingston Photo Co. finished; book-selling by post a flop; duplicating

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dead – and always the risk of being discovered, defrauding the government by drawing an income, however minute, from undeclared labour. Suppose some busybody reported seeing me at such frequent intervals, serving behind the counter at Books Unlimited at Surbiton, or at Farebrothers shop at Kingston? Wearily I turned over my book-stock –and suddenly the solution dawned on me. Had I been

dreaming all these years? Here was fame and fortune, staring me in the face. Miss Weeton and her manuscript Journals, lying unexploited – not for sale, of course; but how about editing them for publication?

Way back in 1925, during a visit to Wigan, I had performed my usual tour of the bookstalls and bookshops there, and had made the discovery of my life in a dirty little place in Wallgate – a leather bound, quarto-sheet book, crammed from beginning to end with journal entries and copies of letters, written apparently by a local woman between the years 1807 and 1809. I remember the thrill as I scanned a page or two, and with what trepidation I approached the old man who ran the shop – how much, please, with all the affectation of indifference I could assume, proper to the occasion. And the mingled shock of horror and delight when he stated the value he placed upon the treasure – 9d! Had he any more fellows to this one? Well, he had had, but thinking them worthless, he had destroyed them! And it was only by his having overlooked this stray, that Miss Weeton avoided being banished for ever from human ken, He seemed disappointed too, over this oversight on his part. I searched the shelves hour after hour, but the truth had been told, alas.

I was overwhelmed by my good fortune, tempered as was my joy by the

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destruction of the companion volumes by the vandal in Wallgate. But perhaps there were still other volumes still hidden away in Wigan. Obviously the woman had been in the settled habit of taking copies of her letters, and this volume was number three of a series. Why not write to one of the local newspapers upon the subject? I did so, my letter was duly published and the Editor of the Wigan Examiner actually suggested that I should submit extracts from the letters and journal, for weekly insertion in his paper. So, Miss Weeton got her expressed wish of recognition by posterity, and week by week, the examiner devoted a column of the adventures, the miseries, heartaches, and the indomitable pluck of this strange woman, who had dismissed Wigan, over a century before, as 'a place of mental barrenness.'

But that was not all; overjoyed as I was to see myself – and Miss Weeton – in print, the selections resulted in the production of no fewer than three more volumes of the manuscript, then in the possession of a Mr Marshall, living retired in Southport, who most generously made me a free gift of them, on condition that I performed the editing. The newspaper series came to an end in due course – but a fraction of the material I had to work upon – and the volumes were placed aside. Publication in a more permanent and worthy form, never struck me as feasible. But now ten years had elapsed, and I had more than sufficient time upon my hands for the job; fortunately, too, the bulk of the research and editing had been prepared by me whilst still in the

North, and all that was required was their knocking into shape. God,
this was my chance!
Get to work.

For the rest, being upon the books of the Labour Exchange, I was

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automatically selected for a few days work at each quarter end, as motor-licence clerk at the County Hall, Kingston. And at Xmas I put in a hectic week or two as mail sorter at the General Post Office there. That was the sum total of my employment during the year or more that elapsed between the conclusion of my diary for 1935, and the next attempt in the summer of the following year, which was inspired by a mad venture I had then under contemplation – that of cutting out my monotonous, soul destroying. Tri-weekly visits to the hopeless Labour Exchange, and touring the countryside as a street musician! Of the long-drawn-out agony of the intervening period, apart from my success in placing Miss Weeton with the Oxford University Press (with a timely advance of £20 in 'royalties'), there is no record save in a mind which shrinks at the very recollection of idle days spent either at home, or leaning with my back against wall in Home Park; the haunting of the two bookshops which provided me with a few casual earned shillings on occasion; and the regimentation of that hopeless queue at the Labour Exchange. Obviously something must be done – if not by my country, then, by myself; and however drastic. That set of tubular bells in Farebrother's shop at Kingston – a few tunes roughed out upon it, as I deputised for the owner of the shop in his absence; an improvised bath-chair chassis; and then, into the blue. For I was now upon the Means Test, and 35 shillings a week (just the amount due weekly to the landlord) for the support of a wife and three young children, offered no other alternative. An immense defence programme was getting into swing at long last, but I did not fit into it. There was no defence where I was concerned, and it was high time

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that I set up on the defensive myself, against that old enemy of mine, the Government, who had driven a Hall upon the road, but not as yet into the gutter.

Wednesday, 4 August. 1936.

Card from Oxford Univ. Press acknowledging receipt of last batch of index for Miss Weeton. Took two bolts down to old Johnson, to finish off the frame for the bells. Had to replace them with two of smaller

diameter, after he had banged the threads off those I had brought. At last, the job is done, and on the whole, a good, firm, easy-going carriage; the two back cycle wheels are a trifle wobbly, but not likely to bring disaster upon me without previous warning. Arranged with Johnson to let me into his yard early Saturday morning, so that I could get clear of Kingston before the streets were alive. To make quite sure of his getting up betimes, I arranged to pay the 2/6 balance due on the 25 shillings for his work upon the chassis, on Saturday morning. Spent most of the afternoon reading Clayhanger. On the dole line, the man immediately behind me was from Bridlington, and the one in his rear, from Accrington. The man from Bridlington engaged me in a long conversation upon the present aspect of foreign affairs. He seemed to be only in the initial stage of a political faith or study; for a man of his appearance, his ignorance was pathetic, and his conservatism equally so. Bought a patent device for boiling kettles today. Started wearing my old walking boots, to get used to them again. Also tried on my war medals – felt a fool in the act, but if the wearing of them

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only serves to render the police less antagonistic, they will perform a useful enough service. I can imagine myself walking into shops – if I can pluck up the courage, that is – and, hat in hand, saying, 'anything for the Bells?' It seems impossible that a week hence I shall be launched upon a mad enterprise which will mean either a new conception of life and an utter change of routine and habit, or, back again, facing the old problem – what to stave off ultimate financial disaster – back on the Means Test, in fact, Em took John to the Pictures along with Mr and Mrs Kent, who were accompanied by David. This morning, whilst Joan and David were on Esher Common, some young roughs came up and asked if they wanted a fight, and forthwith gave David a hiding, and hit Joan in the chest. John, thinking discretion the better part of valour, pleaded that he was only nine years old, and so excused himself from participation – but I wonder how he took the blow that Joan received, the Joan for whom he would lay down his life! The dog will miss me – he has become very attached of late, and makes a daily fool of me. And Em – well, she is doing what she can to render my last few days at home as comfortable and well-fed as can be. This weekend she will feel it hard, for, in addition to my absence – the first one of any significance in our married life – Miss Johnson and Mr Pennycook will both be away; and tonight she has gone down to bid farewell to Mrs Kent, who departs for Harwich and three weeks holiday tomorrow. And my own feelings – well, I am principally concerned about the money aspect of the venture. If

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I were quite sure it would prove a source of satisfactory income, and rid me of the Means Test and financial worry, I could perhaps attempt to analyse my other feelings; but always this takes priority – will the public respond; is the venture likely to attract practical tokens of sympathy, as against mere curiosity; will I take 30 shillings a week, just enough to keep myself, probably, so much as – dare I suggest it – £5, which would spell freedom from worry for us all, justifying what at present looks like a mad and undignified venture? Shall I pass merely from one worry to another, different in the particulars, but essentially the old one; or shall I pass from town to town, eager, confident, and with a mind not entirely obsessed with the spectre of just one more failure, one more absurd plan scotched? My second book is, however commenced upon – how will it evolve, and to what?

Mrs Kent has just been in – barely touched upon the subject. 'Mind you don't stop away too long'. I replied 'Six months, I suppose – or three days'. To which she answered – 'That's more like it'. Such a conversation well illustrates what must be the attitude of all who know me.

Thursday 6th August 1936

Another wet day; the weather prospects are not promising, but somehow, rain or fine, I don't care what it might turn out to be. Went down to Farebrother's and collected the tubes – also paid him 6d for a saucepan, and was in two minds about the purchase of a primus stove at 3/6d, but decided that the little affair I bought at Stewarts would suffice for the

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present. Farebrother is in an 'off' humour – we seem to be mutually antagonistic at present. I shall be glad to see the last of him and his shop for a bit. Called on Johnson and fitted the tubes. The Gladstone bag will give ample clearance. The weight of the bells cants the frame over to the left, but this I have corrected with a strap from the frame to the carriage. The wheels – well, I shall take an early opportunity of having a through axle made for them, as it is obvious that the present arrangement threatens a collapse sooner or later. After dinner, came back to F's, as I had left my book there this morning. Took John along with me, in order to show him the best way to Tiffin's, his new school, and also decided to show him the outfit, which intrigued him much. He saw me messing about with a cigar box tonight, which I was fashioning into a collecting box to fit on the side of the frame, with a large THANKS on the lid (this he did not see, of course). And he asked me if I was taking a monkey with me – half in jest, half seriously. He also – though this time quite seriously – aired his views upon my proposed wearing of the Harrow school blazer which I recently picked up second hand, and which he said would be a disgrace to the school it represented, should I wear it. He was glad I

should not be wearing a Tiffin blazer. Poor old John! Still it is as well to know his honest opinion; and he is too young and too open to disguise his sentiments. I found that the walk from Farebrother's to Johnson's with the bells, left me tired – a little over a mile; and I am contemplating a journey of possibly some hundred's! John says that the book I intend to write,

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is not interesting, well, I must be insane. Well, one more day – and then! There is little enough left to do. I cannot burden myself with much personal impedimenta, and until I have attempted a night or two in the open, I cannot make full preparations upon that score. So far I have a small camping tent, a saucepan for boiling water, a thermos flask, and a small methylated spirits heating device—not a very extensive outfit. I propose sleeping on my spread out storm-guaed coat, and Em will rig me out no doubt with a blanket or two. My notion at present is to look out for cheap'digs', privately, or at a small public house or temperance hotel, trying not to go beyond 3/6 for bed and breakfast; but of course, until I have seen how it goes, it is hardly possible either to forecast or plan. Today, old Johnson thrilled me with a passing enquiry as to my plans, adding that he supposed that I expected to make a quid a day. A quid a day! Sometimes I am very pessimistic; and yet, as I said to Em last night, at a shilling collection at each stop of ten minutes, it would not be hard to make a pound a day. It was remarkable how she seemed to draw comfort and hope from that chance supposition. I could not help but notice the swing over positive interest – acquiescence in fact, where before there had been passiveness, or faint antagonistic but dutiful endeavours to perform her part. Both of us have suffered too much, and together, to allow the absurdity of it to utterly swamp the hopeful and practical possibilities. The Means Test man has not called. as promised, to O.K. the idea,so I shall have to chance finding myself ineligible for benefit, should the venture fail and see me back home within a week. Em, I see, is planning letting another room. Let's hope it will be quite unnecessary.



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Friday 7th August 1936

My mind was made up almost as soon as I awakened. I would not risk going upon the road with that contraption as at present mounted upon those splayed wheels. At a blacksmiths, they were just short of rudely contemptuous. However, I ventured into a motor-cycle repair place, found a Yorkshire mechanic, and the job was as good as done. No more of old Johnson's hammering and messing up; and resuly – a firm back axle, practically certain never to let me down; and all for 3/6. Decided not to start off tomorrow morning, after all. Em would be on her own all weekend, and apart from the money question, there's no particular hurry for a day or two. I shall make a start early Monday morning instead. Was paid what I hope will prove to be my last unemployment'dole' –34 shillings.

Saturday 8th August 1936

Took John and 'Bunky' by bus to Walton on Thames, and from there we walked along the Thames nearly to Chertsey. 'Bunk' managed to cannon into a street lamp-post, and damaged his knee by falling into a pot-hole on the river bank; otherwise we had an uneventful but pleasant walk. Jim was in one of his ridiculously funny Father Time moods. It will be hard to break away from my little family. Still, if it makes home for them more of a certainty, the sacrifice will be justified.

Sunday 9th August 1936

Told Em I had decided after all not to wear my war medals or in any way advertise myself as an ex-service man. She has just finished packing up for me – a queer, guess-work sort of job, As for reading matter, I shall only take with me Florio's

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Montaigne, and an anthology of 17th century poems. I have tried to dispel any sad forebodings in Em by insisting upon the fact of my certain return tomorrow night at least from Hounslow. There would be no point in going into lodgings so near to home. She naturally views with some dismay the prospect of separation after sixteen years of unbroken married life together. However, the die is cast; tomorrow I am off. I want to follow, humbly enough, in the footsteps of J.B.Priestley, upon a second, and rather original ENGLISH JOURNEY – with bells!

And there, once again, the Diary came to an abrupt conclusion. The entry proposed for the next day, jotted down in the form of pencilled notes as I went along, was rejected as a diary entry, and expanded to book length. And what a book! How sick I must have been – mentally. Spiritually sick. Deterioration reflected in the very style – florid, laboriously jocular or worse, facetious after a dreadful fashion; anecdotal, too, padded with reminiscences from my childhood, youth and war days; and a nauseating self-pity which cropped up almost every other page, through the thinnest, most palpable of disguises. But of one achievement I could be reasonably proud and astonished – I shoved that damned contraption twenty miles, under the hottest of August suns, and saw Harrow, and the surrounding country from the Hill, for the first time in my life, which was something achieved. And I suffered the agony of the damned – the supreme agony of the hyper-sensitive, drawing public attention to himself in the most ridiculous of poses; for very shame of themselves, the kindly disposed with any perception at all,

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avoided me; few of the others paid for the exhibition which so tickled their risible faculties. As for the book:

HOUNSLOW: Seize that mallet as if business is meant; perform the preliminaries – try the hang of the bells, nonchalantly deposit one foot upon the chassis (otherwise the whole caboodle might precipitate itself into somebody's shopping basket); as studiously negligently rest

one hand, filthy with sweat, upon the top bar, and then, as they say in Lancashire – BRAST OUT.

And 'brast out' it is – nervous (or un-nerved) energy applied behind a heavy wooden mallet, upon hollow brass tubes, producing results which the noisiest of passing buses cannot prevail against; a concatenation of crashing sounds against which the indifference of the shoppers is not entirely proof. Some are hesitant; one or two actually pause, intent apparently upon shop-windows, side-glancing; quickly, however, they recover poise, and the flow resumes its normal course – almost; for one man stops, bends forward, and pauses on his way, one penny the poorer, but immeasurably the richer by my blessing. I can hardly contain myself, my own poise suffers, and I wish I dare take out that single penny for a souvenir before it is too late. Too late – a woman emerges from a nearby shop, clasping her purse; another penny rattles into the cigar box.

The church bells behind me strike the hour, and I wax facetious. I pause in my merry din and audibly re-echo my neighbour, bell for bell. 'Tis a mad world, my masters; just see what tuppence has the power to effect – fees you into the maddest of worlds. And twopence more

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rattles in; from one single source, too !

Hounslow rewarded me with 3/4d in all before a traffic policeman ordered me out of the Borough. No street musicians allowed in the High street. And later:

up an even stiffer hill I struggle, promising myself a long rest outside three small shops which (hopefully) serve the double row of villas which line the road. It must be an eternal struggle for them, I surmise; the houses below must patronise the bustling township lower down, the bus expediting their return from the shopping district. For myself, I entertain no hopes of either side of the road, either uphill or down; but I will wield my mallet as I rest outside the shops; and – well, say 3d on the outside! I wield the mallet a goodish time, too, for I have barely traversed a few bars of my first venture, when a boy pops out of the back parlour of the (inevitable) sweet shop, where I can see the rest of the family, bless them, silhouetted around the table,—listening, or merely sympathetic? With an ostentation which no one could take amiss at his age, he drops two coppers into the box, and skips back into the bosom of his family, my thanks directed against his back.

Well, the labourer shall prove worthy of his hire, and I play on and on, dwelling lovingly upon the Holy City (which cannot fail to touch a responsive chord in the heart of the small shop-keeper, whose reward must surely come sometime). To all appearances, they constitute my entire audience – up and down, and in my rear, stretch the houses of the elect – perfectly useless to me, I know. I try

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the shop above the sweets and confectionery – a girl sits moodily there, as well she might. I am obliged to repeat my request, brandishing, somewhat inconsiderately, my symbol of office. She hesitates over the till, disconsolately, and thinks better of it. In her rear is a partition, through which she lolls half her body -'anything for this man?'

Gollancz might perhaps fall for this sort of thing too: **[Gollancz were the publishers of J.B.Priestley's book, An English Journey]**

And now, thank God, a short stretch of almost gradientless road (there is another rise ahead, round a bend – but no matter). A beautifully terraced house, commands the road, and possibly a view of the country beyond the hill. A lady, rich beyond question, is seated upon one of the terraces, her bunchy hat for a moment attracting my easily distracted attention. She has posted herself, or has been posted there, to watch the traffic, of which I perhaps am not a unit too insignificant for notice. I pull up, and cast myself down before her very eyes, and allow ample time for the inevitable footman or maid to beckon me to the side-gate. But she continues to sit there, immobile, and I proceed to forget her, and concentrate upon resting and endeavouring to fix my wandering thoughts. Shall I be fit for the St. Alban's stretch tomorrow? I have been a fool to overtax myself so, upon the first stage. My heart certainly beats painfully enough at present, but it is nothing against the throb in my feet. And a throbbing vein seems to have come into existence in my forehead. I uncurl my fingers slowly, without pain, but with positive difficulty; the quivering, nerveless things seem bloodless

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to the tips. My fore-arm twitches, but not painfully, and the scalding sweat will not keep out of my eyes. I have bristles upon my chin, and the hairs upon my fore-arm have visibly grown this day.

Yes, I have notes enough by now for the proposed book; but on the debit side, I was still far short of my 10 shillings a day minimum, whatever chance I might have with the publisher. I ascended towards Harrow in short bursts, not so much propelling the bells forward, as falling towards them; had the crazy frame collapsed at that stage of the journey, I would have collapsed, thankfully enough, upon the echoing ruins.

The road bends to the right, and not up-hill. For a change. On my left, there is a steep drop valley-wards; tilted beyond the garage below the

green which indicates arrival, I note an immense plain. This must be Harrow. The bend is decidedly tricky – a dreadful camber inclining towards the shop on my left; the Post Office; and the bookshop of Francis Spite.

But for the chance recognition of a name remembered from Brighton Road days, a fellow bookman with whom I had done occasional business by post, I might conceivably have pushed on to Newcastle. As it was, I sensibly went into his shop, begged him to provide accommodation for, or to hide, anywhere out of site, the dumb, accursed object splayed out just beside his shop door; and calculably by many shillings over my initial target the richer in pocket, and incalculably his debtor for the kindest piece of perception of the whole day, I staggered down the Hill, sore-footed, unkempt, filthy with sweat and dust, towards the nearest station, and

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home. Em was sitting beside the fire in that basement room – so cosy, so absolutely home to me – as I walked in late that evening; facing her, on the other side of the fireplace, was Joan, ready for bed in her pyjamas. “Any luck, Daddy?” But I was looking into the eyes of the girl I had first met upon that Southport platform, back in 1918. She knew!

Never again! But who was I to decide in a matter which affected the Means Test? Three months later, - to be exact, in the month of November, - despite the laudatory column and a half facing me in the Times Literary Supplement, upon Miss Weeton; The Journal of a Governess (edited by Edward Hall), I acknowledged final defeat. Not the road this time, but positively the gutter!

On this same morning, turning from the review of Miss Weeton to a printed official form, I noted that my current rate of dole from the Unemployed Assistance Board, of 34 shillings weekly, had actually been raised to 36 shillings, consequent upon the recent birthdays of my two elder children – subject, of course, to my circumstances remaining unchanged, and providing, etc. etc. Two whole shillings per week extra – over a ‘fiver’ annually! I ought to have felt happier than I did, for, after all, the review in the Times Literary Supplement was but one of a series acclaiming Miss Weeton as a notable discovery, and recognising competent editing. The book must be selling well, with ‘royalties’ piling up at 1/3d per copy sold – due, alas, not for some months yet, and subject to deduction of the £20 advance received on that account

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earlier. The bankrupt farmer gets little satisfaction out of the signs of a handsome crop to come, faced as he may be with mortgage and foreclosure. And it was clearly an utter waste of time, and stamps, to make further application for jobs in either the literary fastnesses or the book-world; and no answer as yet to my recent solicitation for the post of store-keeper in a south coast aircraft factory.

My old valise was ready packed – had been since Wednesday, and since hidden out of the way of prying young eyes; for the children were not to know anything of this venture, unless it proved a success. The pavement artist idea might come off – not a bad idea, really, either. In that valise reposed half a dozen thick straw boards, given to me by Mr Phillips, the kindly printer who had taken the bells off my hands some weeks ago, in part settlement of his long outstanding account (his young daughter was extracting great fun out of them, he informed me). A box of cheap coloured chalks and a fixative spray represented my total cash outlay upon this venture; as for the labour involved in the copying of amusing little figures from newspaper advertisements onto the boards, the Labour Exchange had nothing on me there – as yet; and anyway, the Government was, or shortly would be if I had any luck, in my debt. Two other boards, one bearing the legend THANK YOU, and the other, COPIES DONE AT ONE SHILLING EACH, indicated respectively, prospective gratitude and a bona fide of 'all my own work'.

To be perfectly honest, the pavement-artist stunt was just a blind. It was to be tried out at Uxbridge, where there was an RAF Headquarters; and on this occasion, despite my extreme repugnance to such a course, I

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was going to display my war medals – including the A.F.C. That might start something – surely there were Station libraries where fairly remunerative employment might be found for an ex-officer; or even admin work of some kind in a civilian capacity. So, making my way up the main street of Uxbridge in the direction of the Headquarters, and, having taken the precaution of obtaining permission from a constable to display my wares, provided I caused no obstruction, I placed my boards against a convenient fence, and awaited custom, my heart wildly beating and my face suffused with the blush of acutely felt shame and discomfort. And almost at once, a well-dressed young man somewhat hesitantly approached, looked at the chalk sketches, and slipped a six-penny piece into my hand (I had forgotten, after all, to arm myself with a hat for that purpose). We were both ill at ease.

"What are you doing this sort of thing for?"

"I'm out of a job – too old, you know," – and I grinned foolishly.

"Never mind, old chap; soon be a war in Spain," and off he went.

It was the only trade I did during the two miserable hours I subjected myself to that purgatory of cheeky children (there was a Picture

Palace almost opposite, pending the opening of whose doors they wiled the time away on my side of the road) or critical appraisal of my work unaccompanied by a donation. Air Force personnel were commencing to drift down the road, station-ward, bound upon week-end pass, and there were occasional curious glances cast at the medals. An officer, immaculately got up and looking so snug in his great-coat, paused across the road, and then proceeded upon his way, probably having made a mental note which he would make use of over a gin in the Mess at some convenient

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opportunity. I removed the wretched things off my old coat. A few minutes later I removed myself, precipitately jamming the labour of the past few nights back into the valise. My mind was made up – I went straight across to a tobacconist's; would he kindly oblige me with a few book-matches – I wanted to sell them on the kerb. He was a decent sort of chap, and presuming upon my not taking up my pitch opposite his own shop, he suggested fifty, at 1/9, which should represent a good profit sold individually at one halfpenny – and at one penny, well! I replaced the A.F.C. and took my stand, obligingly facing a hoarding, some distance away, and in the gutter. I had arrived – would that Darton could see me now!

The trailing procession of Air Force personnel intensified, passed me. God, had they a heart – what was the matter with the Air Force these days? A group of non-commissioned officers approached, looking directly at me, but continuing their conversation. Suddenly, almost frenziedly, I stepped out of the gutter, business intent, importunate, my box of book-matches thrust at them, arm's length, so that the nearest n.c.o. was caught by the sleeve as he passed. 'Remember the R.A.F.!' - 'Not likely to forget it, mate' – thrown back at me over his shoulder, followed by a triple guffaw.

Cash, prompt cash resulted out of Miss Weeton. Among letters I received from appreciative readers (including an Earl), was one from

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an Edinburgh doctor, Dr Cassells Brown (whose ancestor had crossed the path of the Governess) emphasizing my success in the psychological approach to my subject. His letter led to others – he in his turn turned psychologist, a few kind words of encouragement broke down my misanthropical reserve, and the truth was blurted out.

He subscribed £10, and collected another £20 from Edinburgh friends. God bless him – he is dead now. I dedicated the second volume of my work on Miss Weeton to him.

Apart from that, the old weary treadmill process continued – would it ever see an end? The periodic visits by the Means Test men were renewed; once one of them arrived in the midst of an exciting rat hunt, and took part in it. Some of them were human enough, and skated awkward questions and enquiries; one, an ex-officer, certainly deserved to lose his job, so far as I was concerned. He would even have recommended me for a similar job, but I jibbed at that monstrous suggestion – me pry into the lives of my fellow- unfortunates! I may be an ex-officer, and on my beam ends, but I would not become the tool of an unfeeling government, to that extent. Besides, I should have earned the sack within a month, upon results – or lack of same. So, thrice a week I took my place in the dole queue, my bodily comfort there depending upon the state of the weather; for if it rained, I could count upon at least half an hour of dampness before I got inside the fusty-smelling building, sealing my ears against the filthy, fatuous talk which usually prevailed, by immersing myself in Montaigne, Dr Johnson, or my latest find, Richard Jeffries, the nature-mystic. Bookmakers' touts haunted the line on pay day, and cigarettes were more in evidence – as also wives, determined to

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ensure for themselves and their children the means for yet another week's precarious existence. Nobody, except the very green new arrivals, bothered to check up on the current lists of Situations Vacant; and at the other side of the long counter, apparently nobody bothered much, either. Docility on the one side, thinly veiled hostility and contempt on the other, and frustration everywhere; for the clerks knew you were not making an honest attempt to secure employment, and they themselves were drawing little more than you. An application which I submitted for some sort of employment at the British Museum, was courteously acknowledged with the regrets of the Director himself (the lack of academic qualifications was an insuperable bar, apparently – one couldn't be trusted to place a book in its right place upon a shelf without a college degree or at least a Matric); and, no doubt with Miss Weeton in mind, he added the warning that it would be unwise to pursue the avenue of historical research as it was so poorly remunerated! But after all, wasn't even the British Museum a government institution, and hadn't they all a'down' upon the unemployed.

Hawkers Aviation Works at Kingston could find no place anywhere for an ex-pilot, though things in the aviation world were not only looking up but booming, and even Mr Hall, the builder next door, had found it to his advantage to pack up the unequal struggle, and had pushed off

to South Wales upon aerodrome construction work, so Mrs Kent now had the field to herself so far as Em's friendship was concerned. Once and only once, did the Employment (I had nearly said Unemployment) Exchange waken up, and order me to report to a certain hotel in Kingston where I would be interviewed by a representative of a vacuum-cleaner

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firm, with the prospect of being taken on their canvassing staff. I had the answer already prepared for that. The interview was short and to the point; the brisk and businesslike interviewer was satisfied with the looks of me and my record – I could start at once, on a small retaining salary and commission, the extent of which depended, of course, upon myself and to which there was apparently no limit. I would of course sign the fidelity bond, just to cover the company? Well, if the company did not mind the fact of my being in debt locally to several small shop-keepers, I had no particular objection. It was a complete triumph for the introvert over the extrovert – the bluster fell completely away, and he was speechless – I still see the look of horror upon his face as I was motioned out, a free man. A particularly mean fraud in this connection I fell for just as easily as did several other ex-officer pilots. An advertisement appeared in the leading papers, soliciting applications for employment in Airway, Ltd, and the wording of the advert was so consummately cunning that not the most practiced of us in the art of assessing the merits of such, detected the catch. An interview was specified to take place at a London Hotel upon a certain date, and so many were the poor fish who turned up (some having sunk valuable shillings in rail fare) that we were dealt with, a roomful at a time. And the first object that met our gaze when we entered, was a shining new vacuum cleaner upon a small dais, beside which stood a lecturer or demonstrator, supported by allegedly successful canvassers, prepared to prove up to the hilt his contention that we could all get past the harassed house-wife, to the extent of many pounds a week in our pockets, provided we were sufficiently pertinacious. One smartly dressed man

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rose in protest, but was ruled out of order, and promptly escorted outside, despite his rolled umbrella and black trilby. Three others, including myself, a little further down the ladder of failure also left, mute. What was the use of protesting, anyhow – we had brought it upon ourselves. Mugs! Surely we had been long enough upon the dole-line to know all the dodges of the exploiters of the unfortunate.

No, there was nothing else for it but the dole-line, punctuated by those quarterly appearances at the County Hall for two or three weeks employment, industriously preparing little round licence cards for motorists; and woe betide you if you exceeded the prescribed limit of botched licences – a single error in their preparation meant that you personally reported to the head-clerk, for his cancellation of the licence. There we sat, hardly daring to look up, the speed of our work dictated not by the head clerk but by that of the Stakhanovs of the dole-line, eager to curry favour and the possible chance of being retained for a further week's employment upon overdue licence applications. Once there was roar overhead – the R.A.F. demonstrating its might (such as it was in those days). It was more than I could resist, and I broke an unwritten law by actually going to the window and looking out of it. Anyway, our three weeks' term of employment was nearly expired.

Then there was the Christmas job; but this time, instead of being given a job inside the Post Office where I was invisible to the general public, sorting out letters and parcels, I was handed a postman's bag, initiated into the mystery (which remained such) of the postman's knot, and was detailed upon a 'round' – fortunately at the Norbiton end of

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Kingston, where I was little likely to come under the observation of Surbitonians and such. I think that all of us felt that we were being victimised – after all, the amount we were drawing upon the dole was but a pound or fifteen shillings less than the wage offered; and according to our logic, we were working, hard and unaccustomedly, for just that difference per week, to help the Post Office out of a jam. We were units in that useful, most convenient labour reserve, about which the economists made such a noise.

Meantime, inexorably our fate pursued us at Cadogan Road, to the doom which now seemed inevitable. The money collected by Dr Brown was a mere sop – most of it, anyhow, was spoken for and absorbed by the patient small shop-keepers who had obliged my wife over such a considerable period; and the rent, rates, and the hire-purchase payments upon the furniture with which we had commenced our boarding-house venture, proved equal to anything in the way of 'royalties' which came my way out of Miss Weeton, or Em's income from her boarders. Granted, the clothing allowances for Joan and John (they had both won scholarships respectively to Tiffins Boys and Girls schools) were a godsend, but they barely sufficed for the special clothes with which the children had to be provided. As for our clothes, well, Ev had the way of thrusting part-worn (by no means out-worn) and expensive clothes upon Em now and then, supplementing Em's skill at making up her own clothes; and of the cast-off suit late my father's, only the waistcoat was now left, and I appeared, Sunday and

week-day alike, in an old sports coat and a tattered pair of bags. Em's engagement ring and dress ring had

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gone long ago in the old book-shop days; and now my gold signet ring, presented by admiring sisters upon the occasion of my being commissioned during the war, was pledged for the first time ; as for the gold watch-chain and Albert, late the property of 'old Ned Hall' (I was promised the gold half-Hunter to go with it, when my father died), there were even fewer computations about these baubles, which went for their gold content. And I even approached a money lender in the City, offering as security that which to me was above price – the actual manuscript of Miss Weeton – the idea being that the money-lender would get his heavy discount out of of future 'royalties' from the published work. He smiled contemptuously – why didn't I place them with the publisher as security, and get an advance on 'royalties'?

Hating city and suburban streets, even as Gitting had hated them; hating the sight of my fellow men and women; I turned once again to the countryside, Jefferie's countryside, for he too had suffered in Surbiton in the '80's of the last century, and had steeped his tortured soul in the Surrey commons and hills, the green footpaths and dusty old tracks, and so did I. Taking a workman's ticket or a cheap return, once a week I disappeared for the day, and puzzled out my new religion – for the nature mysticism of Jefferies had struck a sympathetic chord in me, which no dogma or creed had as yet even faintly touched. My walks tended to lengthen – ten, twelve, fifteen, twenty miles – and I would return utterly fagged out, but always somehow to a good meal and a welcome from Em, who seemed to realise that only by this means was I preserving my sanity. As for herself, she had her children and her home, and, provided she was permitted to retain them, she asked nothing

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more of this world; as for ways and means, something must turn up someday; and as for running into debt, it was so easy to preach honesty, and to be honest, with a pocket well-lined – let anyone drop a pound note outside the café on Maple Road now! I was at last in full accord with Em on that point. And I sat moodily huddled up on a seat on the Queen's Promenade facing the Thames, dangerously near ending it all.

In the circumstances, it is hardly surprising that there is no personal record of that particular period; but in the meantime, someone else in my family was maintaining a diary, thereby not only to some extent supplying the deficiency of mine, but also revealing an aspect of home life which, though secondary apparently to school-life and all that that implied and carried in its train for a normal, high-spirited young rebel, carries conviction in its utter frankness and ingenuousness, dotting the i's and crossing the t's of her father's record – or lack of same. And, to the extent that life seemed good to Joan, and the menace impending over us all was but dimly appreciated by her, we had perhaps succeeded in our mission as parents.

More than once in the course of her childhood had I urged Joan to commence upon a Diary, if only to provide herself with a source of considerable amusement later on in life. For a few days towards the end of December, 1935, she had indeed tackled the exercise, recording her sizes in boots, gloves, and hats in the space provided in the pocket diary she had somehow acquired, and devoting an inch a day to the trouble she was at that time experiencing with her coccyx, which was apparently

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growing at a rate even faster than the rest of her body, and persistently refused to respond to radiant heat or any other form of treatment short of an operation followed by a spell in hospital, There was also an indication of her being but a child in the record of having received with satisfaction, among other presents on Xmas day, 1936, a toy Draper's Shop; the promise of the incipient Joan was contained in her reactions and reflections upon some parental interference in her plans -'Oh, how I hate'miseries'. Perhaps I do not understand grown ups'; and, still more resentfully, following upon further intervention (this time on the part of Mrs Kent) resulting in the setting up of a historic precedent – a clout on the side of her head from her mother, followed by the order to proceed forthwith upstairs to bed; a precedent which, she opined, would never have been established had her'dear father' been indoors at the time.

Be that as it may, at that point the first brief attempt at diary-keeping abruptly terminated, and was not resumed until the further inducement of a reward of sixpence upon completion of the first month's entries, started her upon a chap blank note-book of the Woolworth variety. And this time she not only qualified for her sixpence, but persisted, otherwise unrewarded, with occasional breaks supplied by connecting links later, into womanhood, marriage, and beyond, the series of pocket-books in due course blossoming out into an ornately tooled, leather backed quarto, originally designed as a Baby Book record, but converted to this purpose by her father. And so little value did she

subsequently place upon her diaries- at any rate, upon the sequence of

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School-girl diaries, that upon my discovering them some years later. Thrust away among the lumber of the loft below the slates, she told me that I was welcome to keep them on her behalf – even to read them if I felt so inclined – forewarning me, however, that she had acted upon my advice, and that her diaries were 'honest' to the point of being devastatingly rude in places, and that I might find myself, here and there, coming under the lash of her bubbling sarcasm and carping criticism. That did not deter me (though I came in for a salutary jolt or two in the course of my perusal of them) and, with her permission, I have made use of such portions as will not only serve to amplify and doubtless correct my own one-sided approach to the domesticities and problems of Cadogan Road, but will illustrate a development and exhibit characteristics (not entirely unsuspected by her parents, and perhaps predictable at the time) which were hardly likely to be confided by the writer to any other repository of her secrets than a Woolworth's diary

There may have been lodgers in her home; the fathers of her schoolgirl pals may all – or mostly, for the times were out of joint – have been in respectable and remunerative jobs (it is significant that her diaries reveal no reactions or commit her to any comment upon this point, though we may be sure that the situation in her own home rankled to some extent); she may have arrived at Tiffins Girls School by way, the only way, of a Scholarship, with a clothes grant attached; but there is little indication of either envy of others or of resentment at her own particular lot – a lot apparently sufficiently happy and abundantly varied, and one which indeed, as gradually revealed in the exuberance

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of the daily entries, might lead the uninformed or unwary into supposing that the young writer was heartless and insensitive to a degree, against such a background as Cadogan Road presented – a conclusion as lacking in perception and as far from the truth, as was that heated but fortunately momentary endorsement by her father of the acrimonious report (in some part perhaps justified) by one of the less discerning of her teachers. The ideal bond which had always united father and daughter was now being subject to a very real test; new orientations were appearing in the young girl's life, and the first stirrings of sex were involving her in covert flirtations and the gush of

a normal fourteen year old school-girl's diary. How could Mummy or Daddy be expected to understand?

Could it be that I was so engrossed and absorbed in my own tangled affairs, that I had temporarily lost sight of the fact that my daughter was emerging from the chrysalis; or did I subconsciously envisage her, at some not too distant date, entering at that door labelled 'Women only', but one removed from that which I used tri-weekly in the little shabby side-street down in Kingston – and upon the same bootless errand as myself? Being unemployed was hell, sheer hell; would the Government ever understand, ever do anything for us? And was marriage the only safe career for a girl, or would even that prove a snare in the long run for her? Economics were of more real import than love, and Joan really ought to make more use of her opportunities to secure a career.

And there would be a commotion outside at the garden gate – the kids back from school, Joan's voice rising above the others – mostly male. Good luck to her – one is only young once, as that workman had said to her as he passed a larking crowd of them one day. Thank God somebody

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could laugh these days about the house. 'Joan, come and help me with Miss Johnson's lunch tray; I'm weary of climbing these stairs', – from the direction of the draughty, stone-flagged kitchen.

Tuesday Jan. 12th. 1937,

First day of term. Forged Health Certificate. Shoe-bag dropped in mud. Dunno who I'm sitting next to – Joan v. Molly? Told Miss Mercer that doll wasn't made yet. 11 o'clock: no order-reports yet. Am in play by O.Stokes. Am Kenneth Markham – a sort of villain and hero combination. Joan's got it – and some truffles. Havn't seen Jack or Don, thank God. Violin lesson tomorrow, 1.25 . Ware within 10 mile radius. No needlework . Forgot it (oh Yea!) According to 'Beaky' I sit next to John Guy. Tired of school.

Thursday: Jan 14th.

Wanted to stay away from school, Didn't ackle. Got off gym anyway. New resolution- not to have any O.R's. Great joke! None yet. Worked in Algebra with help of chewing gum (J's). Got rid of it in waste-paper basket. Had to dash to school. Did it in 4 mins (1 mile) on my bicyclette. Doris (she's clever) says that's 15 m.p.h. Excelsior! Reading 'Vanity Fair'

Friday Jan.15th

. Mem: Bring money for violin on Monday. Observation: (1) Audrey's hair looks waved. (2) Miss-----'s had a bath and a hair wash (change) . Miss Wallis falsely accusin' as usual. Said J was playin' about – an' she was only brushing hair (somewhat boisterously) off my back. It only means losing a Latin point. Not that that

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matters much. An' what's more – she talked about the 'wild tribes of Yorkshire'. I'm Yorkshire born. My family pride bridled up in me & I went purple an' said, 'Thank you'. She said, 'What's the matter with you, Joan?' I replied that 'It was like this' – She cut in & said she didn't want to know – and she'd just asked me! And I'd resolved not to fall out with her this term! Oh, dear!

Jan 17th.

In afternoon I went to Hampton Court avec Audrey. Went in Maze – great fun. Went round the Palace, was nearly shut in. Swiz – the keepers followed us right round the place, shutting the shutters behind us with deafening bangs. We raced them through the rooms, making them echo, & along the galleries, to the Great Hall, which we found shut! At the entrance hall there were some boys – the sort that ought not to be let in such a place; and one, fair-haired & with his hands in his pockets, when I glanced at him, winked with great deliberation. Had a Milky Delight. 2d. Treated Audrey to one. Bit sticky.

Jan.18th. Monday:

Fifth day of Term. Have paid Miss Berry the 10/6 for my violin lessons. Mem: Got to go & get receipt at 4 o'clock. Got 1 point in Latin. Rude remarks been passed on my 'parkin', the stuff that Mother made yesterday. I'll eat it anyway. Have acquired a great dislike for all boys now. I wish it was a mixed school, then I'd know their ways more; or I should love to be a boy – O heavens! I wish I was. I can climb trees & swim & can fight passably well & do most things boys can do. I suppose that's why most boys don't like me. I'd like to be close friends with Jack again. He's John's

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friend really, but that mean's mine, too. John's such a sport of a brother.

Jan.20th. Wednesday

Violin torture in' this afternoon, 1.25. Made to wear a green cardigan that I don't like. Violin lesson a success.

Jan. 21st. Thursday

Gym. Borrowed a hair ribbon off Audrey. Hair still a 'Fuzzy Nob' (as Mater calls it). Am wearing duck-egg green ribbed jumper to-day (opposition from Mother) with green log- buttons. Saw lobster face to-day. He yawned. **Horrid** anticipations for Sat., when I have to have extracted 1 double back second tooth! It's double Maths & I haven't been told off yet (touch wood) for talking.'Oh, to be in England now the rainy season's there'. It's catting & dogging – same as it's done 3 days running. B. for Latin translation!!!!!! Grades:- A. A.-.B.

Jan. 22nd. Friday

Saw G.S boy. this morning. He waved, & I did too!

Jan. 23rd. Saturday

Rain all day. Went to Dentist's. Was attended to quickly. He put the neocaine in (I didn't have the freezing stuff called Chochaine) with a needle through my gum – that didn't hurt me, because I've been in hospital with an operation but when it came to the pulling out (five minutes after) he hurt! (to put it gently). The nurse pressed my head & with no preliminaries he pulled & pulled. I sweated & sweated & tried to imagine myself lying on the grass with blissful happiness in some forsaken nook. At last it came out with a noise like a factory started. Blood followed, in a beautiful stream, at which the nurse put the taps on, as it were, & threw me into the next room to wash my mouth out. I went,

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the sweat running off me & looking rather paler than when I came in, for I'm not a nervous sort. I'll never be able to smile at my Grammar boy, the gap is so large, yet it's at the back. Came home whistling. Found I could do it beautifully now. Eat my dinner just the same.

Jan 24th Sunday

Same old sort of Sunday. Rain again all day. Went down to promenade with family to see the river –all swollen & nearly over the prom. Dad said I had a nice voice!! (for singing not shouting) but it wasn't strong enough (!) Violin practice. Finished 'A Dream' by Wells. Jolly good.

Jan 25th Monday

In Scripture, that worthy lesson, 'Fitz' said something about some priests, and who would be angry at the absence of sacrifices? Joan said 'The Undertakers'. Have got a new beret – bit small. Put 1/2d in Treasury.

Jan 26th Tuesday

Mater gone to hospital to day to have her foot done.

Jan 28th Thursday

New algebra sums. Worse than ever, Observations :

- (1). Edna had horrid painted nails, she was in a play last night.
- (2). Miss Swift's come into money; She's got a new frock & jersey on.
- (3). I answered a question in Geography!! Hurrah! Walked to school. Too windy to ride. Saw the Elmhursters. That big pimply-faced, fair-haired one is in the 'gang' Help!

Jan 29th Friday

SNOW! If only it would snow! Then there'd be a good fight. The kids in the north are lucky. They can wallow in it. I went crazy when I saw a solitary flake. Got the stomach ache from eating too many crumpets at yesterday teatime. A for Scripture (Fluke?). Its snowing. The playground is all covered, and its been

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snowing thin snow for ½ an hour. It's almost a 'raging blizzard'.

Jan. 31st. Sunday

Cleaned my bike!!! Sparrow (Audrey) went for a walk with me all the way round Richmond Park. About 10 miles. We thought we were locked in because it was dark walking through the woods from Richmond to Kingston. It was not frightening, as most people think it is, or imagine it to be, but calm & beautiful. All the birds were going home noiselessly, sometimes a little thing calling to another to not go so fast. I was glad, immeasurably glad, to be alive. Audrey came to tea. We played cards. She went at 8.30. I talked to Daddy, or at least he talked. I like hearing him.

Feb. 2nd. Tuesday

They were at the corner again this morning. Miss Watson (Head) asked them to 'move on'. They didn't. As I came by, 'Lucifer' said, 'Ho! Let me pass hif you please'. I imitated his face with passable results, at which he grinned. The E's are getting a real menace. Noisiness in Needlework. Miss Plint asked me what I wished to make, & I

wondered whether I could make a coat for my dog. Joan was sobbing away at my side – goodness knows what for!

Feb. 3rd. Wednesday

We sang the Lord's Prayer! We'll be having Mass next. Violin lesson after school, worst luck. I don't want to practice after school. Got an order-report for not having my house-shoes on. All the gang are playing net-ball, except me, who am going to violin lesson. Poor me! Going home, they turned up, and while we were argueing by the gate, I heard Tatty (my younger brother) open the back door stealthily. The Cadet's curiosity fired the Sergeant Major's (Ma) & I hissed at D.W., 'Scram', at which he calmly opened the gate for me & bunked. The Cadet yelled 'Don't

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tell me you weren't flirting', just to confirm the S.M.'s beliefs. (Little spoil-sport!)

Feb. 4th. Thursday

Bad tempers. The Family, S.M., Flight-Lieutenant, & Cadets were screaming, John hurling schoolboy Cockney insults at people, Tatty (The Cadet) yelling at me, & me snarling at the world in general in a broad Yorkshire lingo. Molly's hair is fuzzy. Audrey's is wavy. It isn't fair. People who have straight hair, should leave it as it is. It cheats other people who have natural hair, so that they are included in the waving lot. Daisy & Joyce got nabbed for kicking puddles. I didn't, although it was me who was doing it. I walked in like a saint. It was only prefects anyway.

Feb. 5th. Friday

Raining terribly. Last night a stone was thrown right through the middle window, cracking the glass with a big hole. Could it be them? If it is – they had better be dead than meet me again. I'll get it out of them. I went to the library after school with the gang. I took out the Plattner Story & Others, by Wells. It's the only collection of short stories that I haven't read of Wells now. I'm a Wells lover.

Feb. 6th. Saturday: Daddy took me & David to see 'Show Boat' at the Regal Cinema. Too good to be true. It is one of the really marvellous few picture I have seen. Paul Robeson sung 'Ol' Man River' very finely. It touched everybody. His face is very good-humoured, with rather sad eyes, which Daddy says have ages of repression in them. He's quite true – and to think that in America that man is not

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allowed to travel in the same carriage as the whites!

Feb. 7th. Sunday

Cleaned my bike again! Finished Vanity Fair. I like it. It's a milestone in my literary reading, too. Finished Plattner Story & Others. The Cone appealed to me most, probably because it was horrible. I am going to read Tess of the D'Urbervilles, by Thomas Hardy next. Crumpets for tea. Washed and combed my hair.

Feb. 9th. Tuesday

Did a huge diagram in science. I like Miss Adlington more now. Olwyn Pogmore, my youthful 3c enemy, has got a craze on me now! I am flattered. She gave me her Autograph Album to do something in! Joan was looking at it in class & Miss Unwin got it! And she says she's going to keep it till the end of the term! Joan says she'll try & get it back if she can. She'd better! Once Miss Unwin confiscated a tiny pet 'Teddy' of mine, and I bought a 1/2d doll & calmly asked her to swap them, as I was fond of the Teddy. She was astounded at the audacity of it, and gave me both back! I was medically examined this afternoon. I like the doctor (lady). Miss Mercer caught my mother & told her a pack of lies about me. I admit last term I was a bit of a scape-grace, but not underhand and mean, as some are, but this term I promised Daddy I'd honestly try to behave, & I have. Miss Mercer told mother that all, all the teachers complained about me. It came as rather a blow. Went to Lecture with Audrey at library. Came home 8.30 p.m. Was at once set upon & told I was mean, deceitful, a ring-leader of a mischievous set, wasting my time, and altogether disappointing. Shakespeare's Brutus has taught me something – to be a stoic. I didn't contradict anything they said, although I could have got half the form to vouch

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that I'd been decent this term, and could show all my books with pride, to show that I have worked. Still, Miss Mercer's entitled to her opinions & me mine. I weigh 7st. 13 lbs. My height is 5ft 4 3/4ins. I'm well built. Straight back. Freckles a sign of health. Tomorrow a year ago I had the operation on my back, and for 3 weeks I was in hospital – pain! yes, but I did not cry once; but now, with a mental pain, I go up to my bedroom & relieve my pent up feelings. Surely these accusations of Daddy's are wrong? I do not make myself out to be a martyr, but I am insusceptible to physical pain, having had an experience never to be forgot in hospital. Therefore I'm not absolutely without good points. Life's just a joke – you laugh until you cry.

Feb. 10th Wednesday

Was dared to blow up a bag in class, which I declined, with an effort. Big tea. Big supper. We tried to write a story. Listened to part of a Symphony Concert (Thomas Beecham)

Feb. 11th Thursday

My Latin was returned (+) with great red lines through it. There was no need to cross out all the words, when the majority of the words are right. That's a habit of Miss Wallis that I abhor. All my paper scrawled over with red pencil. Walked round every lamp post going home. Don knocked us off our bike . Pig!

Feb. 12th. Audrey is going to dare Jack to send a valentine to Molly. Oh dear! what if he does? I'm going to send one to Jack. I've given Daisy 2d for one. I get sixpence today for keeping up my diary for 4 weeks.

Feb. 13th S

Stayed in in the morning& played marbles with Tatty. Went out to tea with Joan Guy. We went a walk in the afternoon

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along the By-pass & over Hinchley Wood crossing, where there are traffic lights and a pedestrian crossing. I calmly pressed the button and held up the whole of the road-hogs of the By-pass for three precious minutes. Dear dear! Nice tea. Chocolate cream after. Cards. Imitated the foolish 'coiffeurs' women wear today. Roars of laughter.

Feb. 14th. Sunday

Went to tea with Murial. Went for a walk in the afternoon along the by-pass with her dog, Dinah. Everywhere factories and cheap houses blight the atmosphere. Horrid. Muriel had a nice maroon silk dress on.

Feb. 15^h Monday

No school, As a treat, Mummy took me up to London with her in Mr Barrats's car to have her poor done. We came out of the Authopedic hospital at 11, a.m. Went in at 10a.m. Bought an 'Everybody's to read in the hospital. Mummy's foot is bad and her other foot has started. She's so young, too – 38 . It's work, I suppose. Went after to the London Museum. Saw all the Coronation stands being put up on the way . I wish we'd had more time. It is a beautiful place (once a house). I'm very interested in the dress. Mr Barratt thinks that History is silly. He's mad!

Feb. 16th. Tuesday: Joan dashed up this afternoon, yelling 'Coo! Derek Woods has asked Joan Woolgar to go to the Pictures with him!' Once he threatened to bash me, at which I dared him to, but not before he rang up for the ambulance to carry him home after the fight. I suppose that's why boys don't like me. This dinner time I was galloping along the passage to the tune of William Tell, when I collided into Daddy, rounding the corner with a bowl of rubarb in his

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arms (there being no traffic lights in our house) & the rubarb did a complete turn in mid-air, & had it not been for my father's skilful handling of the same, I wouldn't have been here this afternoon. Clever Papa !

I'm a fool. I came in the garden, having had a ride on J's bike & found him with my Diary. I asked him to give it to me, but he kept it (for fun, I suppose) from me. Suddenly, without any warning, I went white & snapped, 'Don't then,' & slammed the door, the Diary following me. I heard poor Jack saying ruefully, 'That's done it – what a temper!' I do wish I hadn't such a horrid sudden temper. It is as unpleasant to me as any one else. It goes in a minute, & I'm sorry. Too late! Oh, I am sorry. Violin practice. Daddy showed me how to recite 'Friends, Romans –' I am Julius Caesar in 'Julius Caesar'.

Feb. 17th. Wednesday

Went to Robert Mayer Concert. Lot of Elementary boys behind us. Marvellous concert. Solomon played the piano so well in Lizst's Hungarian Fantasia, that we clapped him until he gave us a little encore. It's the first time he's ever given one, I believe. He's a little Jew – but can he play! The viola player that I liked last time was there – the one with the ginger beard & glasses who sits with his legs crossed even at the most energetic parts of the orchestra. Tiffin Boys didn't go. On the whole, certainly everybody was much better behaved than last time, when they came. Mucked about at the bridge again. I held on to the bars of it with my feet & legs & leaned back over the river, to Audrey's consternation, Joyce's collapse, & Joan's admiration. All the work-

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men stopped & watched.

Feb. 18th. Thursday

I forgot to put down yesterday a final complete snub of D.W. & Roey. We met them coming home from the Robert Mayer concert, & they were smoking a cigar! I sniffed & said, 'Huh, cigar!' & they took the hint & came across, & addressed Joyce & me, with no result except silence. Joyce was deeply interested in her front mudguard, Audrey was stalking along as if she'd lost sixpence, & I hid my smiles behind a programme. Very uncomfortable, they made an exit. I practised my violin tonight & last night. Daddy & I had a talk dealing with Christ, Socrates, Plato & Mohammed. I'm a little puzzled. Daddy says that Socrates & Plato were educated, whereas Christ was merely inspired. Then I quoted about the 'treasures in heaven' (Christ's), & 'Give me beauty in the inward soul' (Socrates), which were the same in meaning. Daddy says that truth occurs over & over again – the real truth. I believe, he believes too, that Christ found the truth, the same as Socrates did, but I think Daddy has a higher opinion of Socrates than Christ, whereas I, just now, am wondering – just wondering. When I lie in bed & see the dawn, I wonder then. When I'm coming home from a school-day & see the sky a maze of golden pillars & light, I wonder then. Tonight I feel so mean & unhappy. I don't know why, everything has gone wrong. Tatty won't even answer me when I say good night. I suppose its me

Feb 19th, Friday: Joan has brought a lovely picture of Charles Laughton as Rembrandt. It's lovelyd. He's unshaven & very untidy – but what a face & eyes. When I came home I went to the library with Joyce &

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got out American Beauty by Edna Furber.

Feb 20th, Saturday

Went to J's in the morning & practised. Got on well. In the afternoon we we went for our walk (Sparrow' & mine). As we sat on a gate at the top of the Hook field, Joan pointed & said, 'There's a hare in the middle of the next field', and sure enough, there it was below us, listening. I happened to have been singing William Tell at the time, & the hare started running to the tune (believe it or not); as I got faster, so he went faster. At the end of the tune, when there's a long drawl on the cornets & trumpets, the hare leapt through the hedge with a large bound & we lost sight of him. We both nearly burst our boilers when he'd gone. Then still laughing & vowing we'd call him William, we walked down a slope & passed the place where William had disappeared, & then we heard dogs barking. We both stopped & and turned a pasty colour & said in one breath - 'hounds!' Then over the hill came a brute (man) running with a lot of beagles behind him . We cried in dismay 'they're after William' & nearly burst out crying. I think I would have done, if I wasn't so angry. It aroused no sporting spirit in us. We hoped the man who lead the hounds would drown, burn, or die

horribly, worried to death by hounds. We hoped and prayed the hare would come our way, so that we could protect it. No such luck! The chase went far away & then the dogs stopped barking. I suppose they caught poor William. 'Civilization'. What a mockery! 'Barbarism' would be nearer the mark. A lot of dogs led by a fat-headed brute of a brainless man, after one poor little hare. I hate fox-hunting, horse racing, & hare & hounds.

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Feb. 21st, Sunday

Day gone nasty now. Noon. I was craving for a picture of Beethoven a few days ago & funnily enough one has turned up, on the back of the television programmes. Strange! It's just the one I wanted – Beethoven, sitting at a table strewn with music, & looking, at first appearance, very cross. Studying it you find the genius in his face, though. Have written to my French correspondent. Quite a long letter. All wrong, I expect. There's a lovely programme of Wagner on. Siegfried. Reminds me of something funny that Molly said innocently in Music the other day. She said, 'Is Siegfried anything to do with the film 'The Great Ziegfeld?' Fool! All the almond is out beautifully & the daffodils are coming. The croci are in full bloom.

Feb. 22nd. Monday

Half term. It was my brother's birthday today. He died at about 6 months, before I was born. He'd have been 16. 16! I wish he'd lived.

Feb. 23rd. Tuesday

Miss Mercer's got a nice striped dress on. Suits her. Molly wants me to lend her my bike after school – but I don't think I will – Pa wouldn't like it. I would

Feb. 24th. Wednesday

Have finished my essay. I got up at 6 a.m. to complete it. It isn't too bad for me. Miss Hewson gave us a funny example in grammar: 'I was stung by a bee sitting on the fence!' Joan has written an elegy on a hare. The last lines are: 'Over thy grave now do we weep, While thy cold body below doth sleep'. This is not quite true, as we don't know where his grave is. Violin lesson, 1.45 p.m. Awful. I must practice more. When I came down, waved my left arm wearily over the class, not to swank or make them laugh, &

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sure enough, I got an order-report !

Feb. 25th. Thursday

At dinner-time I dropped a biscuit in the water-jug (on purpose) & Daddy made as if to hit me. Strange to relate, it did not hurt me, but a few minutes after, Dad said, 'I kick the dog, & I hurt my toe, & I hit my wooden-headed kids, & knock my fingers up'! Poor Papa!

Feb. 26th. Friday

Joan makes me laugh in scripture –if she can't think of anything to write, she blots very hard to make it look alright. She never blots in other lessons! Saw D.W. playing marbles, but he didn't see me. I'm sorry in a way, because I would have liked to ask him about Chessington Zoo. Playing marbles! Lot of housework. Did two essays on 'Getting Up', & about myself, & then a man out of work.

Feb. 27th. Saturday

In the afternoon, S. came round & hawked me out into the rain for a walk to Hampton Court. We buffeted our way up the Avenue against wind & rain, seeing no one, & came to the Palace. The Keeper let us in for 3d instead of 6d, & we spent the afternoon in the galleries & rooms. We were talking to one Keeper, who told us one picture in there was insured at £100,000! He said that he'd seen the ghost of Cathrine, that is supposed to walk from the Great Hall along a gallery at 11 o'clock, when he was a night- watchman. I don't think he was kidding me. Poor Cathrine Howard! What a sad round for her of a night along that gloomy, echoing gallery, probably pursued by the fat figure of Henry VIII. The next Keeper that we met said that he didn't believe it. As we walked along the said gallery, it certainly did feel queer, because a gale

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was rattling the windows, the boards creaked under our soft steps, & in the waning afternoon light the gallery looked eerie. We took a bus to Kingston Bridge, & went home along the Prom. Where the water had risen at least 18 inches! We kicked puddles at each other, &, completely wet & happy, we returned home to a big tea. Daddy says that he's glad I'm acquiring a taste for music. He says it's a good sign.

Feb. 28th. Sunday

Was up by 7.40. On Sunday! I had a glorious dream last night. I don't know what it was about, though. I think it was about Derek Allen.

Finished Tess of the D'Urbervilles. Its good. Stuck in my pictures in my music album.

March 1st. Monday

Snow! I'm bucked. Got an order-report! Oh dear, when will I be able to keep out of trouble. Miss Hewson used my pencil. I treasure it. The E's are getting a nuisance again. We must fight them again. I'm going to speak against the motion in the League of Nations debate! Poor little me!

March 3rd. Wednesday

John was in sore straits this morning. He had forgotten his homework, & said that he'd get the cane. He eventually got Mud (Mother) to write a note for him. He's got to have the cane one day! The funk. Still, I suppose he's not so hardened as his experienced sister!

March 7th. Sunday

Snow – about an inch! Usual Sunday high tempers all round. Dad hit me (just for his little bit of fun) & I hit him back, harder (just for my little bit of fun). Then we both sulked. Then high words ensued. I was sent out to cut the bread & did the same silly trick as I've practised before. I gave myself two voluntary

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cuts with the sharp knife, just to see them bleed for a bit. It may seem ridiculous in the eyes of other people, but it's sensible, really. The sight of blood puts me in an awfully good mood. I came in the dining-room again, quite transformed. I remember when Don was teasing me once, & Jack, to my dismay backed him up. I, fuming, went straight in, took up the bread knife, & tears of anger & disappointment running down my nose, I cut myself hard. The blood, to my delight, spurted upwards. I thought I'd cut an artery. The boys couldn't make it out at all. I'm just subject to my emotions, that's all. If I wants to wail, I go apart & wail, & if I wants to be stubborn & stoic, I am. Heard a bit of beautiful choral piece of Mendelson's; then I had to go to bed. I listened on the stairs for a bit

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March 9th Tuesday

Went to tea with Joyce. Had some fun. Late home, got in a row. Revelations! Dad's got a horrid temper. He wouldn't kiss me goodnight, but about 2hours later, he crept in, & I pretended to be asleep. He was disappointed, but it served him right. Mother came to bed, but she'd apparently forgiven me, because she kissed me, thinking I was asleep. That put me at my ease, & I went to sleep.

March 10th. Wednesday

Had to hurry home, because Mother had gone to hospital again. When we came to school, a strange sight met our eyes in the direction of the sheds. I soon saw that it was a crowd of Juniors. I pretended not to have noticed & was talking snappishly. I then saw that two Tech. boys, Eric & Croke (!) were

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talking to the filthy little juniors, who were offering them sweets. The shouts of the boys were drowned by the squeaking of the Juniors. Got to stay in for messing about in Needlework. Have been measured for a new suit.

March 11th. Thursday

In recess we played in water. Had some fun. A weedy little Inspector came in Grammar. Didn't pick on me. Have got the craze for horse-riding, meaning putting string on my bike's handlebars, & steering by them. We actually won in the debate, 40 – 30 votes. My maiden speech wasn't ever so good.

March 12th. Friday

When I dashed in, late as usual, to get my Geog. task, Miss Owen congratulated me on my speech last night. I was flabbergasted, & could only say, 'Do you really, Miss Owen – thank you Miss Owen'. Queer! Went mad in between lessons. Broke every-bodie's rulers in the 3 back rows.

March 13th. Saturday

The great day! Went up in a crowded 'fast'. Miss Mercer brought her sister. My suspender broke on the way to Westminster. Curse! The concert was beyond words. Dr Malcolm Sargent conducted it & explained the pieces. I love him. 'Don Juan' by R. Straus was marvellous. The clarinet player was an awfully nice player -& man. The nice young cellist was there, & I found myself saying 'If music be the food of love- play on'. Silly fool! He is awfully nice, though, with a haughty demeanour, black hair & beautiful hands. The ginger – bearded viola player was there, too, with his bib! Afterwards we walked down Whitehall & had lunch in a Lyons. Then we went to

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the National Gallery. I like the Rembrandts best. Joyce was a mope.

March 14th. Saturday

Dad took John & Tat to the Science Museum & the Natural History Museum. Lucky beggars! Did my music album.

March 16th. Tuesday

Got an O.R. from Miss U. for reading a history book in Geom. If she only knew how I tried to like Maths, & how I really hate it, & how I love history, she'd sympathise.

March 17th. Wednesday

New gaberdine coat. New Gloves. Miss berry played the whole of the Sonata Pathetique by Beethoven. She's marvellous. Violin at 4.0 p.m. Last lesson this term. (Hurrah!) Have decided to take Latin next year. I want to pass my General Schools & get a scholarship for a college. I want to be in the historical, economical line. High ambitions! I'll have to work dam hard to catch up with my Maths.

March 18th. Thursday

We were all summoned into the Hall by the Head this afternoon, who looked very grave. She asked us (I declare she's a candidate for the yellow cab) which place should be kept cleanest? Somebody suggested a kitchen, but Miss W. said it was more serious than that. Suddenly somebody coughed & everybody comprehended, but were too delicate to suggest it. Then we were told to keep the 'water closets' clean, & that somebody had been standing on the seats.

March 19th. Friday: Miss mercer kindly informed J. & I that our reports were better. We jumped for joy. Stayed to see the Oxford v. Cambridge netball match, seniors. We cheered, yelled, shouting, stamped, & put the evil eye on the Cambridges, but Cambridge won! New green suit – nice.

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March 23rd. Tuesday

Packed our books this afternoon. Lost my set-square. Wonder what my report will be like. Thank goodness I shall have a little rest from suspicious back-toothed teachers & nagging prefects. Went for a walk in the early evening with S. We collected a bunch of catkins & 3 or 4 sticks of pussy palm, the last ones. The sky & sunset was lovely. A grey majestic firmament above, & many miles to the west, a pink streak turning orange.'All ours', I whispered to Sparrow.

March 24th. Wednesday

Last day of Term. Whoopee! Last morning. Got told off, to celebrate it. Cheeked the prefects by keeping on riding round the playground on Joyce's bike, evading their grasps. Joyce and I are staying on at school until we are 18, all being well, & we are the only ones taking Latin in IVA. There was a great roar of laughter when the form knew – they don't know me, however. I'm going to give up leading scrapes & get to college, by hook or by crook.

And at this point, at end of term, and upon a good resolution (however hopeless of realisation, for more reasons than the merely economic) we can dismiss the scholastic in Joan, and develop what there is of the domestic theme in the diaries for the next few specimen weeks. And the very next entry saw her plunged up to the hilt in the unaccustomed, and by no means congenial post, of deputy for her mother, who now proceeded North for a weeks stay with her parents in Wigan.

March 25th. Thursday

Dunno what I shall do now, keeping house! Me! Phew! Sausages and hot cross buns for dinner.

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And with frequent releases from household chores, in the way of cycle rides, walks, tree-climbing and such, mostly in the company of males of her own choice or those of her brothers, the weeks between terms passed fairly satisfactorily by. Shopping, for instance, had its thrills. 'The man at the greengrocer's is funny. He's got black curly hair & a thin black moustache. He's married. He always does something daft – gives the wrong change or goods, propels me out of the shop, leading me by the hand – & such actions'. The first Sunday dinner was a success, barring the Yorkshire pudding, which she did on top of the stove instead of inside, with net results – according to her own statement – uneatable. Still, there was always the game of make-believe to be played, even if the door leading into the living room in the basement, with its frosted, cracked pane, did not respond to being metamorphosed into the portals of a stately Greek temple, or even Alice's 'little door'. And Daddy & I had another gas. He has taught me a little philosophy, to fall back on when I'm in need of comfort'. We both stood in need of it. And whilst at the fair at Hampton Court on Easter Monday, D.K. (with his father) gave her a sly smile. 'Dad saw it, but only teased me'. After which, The Biggest Rat in the World, proved the complete flop and swindle it was. By Easter Tuesday she rebelled at house-work, went to the old haunt, Esher Common, with

Sparrow.'dammed the stream, sat in it, stood in it, and came home with a halo round my tousaled mop'. Her mother's arrival back was timely.

The rest of the holiday passed pleasantly enough, in the usual company and environment, including an attempt-resisted- on the part

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of one of her numerous beaux, to hold her hand at the Pictures. 'Just to think that I've known him over a year now. We're both a whole year older than when we calf-loved behind his house'. And, shape of things to come – 'The poor chap is studying to pass his General Schools and then go into the Air Force'.

It was all great fun, except when Daddy was in one of his 'off' moods, so frequent these days. 'Bunk's' (or alternatively, 'Tatty's) birthday was noted, as also the fact that John and she presented him with yet another of his favourite Dr Doolittle books. He's only 9, & he's just been put into the top form of his Elementary School. He's the youngest in the form. Very clever! And 'Mud' had just knitted her a beautiful cosy jumper, 'Mud', forever knitting something for somebody. Spring-cleaning had its lighter side, too, to compensate for being confined indoors whilst the boys had their liberty and could go where they liked, without either let or hindrance. 'Some holiday! Cool!' Still, the boys – all boys,- were always lucky – and favoured; that picture in the Radio Times, for instance. 'Tatty had the parents on his side, so he got it. Ah well – ' And if one accidentally fell up to one's waist in the Long water, fooling about with a floating log, there was sure to be a shindy on arrival home. Still, it was well worth it. (And perhaps she could creep indoors without it being noticed.) And what a laugh when Daddy sat in his bucket of distemper, and I put my foot in mine! And the best happiness of those snug evenings, sitting by the fireside, after a visit to the Public Library – with Daddy. 'Finished Father & Son – Edmund Gosse – very good. But I can't read O.Henry. Daddy said he

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admired me for admiring the stormy sky. I love the sky. I think it is the most beautiful of all'.

And so the holiday ended:

April 17th. Monday: Last Happy (!) Day. Went to Esher Common in the morning with Sparrow. Good. The stream's ever so high. We slipped the boys.

Took the dog. Jumped the stream – ever so wide-& didn't get wet over our ankles. Got swamped at a water fountain, coming home. Left

it running. Audrey & the boys came in the afternoon. Played about. In the end, Daddy mended my puncture. Got my school things ready.

Daddy mended my puncture!! Daddy sat in a bucket of distemper. Daddy took me to the Library. Daddy had heaps of time upon his hands; He was entering upon his third year of unemployment – almost total unemployment. Poor Daddy!

For some months, since about February of this year, 1937, I had been tantalised, tortured, by the prospect of a job – and such a job – not only in the book-world, but at £6 a week, too! It all started with Mrs Weeton. My success as an editor had impressed at least one person, Mr Headicar, late librarian of the London School of Economics, whose son was running Books Unlimited up on Surbiton Hill; their new venture had followed closely upon mine, and would come to a like termination. He frequently chatted with me when he put in a few hours

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at the shop in the absence of his son, and had recommended me, so he said, for a job upon a proposed Bibliography of Economics, period 1775-???, which the British Academy was contemplating producing. He too was to have a part in it; but the months dragged on and on, and I practically abandoned hope. £6 a week

for such as me. Ridiculous! And the prospect of not less than a year's work among books – old books, too, and at three principal London libraries!

But it did come off, in August of that year; and in Cadogan Road, paradoxically enough, we found ourselves faced with the biggest financial crisis ever, as a direct result of our good fortune; for my pay was to be retrospective, quarterly in arrears! Dare I throw away 35 shillings weekly? Could we survive that crucial three months which would intervene between the final U.A.B payment, and the first substantial cheque I had handled in years? My wife put her cards on the shop-keeper's counters – her very good friends; in debt as she already was, but with such sound proofs of payment assured ahead, and in full of [???] outstanding demands, how could they refuse? And those three lovely children of hers! And so, at last we were living almost entirely upon 'tick'!

I reported for my first spate of work upon the Bibliography, in August, being detailed by Mr Headicar to comb the libraries at South Kensington in the first instance. I reported, in my new '50 shilling Tailor' suit, and made myself known to the superior beings who were established there. I was an interloper, and a somewhat

unprepossessing one at that. A longish course of worry had left its mark, visibly

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but perhaps they ascribed other reasons for the diffidence, the anxiety amounting almost to servility, the attempts to ingratiate myself with them which were all too easily repelled. I was there under false pretences, having crept into their sacrosanct midst on the strength of one book which I had edited, the subject of which had carried me to some temporary evidence in the literary world. What did I know about economic history – or even of economics? Certainly I was not acquainted with the writings, say, of the Hammonds, or of Cols; but what did I know of Palgrave, Hayek, or even of Prof. Henry Higgs, who, now living retired down at Brighton, was apparently the controlling spirit behind this venture? Even the Goldsmith's Library, which I was to exploit, was a new one upon me; Shouldn't it be Goldsmiths without the apostrophe. And had there been at some time a Mr – perhaps a Prof. Goldsmith? As for Professor Foxwell, deceased, whose name was apparently to be for ever and inextricably linked with this famous collection of economic literature, and in whose honour this Bibliography was planned and to be executed, the time was to come when I should feel relieved that he was at least dead and could not at once reveal me as an imposter. That I was prepared to work, and to work hard, was hardly sufficient. That I was steeped in the general history of the period, and had a decided bias towards the economics of it, did not adequately compensate for my lack of specialised knowledge in the particular department I was to investigate. And that I should early find myself nonplussed by the pamphlets and books published upon the subject in foreign, was my pigeon entirely; my second application to the inhibited female who was au fait with such works, met with a decided

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rebuff. And I was ill, too, with eruptions on my lip; the scones I was limited to as a mid-day meal were but poor diet against such, not unrelated to a lack of vitamins and an un-balanced – perhaps insufficient, dietary. Still, £6 a week was at stake; and my future, my literary future, was bound up with my success or otherwise in this venture. Mr Headicar apparently had great faith in my capabilities, and I would not let him down for all the literary snobs in existence, even if I had stormed their castle by the back door, degreeless. I could read up my subject at the reference library at Kingston during my spare time, and meantime I would get on with the catalogues, and an inherent orderliness of mind in such matters, would stand me in good stead; and there was the fascination of titles, the prospective handling

of fugitive pamphlets (how much time would I lose, unable to resist dipping into their contents?), which balanced all the other disadvantages of the job. No one should accuse me, at any rate, of watching the clock; and I would give the permanent staff as little trouble as possible.

Gradually I won confidence in myself; the cards multiplied, were submitted to the authorities concerned, and not a word was said about dropping me. The first quarter was consumed in this aspect of the work – October arrived, and the prospect immediately ahead of a cheque for £78. £78! I had dropped diary-keeping (as I had dropped almost everything else) as a mockery long, long ago; but was not the time, the time of my rehabilitation, at long last arrived, and ought it not to be placed on record?

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October 23rd 1937

Two rainstorms—walking my contemplative round of the Claremont Gardens on my way to the train, a sudden mighty swish of rainstorm drove me into the shelter where I was eventually joined by a poor child carrying a wreck of an umbrella. The wind drove the leaf carpet on the kiddies pond into a compact mass at one side, and October for a while was blended with March. In the afternoon—sheltering with the three children under and against a chestnut in Bushy Park, watching the antics of the deer, acknowledging the amused and amusing salute of a passing, very damp, errand boy, on the chestnut drive, and restraining Bunk's ardour to be in the driving rain which holds no terrors for him. We were much amused when one of the stags uprooted some fern and made his way among the lesser fry with his antlers decorated. We had the whole park pretty much to ourselves and the rain only ceased as we came through the dripping wood at the Hampton end of the Park. Saw Mr Headicar at dinner time and we agreed we could but carry on with our copying tasks and leave the rest to fate. I have now done without morning papers for a fortnight—partly to economise, partly in experiment to escape the regular dose of international crises and Mussolonic threats. On the other hand I have completed my first week's smoking, having renewed the habit after almost two years of a break. Am trying to keep to two pipes a day, in the evening, with an additional one on Sat. and Sunday. We will see if I can be temperate as well as abstemious. Picked up Last Chronicle of Basset, in 2 vols, first edition, for 1 shilling at Books Unlimited tonight my first purchase for many weeks

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Sunday Oct. 24 1937

Quiet day at reading – mostly -and wireless. My main pleasure today came from a glance over Birket Foster's quietly restful eminently Victorian sketches (none the worse for that – indeed all the better suited to my restless mood) in Sabbath Bells, a collection of poetical extracts. John spends all his spare time wading through his catalogue of Meccano engines and accessories. He has whittled down his Xmas expectation from approximately 5£ to 1£ . It is all the more comic as he has a collection upstairs which he never touches nowadays. Bunk managed to get him playing chess tonight, after a long cessation.

Monday October 25th 1937

Am reading Hunt's Political History of England 1760–1801 on my daily railway journeys. Thunder this afternoon with frequent rainstorms. Spent dinner hour in Brompton Oratory my first visit to any R.C. place of worship. The numerous and really fine altars were a surprise – but the contrast between the splendid masonry effects and the shabby seating accommodation struck me most. I sat a while, taking in details and watching devout R.C's in a nearby chapel. One boy, typical of the street corners, fell on his knees at his mother's indication, as he passed this chapel. At the doors were holy water receptacles, in frequent request as visitors crossed themselves. The candles of votaries struck me as being rather futile if not even a rather patent source of profit to the church. The magnificence of the church itself awed me perhaps in a rather different though not lesser way than St Paul's.

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But I felt as if I was in a foreign church, and the people genuflecting around me, not true English folk – so far goes my insular prejudices. Specially the the confession boxes, with the names of the Confessors above repelled me still. I felt, non the less, a religious thrill once or twice, and I felt not quite so superior as I feared I would.

Mac very uncomfortable this evening, adorned with one of Bunk's old singlet shirts, his two front legs through the sleeves, the body of the shirt covering his back, where he has a sore. The tortoise appears, at

last, to be bedding himself for winter. Headache – no inclination to read tonight,

Tuesday Oct. 26th / 37

More often than not I go up to town with less than one shilling in my pocket. My expenses are 4 ½d tube fares and a couple of penny wholemeal scones which I usually munch whilst systematically 'doing' one or other of the Museums at S.Ken- principally the Victoria & Albert, which I have now practically exhausted at a first survey but intend to devote what remains of my Goldsmith's work, or rather its leisure hours to a still closer acquaintance with the art side – paintings in water colour & oils, that is. With regard to my cataloguing, I have now reached the letter R, and am approximately three quarters through the banks of card-index drawers, after 9 weeks work. I have learnt a lot; the work fascinates me; but my eyes are giving me trouble and constantly sitting leaves me with alternations of constipation and diarrhea. I make no progress with the assistants, who almost to a man

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and girl avoid me or class me as a queer fish. The North country girl alone of the lot, who works in the same room, is human – but often we pass hours without a word. Perhaps they sense my dual nature and perhaps the evil takes precedence. And I cannot suppose it otherwise, for I feel guilty, in whatever company almost that I'm in – save God's, who knows me, as I know him.

Joan's school officially opened today. Em went. Mended, with a deal of bad humour and disinclination, John's back tyre tonight, whilst he, poor kid, tried to be helpful and was snubbed for his pains. No wonder I later threw down Dean Inges book on Mysticism in disgust.

Oct. 27th / 37

Postal order for 9/- received for two Lock Library books sent off the other day. Gave it to Em. She deserves it, after the struggle of the past two months. This represents my second book deal in over twelve months – 9/- for two twopenny bargains! The hand has not altogether lost its cunning – but it would be more cunning if it was more regular. Mac still in his shirt at penance.

I am heartedly sick of my two wholemeal scones at dinner time, nearly piked them back in Geological Museum today.

Joan on holiday for remainder of this week. She is reading Reade's Martyrdom of Men and finding it much food for reflection.

Thurs. Oct 28th / 37

Bought two date scones at Peggy Browns for lunch but I found them even less palatable than those of the wholemeal variety. I shall always connect the Geological museum with a sense of imminent retching, I fear.

John busy preparing a lecture on railways and I tried to fix him up with data on the old atmospheric Rly. but the sources were buried in the office below piles of other books .

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Joan moaning about the threatened destruction of all the countryside charm that has lain for centuries between Long Ditton and Claygate. SOLD – so say the big wooden placards and we know what will follow.

Friday Oct. 29th 1937

John, so I hear, upon some point of difference with his mother, threatened to leave home – at least until 10-30 p.m. Brutally enough we all laugh. Em having bad nights with her chest – some kind of oppression there and she does not like going to Dr Pope whilst we owe him two quarters account.

The early part of this day found in me one of those too rare moods of a sense of exquisite nearness to nature, to man, to all around me – almost even to rise from a chair seemed to call for special care, as if in itself the act held some sacramental value. I found myself noting with a quiet mystic sense of understanding and communion little insignificant details of my daily contacts – even the discovery of POST OFFICE in blue glass let into the top of a street lamp gave me deep and incommunicable satisfaction. Later in the day, though this mood had passed, it struck me very forcibly as I walked down Cromwell Rd, that after all, the very pavement I walked on, the street lamps, in the issue, were for me and me alone. It was a queer sensation and I felt infinitely important, as a man, and responsible to a great power. Tonight took Em and Jim to a Co-op concert at the new British Legion Hall at Tolworth. The film of The Man of Aran was the main attraction. The Hall packed, mostly with children,

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the atmosphere stuffy, the seats hard. Were treated at the close to speeches anent the Municipal election with appeals to do the decent thing and vote labour. A year or so ago I would have clapped such a speech to the echo; that it should take me till nearly my 40th birthday to realise the claptrap of it all (however earnest and sincere)! What is really needed is a change of heart, not happy homes or increased wages, or such like measures. People are so desperately keen to make others happy in the mess, whilst so backward to tackle the job piecemeal in their own lives and those immediately around them.

Saturday Oct 30 1937

Hung about the gardens for almost half an hour this morning. The weather is wonderfully mild, The one rose-bush there, its dead leaves almost all dropped and a mass of forward buds in their places. A hornbeam is a glorious mass of scarlet decayed leaves. I wonder how these morning contemplative strolls amid so much which appeals, and to which I respond with every fibre of my inner nature, is affecting and will continue to affect my life from the storehouse of the subconscious.

A letter from the House agents accepting my offer to pay the rent in mid-December for the preceding months, ending 'dear sir, yours truly'—Mr Higg's letter has carried them off their feet, apparently; sent as evidence of my bona fides.

John, hedging to stop up till 8-30 declared his intense desire to listen to Toscanini conducting a Brahms concert, and that we should'n't stop his musical genius! Oh John!

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Sunday Oct. 31st / 37

Em and John busy in the garden – John in his element; gathering armfuls of leaves for a projected bonfire. The tortoise still lively and above ground, as well he might be in company with a full blown primrose on the rockery.

A lazy indoors day, pecking at books, looking over my collection of the illustrations of the '60's and wirelessness. The boys disappeared upstairs for some mysterious game. Joan reading Montezuma's daughter; I simply cannot settle down to reading myself – anything. Today I have tackled successively, Galt's Entail (with fair success), Last Chronicle of Barset (London portion, and Johny Eames, a character thoroughly to my distaste), Law's Serious Call—no good at all, in my present humour; and a few of Walpole's Letters, rather more to my taste. I feel at odds with myself—resigned at one moment to my inability to concentrate; at the next, wondering if the habit for such it

increasingly seems to be – is significant of a decay of mental power, I suspect secret worry over my financial affairs and the uncertain tenure of my job is largely a contributive factor.

Gave Joan the Baby Book for Diary purposes today.

Monday Nov. 1st 1937

An appropriate commencement of the month with pitiless rain most of the day.

Bunkie on two days half term holiday. Reading I suppose will be his main employment. Yesterday he borrowed Miss Bell's illustrated edition of *The Wind in the Willows* – a great favourite of his. It is amazing how he has developed, almost unaided, a taste for literature of not only a high class but largely educative. Well he has sampled in fiction and fact but he can (much to my relief) always turn to Dr Doolittle books for light relief. He is top of the highest class (in which are boys of 14, and he is but 9!).

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He is a prefect, and a general favourite with master and classmates. In physique he is robustly built and it is most amusing to see how patiently for a while he will endure John's baiting, and then turn on him and rend him – though it must be admitted that John usually collapses in a fit of laughter, in which we all join. Yes Bunkie is a boy a parent can be proud of, and who has given neither of us cause for worry or disappointment. Em had to get herself some brandy this morning, she felt so ill, after which she paid Dr Pope a visit. He suspects weak heart, which no doubt accounts for shortness of breath and quick fatigue. She is to be examined in hospital if the bottle of medicine he has given her does her no good. She is worn out and run down he says. Alas I know it and am helpless. With Joan's increasing willingness to be useful, in addition to John's readiness at all times to save her any trouble, Em is not so overtaxed as she has been. What comes our way – and perhaps it may be a little more of the good things – now – is properly to be shared, otherwise it must be rather bitter fruit – to me certainly, for my pleasure in anything is the reflection of that of Em's first, and then the children's. Reading Crocker's edition of Dr Johnson again. Somehow Johnson always calms satisfies.

Voted tonight in the local municipal elections – labour though not without reservations

Tuesday Nov, 2nd / 37

Slight fog, morning and evening; rode in guards van from Clapham to Victoria consequent upon the usual fog crowd.

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Acutely depressed most of day, fighting hard to cling to some shreds of belief in a superintending and sympathetic God. I would and will go through many such sloughs of doubt and despondency triumphantly. I now believe, for the sake of the hope of a continuance of those fleeting visions which tell me that I am the right road and my effort is acceptable. Em got me another pipe. She seems rather more herself today, and she took the two boys out to purchase fireworks this evening. John has been practicing shadow boxing with cushions for some days past. It's a great scream to watch him – how he punishes that cushion!

Queen Mary had lunch in my old room 6 today, in connection with her inspection of some needlework Exhibition; the lunch was cooked entirely with utensils, and served on crockery from Buckingham Palace, no canteen dinner, thanks, for Her Majesty—and who's to blame her? And whilst I'm on the subject of royalty, I may mention that I have been just supplied with an inkwell, glass, with V.R. engraved upon it.

Wednesday Nov. 3rd / 37

At long last, a communication from the Oxford Press to the effect that Miss Weeton II was accepted in the final state as submitted by me during summer, and would be passed on to the printers after certain small alterations suggested for my approval. They hope to publish it in Spring. It will be a bit of a rush especially if they are so dilatory as they were with volume I .

Em a bit off the hooks today. As for myself I feel so oppressed, that I dare not broach the subject of her health with her – but she understands me well enough, to know that it means more to me, to us all, for her own sake, than we can well express.

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_Thursday Nov. 4th / 37

Horrible dream. Caught in very compromising situation— in bed. In fact, with Japanese prostitute, who quite cheerfully demanded 10/- as her fee in front of Em – who was terrifically polite to us both. I had only a few odd shillings, which she rejected and I rushed out to borrow more, what a stew I was on when I awoke—fortunately before the rapidly approaching denouncement. Spent another delightful lunch hour among the old pottery in the V& A . For one thrilling moment, I realised how undivided was I from those who formerly possessed them. And later in the afternoon came one of those ecstatic moments when I felt it difficult not to rise from my chair to utter the shout of joy I

felt necessary to give escape to the unaccountable warmth of feeling suddenly enveloping me.

John very busy preparing a 'guy'. And bang goes one of my old coats. The tortoise brought indoors today as he does not appear to wish to hibernate outside.

Friday 5th Nov. / 37

Bonfire a decided misfire, though assisted with 4d of paraffin. Jack and Don, and Joyce Tresk contributed their share to the general noise, and Em enjoyed it as much as anyone there, I stopped indoors a while to pacify Mac, but later spent most of the evening coaxing the fire and seeing the end of the bug-ridden wooden bedstead – that dreadful legacy of the lousy flat in Brighton Rd. The battle against the persistent and unmentionable blighters has never

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ceased since, and I suppose will never absolutely cease. But there is one entrenched fort the less anyhow. John, Joan and the others shot off to see the big bonfire on the Fairfield at Kingston, and returned with a crowd of lady killing schoolmates, who were duly, much to their amusement sent off home to bed by Em after sky-larking in the garden a while.

Nov. 6th. Saturday 1937

A miserable November morning and our afternoon walk to Teddington along the towpath and back along the Lower Teddington Rd was a depressing affair rather. Explored a river-side approach near Kingston Bridge and found a rum collection of houses of all periods – a genuine, almost unspoilt bit of Hampton Wick. And through an uncurtained window of one of the old houses on the main road caught a perfectly enchanting 'interior' – a small wainscoted, cosy room, three children playing on the floor, blissfully unconscious of the picture they presented, in a lovely survival of the past, down to old coloured wall prints, glass stuffed sausages, etc. Promised Mrs Kent to take her kid walks on sats, instead of his being dragged off eternally to the Pictures. He had no less than 8 packets of sweets on him – after a week in and out of bed with a cold etc. Changed library books and took out That Devil Wilkes, by Postgate; Burke by Morley; and Boswell by Yulliamy, I noted that Miss Weeton had been out 16 times so far this year.

Sunday Nov. 7th / 37

Lazy day indoors. The boys busy in the kitchen playing at shop! I suggested to them this morning that they send their unwanted engines etc. to the distressed areas suggesting

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a collier acquaintance they made on their summer trip to Darton as a likely distributor. They were charmed, as I knew they would be, with the suggestion. My dream last night too gross to set down. The bane of my life, the one persistent 'dagger' at my every endeavour to purify both thoughts and actions—when will it give me peace? I really think I was born over-sexed and that it can be little short of a disease of the mind, for God knows I have long combated it. Perhaps in attempting to counter it, I have made the wrong approach, and have intensified the evil.

Monday Nov. 8th / 37

Thinking over my statement of yesterday, it is perhaps only doing myself bare justice to amplify it a little. In loving a tree I see more than the wood; in admiring the majestic surge of wind – driven clouds, I allow that they are explainable in terms of science, and appreciation of the beauty of woman may cover a tragically inadequate balance of desirable qualities of both mind and heart. But in all these cases the beauty of line is there for all to see and appreciate, and the real the tragedy of it is that the animal in us must cast its bane over the ideal beauty and the inherent right to soak myself in it.

Tuesday Nov. 9th / 37

Am drawing near to the close of the first part of my labours at the Goldsmiths' Library. I shall be in a position next week to commence upon examination of the books themselves and to copy on to my cards and to copy any MS. notes of Prof. Foxwell's on the flyleaves of the books. It will have taken me just three months in the copying from the card index and I must have used well over 3000 cards. If I have to leave the University for the new

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place at Bloomsbury – where the Goldsmiths' Library has now mostly been moved to, I shall be sorry on some accounts. The lunch hour visits to the V.& Albert have been especially a real godsend, for all my adult life I have thirsted for the opportunity to 'do' the museum leisurely, and have made the most of the opportunity. And contrary to my expectation, and no doubt owing to the opportunity it affords for a read each way, I have enjoyed the train & tube journeys. And I shall not forget the the deepening twilight, the misty evenings, the leaves falling on to pavement and road, the strangely beautiful effect of the Science building all lit up opposite the University and that pleasant

anachronism, the gas-lighter doing his rounds, as I leave at 5. I have been quite my own master, having seen Mr Higgs but twice at the University and Mr Headicar on the single occasion of his introducing me to the scene of my future labours. Bunky did a bit of stocktaking—counted up his cig cards and found he possessed nearly 1500. Joan is taking some specimens out of my library to illustrate her essay on factory children of the 1830's. Letter from Amy to John and Bunky enclosing 1£ for clothes as a Xmas box – not to be used for any other purpose significantly added. Thank God, it is now not absolutely necessary to do so, we should not hesitate, if it were, as she shrewdly suspects and indicates.

Wednesday Nov. 10th /37

The majority of the staff had a half day off today in anticipation of the conferring of a degree on the Queen which is timed to take place tonight. Despite a roaring fire in my room,

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I had but a chilly time of it today, separated as I am from the fire by two solid banks of glass cased book shelving. Em has gone up to Tolworth tonight to join the Hospital Savings Assoc. There is a decided coolness between Em and Mrs Kent at present. She is as fine a character, as generous-hearted and true a friend as ever a woman could hope to possess.

I never enjoy my museum wanderings without reflecting that these priceless records of the past may yet be blown to smithereens in senseless strivings for domination of man over man, nation over nation. As I was looking at a shelf of beautiful specimens of the potters art today, I was struck with the absurdity that orders may yet be issued to close the place from the public whilst it was 'decontaminated' from poison gas fumes—fancy poison fumes circulating round these expressive though oblivious monuments to patient and undoubtedly very often religiously inspired endeavour of the past? Poor, foolish, suffering humanity – will it never, never dare to be happy where it can!

Thursday Nov. 11th / 37

Streets busy with poppy sellers. One contingency they had not provided against – the new thick three penny pieces. I had to leave mine to the honesty of the seller, as it would not go through the slot of the collecting tin. I was rather struck at the miserable showing the University made with its very bedraggled flag on the tower mast – a hole in the middle, tattered at the edges, and woefully dirty looking. During the 'silence' somebody very decidedly walked the length of the corridor, whilst overhead there were footsteps.

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If only this job will last out a year or more, I will build up by degrees a stock of books again, so that I shall not immediately be cast on my beam ends when I come out of work; and of course, I have taken a great chance with this job, for, with my £6 a week, I am automatically disqualified for the 'dole'. Not until the third quarter receipt of salary will we really begin to become financially stable. It is as God wills; more and more I realise that life is part of a process unseen that one cannot possibly judge of the event as it occurs. The present ill may well prove the future good. I have had such a long run of bad luck that I am ever fearful that a period of prosperity or the present appearance of it, still to be realised by the payment of my final cheque.

Nov. 12th / 37 Friday

Clipped Macs bushy tail tonight amid clamour of protest – but I noticed that Em assisted when she saw he looked rather improved in appearance as a result. Bunky in tears almost–over a threat of suet pudding and custard tonight. He lives on bread and butter–and eternal eggs.

Saturday Nov. 13th / 37

Letter from O.U.P. informing me that the second volume of Miss Weeton was now in the printers hand. Spent an hour or two at Lindow's going through a big lot of fresh books. Joan popped in with her violin – that melancholy venture to scale ambitious heights – to try to sell Lindow, but he would none of it. She was persuaded to try the Frenchman at Bric a Bra, who gave her the 2/- asked–and the blessed thing cost me a difficult 10/- last Xmas, 30/- for / tuition, & 3/- for a chin rest!

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But the 2/- will be well spent on a trip, up to the Old Vic to see her first play – Shakespeare's Macbeth. Finished my first quarter of employment of the Bibliography today.

Sunday Nov. 14th

White frost and the poor old tortoise still above ground – but Em and Jim fetched him indoors in desperation today. The dog had kept himself warm during the bitter night, digging holes wherever possible. The fool won't sleep in his kennel–drags out his carpet and sleeps in the open. But none so frisky as he each morning. Bunk thick with a head cold; Joan complained of her back aching – she gave it a knock

on a cupboard on rising from a chair the other day. She has to be careful since her coccyx was removed last year. Mac in conscious disgrace – ate a bar of Em's chocolate, which he found on the carpet near her.

John only could be more pleased – but then, has he not got his blessed Joan in his bed with him, as a result of Bunk's indisposition? To tempt her to bed earlier, he sent word down by Em that 'he had a surprise for her'. It was the chocolate that he had been unable to thrust on Em to supply her loss through Mac's theft. What a boy!

Monday Nov. 15th / 37

Saw Miss Quin today about my projected move to the newly installed library at the Bloomsbury building. She promised to arrange for me to have direct access to the books as from next Monday. Made John copy out his homework again tonight -a job he increasingly neglects and slurs over – as I used to. But he has his own way to make in life, and no family position at his father's firm to step into, as was my misfortune.

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Tuesday Nov. 16th /37

Miss Collinson, my room-mate, concluded her labours on the boxes full of old parchment Deeds today. and is now faced with the prospect of looking for another job, being only a 'temporary'. It seems the height of meanness to me, that she has been informed that 'anybody' on the staff can copy out her written transcripts and summaries of the Deeds; so she won't even get the job of finishing off her own work in the typing of fair copies.

Feel I could read book after book covering the period 1775 – 1800. And the knowledge I am acquiring has undoubtedly provided a more intelligent appreciation of the requirements of the task ahead. It seems almost incredible how unfitted in many essential respects I was for the job when I started.

Wednesday Nov. 17th / 37

I had a decision from the Head Librarian, Mr Rye, about me examining the books at Bloomsbury – not convenient till probably in the New Year – no check been taken yet of the books in their new quarters; workmen and suspicious characters wandering at will about the place, the heating not yet laid on, lighting imperfect, shortage of assistants! Could I take a holiday or pursue some other line of research meantime? It all struck heavily, but I bore up and tried to make no plans, but to be patient and trust that it was for the best.

Something good must come of it. Wrote to Mr Headicar, suggesting that I work at the comprehensive London Bibliography, listing such items in that as do not occur in the Goldsmith's, and sending a batch each week to Mr Higgs to keep him employed at the editing?

The tortoise has now a box of hay to himself, out of which he makes repeated sallies.

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Nov. 18th / 37 Thursday

Rather pretty sight in the gardens, of two modern schoolgirls catching leaves as they fell. A murky day – S. Ken. however never loses its appeal, whatever the weather. At present the weak spidery branches of the trees are revealed in their rather pathetic beauty, and these, along with the varieties of street mists always lend a touch of the picturesque and mysterious to these streets of grand and mean buildings. And always the same crowd – students, school boys, hangers-on of the museums, taxi men and when the weather permits, workmen lounging on the wall seats outside the Science college. And magnificent cars galore, with an occasional sprinkling of returning horsemen and women, very much got up for the social occasion. I shall miss it all – especially my lunch hours and my reading in the train and tube. Today I have finished Villiamy's Boswell. I purposefully refrain from comments on what I read – suffice to say that I am training myself to read but one at a time. And that at times, so much purpose is there in my reading, a sentence, even a phrase, will capture my imagination and I seem to read into it something quite inexpressible, almost holy, certainly mysterious and symbolic. It is at such times that I feel I am working on approved lines, and that I can ignore the frequent feeling of frustration that my reading brings me – for my memory is so erratic, that though I get a good general impression and have no difficulty with my mental images. I retain no useful data to draw upon when occasion duly arises.

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Still, there are other ways of communicating with the eternal and the infinite than recollecting what others had written about it. I have an untidy mind—I must be content with flashes of intuitive greatness – for without doubt if I am inarticulate and cannot give expression to what is in me, it is there nevertheless. I have ridden into some public applause, on the back of Miss Weeton, and perhaps this Bibliography will benefit by my application and industry; but it is not in me to produce a spontaneous, primary piece of literature. I now await developments from either Mr Headicar or Mr Higgs. The latter's

silence is somewhat disquieting. Is he ill, or is he just too old to trouble much about answering letters, or even to bother much about the job at all?

The tortoise was dashing about the dining room, so Em says, this afternoon, He won't stay in his hay box. And he ignores Mac sniffing round him – indeed he essays to climb over him as he lays on the hearth. John, I am more than gratified to report, is reading Dicken's David Copperfield – and though he says little, is obviously taken with it. Joan is full of her swimming feats, or rather threading a line of girls in the Baths today, a feat un-paralleled by her school-mates, according to her. She is very happy, thank goodness. So we all are, for that matter.

Friday Nov. 19th / 37

Reminder from Gamages of the 3 guineas owing – but I intend to pay 1£ off this long overdue account as soon as I get my cheque. The two schoolgirls catching leaves again – hats off to the gay work. Spent lunch hour in the Gainsborough room. Looking at his Flatford pictures, I felt an almost uncontrollable

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emotion and could have knelt to express in ecstatic prayer and rapture – twice this feeling came over me. Oh that I had dared.

Em, along with Mrs Kent, David, John, and Joan, have gone to a parents evening at her school- Joan's that is. David brought in a 2d paper having for its picture cover, a brave circus boy, about to drive off a lion from his intended meal of a circus hand, whilst from behind an enormous tiger springs at him. He is armed with but a whip. And a tent is blazing furiously to add to the undoubted promise of thrill upon thrill. Bunky was contemptuous – he is deep once again, in Three Men in a Boat. Read part of Dr John Brown's Pet Marjorie to him tonight. A brilliant full moon and blue sky tonight as I rode up to the library.

Saturday Nov. 20th / 37

Rather tickled as I was about to leave my train at Victoria. I spotted a juvenile libel or confession scratched on the coachwork of the carriage –DON LOVES JOAN. As one of John's pals is called Don though by no means Joan's fancy –it seemed rather a coincidence; and I did not fail to make due capital out of it later in the day, much to her ladyships indignation and heightened colour.

Took John with me this after noon by bus to Hook, thence over the Quandam fields – now rapidly becoming an estate, cut through by railway development–and oh, what present squalor –to Chessington

Church, into which we peeped. I love that miniature altar, so delicate and refined and redolent of Puseyite times. Then down the hillside nearly to Epsom, cut up the road past the Asylums where we came across two gypsy caravans

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at the road junction, then over the common, and back down the copse to Burnt Stub. Even John could not withhold comment upon the loveliness of late autumn woods, in the deepening twilight, rose-tinted, of a keen November afternoon.

Joan had her birthday tea-party today—Joyce, Joan, Guy and Audrey – all grown up all of a sudden into promising maidens. Was struck with the promise of adolescent improvement in the looks of Joan now filling out and losing her old gawkiness. Picked up a Tom Jones for my birthday present for Joan. Not much of a copy, unfortunately.

Sunday Nov. 21st / 37

Woke up to fairyland- trees rimed with hoar frost, made still more beautiful by the particles of fog moisture frozen into fragile dusty crystals which fell off in a shower of white dust on being touched. Semi fog all day, but Em needed little persuasion to go over to the park. The Thames was as calm as a millpond, and if anything, could exceed the rare – for this southern part – beauty of the trees and grass at our side of river, it was the most generous coating at the other. We walked up the long water, Mac spent most of the time rolling in the powdery grass—Joan with us, the boys had pushed off on their own to Richmond Park – through the Gardens and back across Bushey Park. Em on pins, after our return. Suggested in all seriousness that I should go to the Park and ask the Park Keeper to blow his whistle – hard! Fortunately they arrived in time to render such a device superfluous, though it would have been worthwhile to witness the blowing of a whistle –hard – to penetrate the circumference of 8 miles of fog bound park.

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Read part of Cowper's Task. Bought Joan six-pennyworth of sweets for her birthday tomorrow – many a girl of 15 has been less pleased with a present costing as many pounds.

Nov 22nd / 37 Monday

Joan's fifteenth birthday. She came and kissed me, and was unaffectedly delighted with Tom Jones. I had gone to bed last night

with a rotten headache, which kept me tossing for some time in bed. Also I had to fight off my 'black devil' - the claustrophobic fear, due to our having to close the window, owing to the acrid fog fumes proving too much in the bedroom. To be forewarned is, I find, to be fore-armed, when these attacks come on. Reason can do much – but I know nothing I fear more.

Had a rather longer walk round the gardens this morning, and then hung about the station until about 9-40, having thereby qualified for a cheap return Wimbledon ticket. On applying for a 'return' ditto at Wimbledon for S. Ken, was staggered on being demanded 1/3d for same. I had contemplated 4d at the outside, so abysmally ignorant am I, and ever likely to be at London topography. And having got to my destination was more than a little tickled, as well as distressed, to find that I had lost my Surbiton return half-ticket! So my day's trip cost me altogether 2/5. Had a wretched journey home. Twenty minutes on the cold Wimbledon platform, with a horrible bellowing in my ears from a recently installed loud-speaker. Give me the porter's raucous yell any time. Parcel from Amy, containing biscuits and parkin from Birkett's confectionary shop in Barnsley – of repute for such from earlier years.

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Read from the first volume of Tom Jones to Joan, at her request, as she sat knitting a jumper.

Amy's letter studiously avoids mention of me as usual. Still, I have now the satisfaction of a clear conscience on that score, not only having long endeavoured to avoid giving provocation, but to conciliate them at Darton. It is hard to know how I have offended most – whether in coming a cropper in my independent effort as bookseller, or in having justified myself with Miss Weeton and in the landing of the Bibliography job. Perhaps the present status quo is the safest, though not the most desirable state of affairs.

Nov. 23rd / 37 Tuesday

Managed train affairs better today and was up at the University before 10-15. Miss Wilde happening to come into my room, protested at the coldness thereof and despite my assertion that I was quite comfortable without a fire – as indeed I was – Miss Quin left positive orders for it to be lit after dinner.. Finished sorting cards at last – for no purpose, as it turned out; for on commencing upon the London Bibliography, I found that not only were all the Goldsmiths' books listed (though in much abbreviated form), but indicated by a G!

Called up at Books Unlimited at 6, expecting to see young Headicar only, but found Mr H. senior there, looking ill. He has not heard yet from Mr Higgs, though he wrote immediately on receipt of my letter

last week. What a game. He approves of my working upon the London Bib. which he himself compiled.

Trouble with John over his home and school-work. His master had written BEWARE over his latest specimen of arithmetic. It is a subject which he has allowed to get him down – 32nd out of a class of 36. In most of the others he has done passably, if not well.

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And it must be taken into account too, that he skipped over a class on moving up this term. He is apt to be 'up in the air' as his house-master wrote of him in his record book. One can only nudge him a bit and work on his sentiment of pride in himself. I have felt pretty much in my boyhood, as he now feels. Bunky tidied up – if one can tidy up what was immaculately in order – his cupboard tonight. The tortoise had another run in the garden today. Em told me that the secretaryship of John's school is falling vacant – the present holder being to be married early next year. She is to see what chance there is of my getting the post when next she visits Meshmembers, one of the masters there and influentially placed. The money will be much less but the job would be a permanency. And I should love to be amongst so many young people. Also, there would be greater need and opportunity for me to overcome my acute shyness when in contact with adults. My eleven years of bitter experience here has afflicted me with an inferiority complex which simply will not allow me to use whatever material advantages and rise in the social or professional scale should provide me. I really think Miss Quin, for instance, ordered the fire to be lit today, out of contempt for a supposed notion that I was afraid to waste coal or to be a nuisance to the char-woman.

Nov 24th / 37 Wednesday

Noticed the remains of a birds nest in one of the trees in the garden of the Nat. Hist. Museum. Whatever prompted a bird to nest there, I

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wonder– and yet, where could a nest be more safely located elsewhere than bang in the middle of London. Took my leave of the V & Albert – spending an hour in the first of the rooms devoted to water colours – and oh how I love them. I think, if I were to be permanently fixed up there, I would eventually come to doing about half a dozen each day, letting myself soak into their beauties. Curiously enough, I simply cannot make anything satisfactory out of the Blake water colours, mystic as he was. A Girtin or a Crome never fails to put me into the mood of its creator and in communication with eternal verities. And as I gaze, almost spellbound on some marvellous landscape

which perhaps still exists pretty much as it was then, I breathe a prayer that I may be indulged yet with a sight of the England I love and am denied.

Packed up my four boxes of cards and took leave of the Vice-Chancellors room at 5, after another day at the London Bibliography. Tomorrow I am to tackle the Kingston Library for permission and conveniences to pursue my Bibliographical work there. It will save me at least 2/- a day in fares, and I shall get the chance of more exercise, intending to walk there via Hampton Court Park, weather permitting. I see I have survived now one month of renewed diary habit, so I may set down my reasons for recommencing. Primarily, it was to mark the providences which I have increasingly felt of so wonderful a significance in my life since its regeneration – but the signal evidences of divine inter position are quite impossible to record; things trivial in the appearance, but tremendously significant, occur almost daily,

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and although I have tried to give myself the clue for later reading, I fear I have, and must fail. So perhaps I must pursue my second motive – that of providing my children with as close and photographic a record as I can of this period of their lives and of our home as it impresses me in the light of their future appreciation of a record. I ceased my last record when I lost touch with the ideal that prompted me. I had then made a years endeavour to live my faith. Once more, after that break I have achieved, with varying success—but consistent enough, thank God – another year in the only service worthy of my mature philosophy and experience. If I cease diary-keeping again, may it be for a reason not so fatal to my well being, mental, spiritual, and eternal. God help me if I fail now, for, hard as life is, how could I face the mockery of it without an end in view and the sweet certainty of those precious moments of communication with the unseen and real. Above all, I value the dependence I am training myself to give to God – to put everything in his hand

Nov.25th / 37 Thursday

Walked down to the ferry – a fine frosty morning, with fog about. Hung about for a few minutes, admiring the picture provided by the hanging mist over the smooth river. The ferryman put in his appearance and I got across after all. The Park, of course, was perfect – the frost had not been so heavy as that on Sunday, and the grasses had assumed fascinatingly beautiful effects, A fine stag deer provided me with a qualm or two as I passed by him posted rather menacingly I thought, at the foot of an elm. Then I had a further reward – a heron slowly lifted itself and waved itself over the Long Water; and further up,

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there was another, who merely shifted his position, closer to the ornamental geese at the top end there, who loudly voiced their objection to his dignified presence. Going down the elm avenue to Kingston, a Jenny Wren posed obligingly whilst I passed and then I came across the curious sight of yet more herons, right in the middle of a small flock of sheep.

Perhaps it may be construed into a preening of myself, but really I could not help the thought –of all the hundreds who daily proceed to Kingston to work, only I should go out of my way to include a park walk –if only for exercise sake! What a sight it would be, to see a 'queue' waiting at the Ferry at 9 am. Instead of outside the Odeon in the rain at 7 p.m.

Introduced myself to Mr Cross, the Kingston librarian and he placed me in the Reference Room, and took the London Bibliography down from its shelf with his own hands for me. I quite appreciated the change from the loneliness of the Vice Chancellor's Room, to the activity within and the street noises without, my new quarters. Ate my lunch at the Thame's – side. Spent a few minutes in the Church and fell in love with the play of the sun through the windows onto the pillars and the arching above. My eyes tired during the afternoon, as well they might. Walked home through the foggy streets. Em and Joan rather at cross –purposes later, after Mrs Kent had been to measure the latter for her new party dress; so the atmosphere a little tense as a result. Joan complained of being deprived of her dinners for two days which did not improve matters. On top of it all, mentally fatigued, I felt but only just in the humour to keep my

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own temper. Still, I kept it. I am secretly disappointed at not receiving any 'proofs' yet from the O.U.P., and I am childish enough as to let the disappointment influence my feelings and conduct.

November 26th. Friday

There is no point in keeping a diary which is not an honest record. I am too unhappy tonight to continue it – perhaps it is beyond me now. Goodbye my endeavour to provide us all with pleasure – someday!

Not so easily, however, was Joan to be defeated in her own tussle with life and its complications and exceeding variety; her diaries were

now an established feature in her young life; so much so, that sooner than be defeated by the inconvenience of stowing away the large quarto Baby Book now in use for diary-keeping, in her going-away luggage, she purchased another of the little pocket-books for the supplementary purpose whilst at – Darton! And so we get a last glimpse of Dad – for his grand-daughter's first Xmas at Darton was destined to be his last, there, or anywhere else upon this earth.

20th December. Monday

We packed up our books today. Unexpected telegram from Darton – 'Can Joan come & spend Xmas with us – Grandad . Daddy just 'grammed back,'Yes' – so I'm going. Fancy his asking me for Xmas. Of course I badly want to go – snow – and more snow, I hope. And I shall see Sam. It will be my first Xmas away

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from home.

21st December. Tuesday

Broke up amidst rejoicings. I couldn't worm out of Miss F. my conduct grade, but my work is B. (not bad). Joan has given me a sweet little tortoise; inside there is a little costly bottle of 'Evening in Paris' scent. It is lovely.

22nd December. Wednesday

Set off at 8.30 in Cyril Barratt's car. Saw someone run over at Putney Bridge. As we drove past a bus, Cyril saw a man lying in the road, cut about, & somebody bandaging him up. We got to Marylebone in good time, & secured a window seat, only to be bombarded by a tribe of kids, yelling & coughing. The dough was enough for Mummy, & as I am particular as to who my companions are on a railway journey, I was transferred into a carriage with three gentlemen in, all behind newspapers. They spoke not a word the whole journey. Auntie Amy met me at Barnsley. We did some shopping & then went to Bloomfield. Uncle Stanley & Auntie Edie had just arrived. Got a good welcome from Grandpa, & Sam recognised me!

24th December. Friday

Went to Barnsley. Auntie Edie, in addition to the Cardigan, gave me 2/6, & Uncle 2/-. I bought lots of decorations & balloons, & a Xmas stocking, for fun, for Grandpa. We spent the afternoon putting them up. I burst three balloons, Auntie Edie one, & the shock (!) from that apparently made Auntie Amy fall over a chair, where she sat on, &

bust, two more. The electricity men are in, putting in wires for fires. One, a handsome lad, who I kept on bumping into, came into the lounge where I was getting a bit exasperated

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trying to put up a decoration that wouldn't go up – said, 'Eeh! Putting up nice decorations'. I said, 'Yes', a bit wearily.

25th December. Xmas day.

I was ill, which made me very annoyed, because I was ill before dinner. Uncle John, Auntie Gwen, with Anne and the baby Julian, came. He is very good & very nice. I was in bed all afternoon, but got up at tea-time. After they all went, I was violently sick, & grandpa gave me soda water & a little brandy. So much for my Xmas day. Auntie Gwen gave me 2/6.

26th December. Sunday

I could not go to Cawthorne, but Auntie Amy & Uncle went.

27th December. Monday

Got a letter from Mummy. Went to the Ritz to see Spring Holiday, & a man playing badly on the organ. Boring. Uncle went to see the panto, and said it was rotten.

30th December. Thursday

Went to the Pictures, with Auntie, at the local bughole, to see a nice rendering of Romeo & Juliet. Leslie Howard is very good, and so is Norma Shearer.

31st December. Friday

Went for a long walk along the road, quite alone, meeting no one, to the Wakefield Road, along that, & turned left up a lane to Woolley – a sweet, old village, over a headland to Woolley Edge, & down to Darton again. At the old pit on the Edge, I talked to the man who was looking after the pumping of the water out of the pit. He showed me the engine house & the electric fans & told me of how, a year ago, a college student had thrown herself down the disused shaft. Walked over to Cawthorne in the afternoon along the canal bank; as I got off the bus at the canal bridge, a

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jovial young workman, warming his hands at a brazier, said 'Warm enough?' I could not help smiling, his face was so jolly. I descended onto the tow-path, and was pursued till out of sight with shouting & whistlings, which, far from making me mad, made me laugh exceedingly. I looked back and waved. The wind, trees, & what water was left in the old canal, laughed with me. It was a good day for a walk – breezy, fresh, blowing my hair about. I had tea at Auntie Gwen's, and afterwards we had some fun with balloons. Came home in the car. Carol singers from that everlasting chapel about 2 in the morning. I wish they would keep their happy new years to themselves at that time in the morning.

1st. January. New Year's day.

Went into Barnsley in the morning. The boiler pipe having burst, mess in kitchen ensuing; maid in hysterics, no water forthcoming. We called at Moss-de-Lee first, where I got a wash. Marie & Bessie (beautiful as ever) were very nice, & want me to tea next Thursday. My horrid sty on my eye being much worse, Grandpa announced his intention of sending me down to Dr Millar's to have it lanced. My grin was a bit forced, & I thought my knees would knock. To begin with, I'm frightened of my eyes myself, never mind anyone else touching them: and also, I have heard Daddy talk about the way he nearly howled out when he had his lanced once. Anyhow, I went down with Auntie to the doctor's house. Dr Millar took out a murderous-looking little knife, sterilized it, & taking hold of my eye, looking as if he was going to scoop my eye out, said he'd only hurt me a second, and he only did. He just took the top of it off,

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and a relieving flow of matter followed. So it was over.

4th January. Tuesday

A wet day. In the afternoon, Mrs Sharpe rang up asking me to tea. Of course I went. It is a big house. We played at 'Swift' with bats & shuttlecocks, sending both shuttle-cocks into the fire! Then we had a boxing & I received an unexpected and good wallop on the backside from Peter for daring to say he was frightened to fight me. We ambled up Sackup Lane, still fighting, at 9.30, much to Grandpa's disgust.

6th January. Thursday

Went for a short walk over Woolley Edge. As I went along the terrace, I met Denton, the man who, it is rumoured, beats his wife. Contrary to the usual custom of saying Good Morning, he looked away & blushed. Strange! I'd like to see him beat me.

Jan.7th. Saturday

The Sharpes & Gregson came to tea. Kathleen came in the lounge & called me out into the kitchen for a minute. She then, in an ecstasy, said K.B. sends his love! Of course, I disbelieved her, but she said that she'd met him at the gates, & he'd given her the meat, unwillingly, because he wanted to come up & see me. She said she'd give me his love, if he liked. He did like. I like him enough, in all conscience.

8th January. Sunday

except for feeding the hens and going down the Lane, I read Monte Christo all day, having given Newman's Apologia pro Vita Sua up, as a bad job. Uncle Stanley & Auntie Edie came for tea, all the way from Derby. Uncle S. slept all afternoon, quietly enough, though I was anxious about him missing his tea, when Sam gently banged his elbow with his nose, which wakened him in time.

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Two days later, the holiday came to an end; Grandpa had noticed the Diary-keeping, with interest, and upon one of its blank pages, appears the following, signed 'Grandpa', and dated Jan. 1938:

*He either fears his fate too much,
Or his desert is small,
Who dares not put it to the touch,
To 'Win' or 'Lose' it all.*

*As one by one your hopes decline,
Be calm, be firm.*

Never cry over spilt milk.

Curious how the old man's affection for his favourite of other days persisted. Almost every old snapshot in which he appears, shows him in company with Joan – sometimes being held by him on the back of dear old, smelly, foolish Sam; sometimes wearing his panama as they sit upon the low ornamental wall beside the tennis-lawn; wherever he walked there was his persistent shadow, Joan. And now she was growing up, must have noticed a thing or two – but above all,

she yet jumped at the chance to come up to Darton! She was Yorkshire, and proud of it.

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It was a good sign.

Curious, too, that he considered a visit to Darton, fares paid, was sufficient present indication of his continuing affection (the boys were never invited) . The lancing of that eye – did it not suggest to him that perhaps, only perhaps, not all the mother love of his neglected daughter-in-law could supply the efficiency of vitamins in her diet – that for months now, his son had been working, certainly, but had yet to draw the first pay cheque upon his labours at the University; that another month of such a state of affairs might see not only his son, but his favourite Joan, homeless, and the problem of the next meal of even more importance than the balance of vitamins! Did no suspicion of the truth, the awful fact of his having a cancerous growth gnawing at his vitals, dawn upon him, and incline him to take one more look at that will of his? Much use would it be to his grand-daughter that provision, long term provision, had been made for her, in that proportion of the disposable principal which should be distributed equally among his grandchildren, but only upon the death of the sole legatee, their aunt Amy ; or in the event of her pre-deceasing their own father, upon his death!

It was as good a joke, almost – or would be when it became known – as that rumoured £1 a week which was to be doled out to their father, commencing with attainment of the age 60, under the terms of another will in the family. And they would not fail to note, and draw the proper conclusions therefrom, that he was specifically excluded from all access to any capital bequeathed to his grandchildren; and

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that again, only in the event of the prior death of his sister, should he benefit at all, and that only to the extent of drawing the interest upon the share allocated to his children. A pretty legacy of hate – for there would not be much else to draw upon out of that will, after all its subdivisions.

May 22nd / 38

Unable to settle down to book reading, serious or otherwise I suddenly decided to have a look at my old diary, and the reading of it put me in the humour for re-commencing it. Since the last entry we

have had to face crises which have at times reduced us to almost being homeless and have certainly been to trial of one's trust in an all-seeing power. My cheque for the first quarter did not arrive until Jan 19th, and my second one (six weeks overdue) on Apr 23rd! The history of my financial embarrassment is too involved and long to recount now. I am still working upon the Bibliography, Mr Headicar has been dropped, and I am engaged to place the completed material in the hands of Prof. Scott by the end of June, about which time I should take up a new job at Hendon in the Accounts Dept. as a clerk at 62/- a week. As I hope to make an arrangement whereby I shall be paid a quarter's retaining fee of £25 by the Harvard Authorities my financial position should steadily improve. Meantime, Dad is dying of cancer,

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having been provided with an accomodation feeding tube into his stomach owing to his oesophagus being blocked. He is at present confined to his bed, at Darton, after returning from the Sheffield nursing home. I have been up twice—on the second occasion, about a month ago, having been whisked off to Youlgrieve by Bill and Ev, where I spent three days in surroundings beautiful to a degree and which made a great impression artistically and spiritually.

Bunkie has passed his scholarship for Tiffins—an excellent effort as he was one of only two to pass and as also he sat whilst still only 9 . He commences in the Autumn term. At present he is walking about with his arm in a sling having been 'thrown' in a game and bruised his forearm internally narrowly escaping an internal abscess. He is keen on me carrying on with this diary.

John remain John! And Joan is in trouble, though it would not appear so at this moment as she cuts out brown paper covers for her school books. Her head-mistress has written complaining at her not pulling her weight at school, general rowdiness and association with rowdy girls, though her work evidences both ability and attention. Em is to see Miss Watson tomorrow and I have impressed — once again — on her the necessity of curbing her exuberance, especially when it brings her into collision with her mistresses and proves too much for her self control, She has shown a proper spirit — apart from a natural desire to partly exculpate herself and I believe she will benefit by these jars to her self esteem. She means well, and has a sense of her responsibilities, but is so healthy, (apart from recurrent styes & boils), so full of animal spirits, and so little subjected to trammels in her home life, that she just takes the bit in her teeth, and tries to

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combine fun with conscientious work, with results satisfactory to nobody concerned.

There they all sit – Em with Bunk at her side, on the settee (literally and visibly on its long last legs), facing Jim and Joan at a game of Ludo. Nothing much to worry about in such a group, though Em's health has been indifferent for the past week or so – threats of quinsys, sore throats, an attack (for the first time), of lumbago and general run-downness. However today's and yesterdays brilliant weather have helped considerably, and, apart from cooking the dinner, she has spent most of the day outside with us in the garden.

Mac is as soft as ever, and has walked some hundreds / of miles with me.

Miss Weeton II is at last in process of being printed, after much unpleasantness with Master Charles Williams of the O.U.P. who wanted to ruthlessly cut it down, because otherwise the 2nd vol. would be a 15/- production. I stuck out, and have won. Any further cutting / would injure continuity & coherence.

I have spent a good deal of time, also upon the editing of Miss Mitford's *Our Village*, which I would like to see produced in a definitive edition, with biographical notes. I procured a complete set of the five volumes as originally published (1824 -32) and have abstracted the purely *Our Village* interest, linking the volumes with biographical matter drawn from various sources. With regard to my Bibliog. work – I resumed my Goldsmith's Library work sometime early in Feb. and have worked at the new and magnificent University building until 3 weeks ago, when I received a batch of material

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from the librarian of St Johns, Cambridge, since when I have been at home but I hope to return to the G.L. on Tuesday. As matters stand, some editing and revision is to be done by a qualified person when I have completed my collecting and arranging of the material – mostly from G.L. and Harvard sources. Meantime, having applied for a job to the Air Ministry when the future of the Bibliography was in the balance last month, I have received word that I shall be considered for a vacancy at Hendon at the end of next June/

And now– to the diary

Passed day completely at home. Sat upstairs in morning awhile, doing final third checking of the Weeton proofs received yesterday. Joan started the day unluckily – I knocked as usual with the broomstick on the ceiling of our bedroom for her to go down and prepare Em's Sunday cup of tea. She usually responds to the second or third knock but I decided to alter this business, and shortly afterwards, went down and made it myself. She must have heard my movements, and soon came rushing down but I sent her back with a flea in her ear – result excellent! She had the place cleared up when Em came down, made a steak and kidney pie, and some cheese biscuits, and cooked all morning. The dinner was a treat!

We sat in the garden all afternoon – lovely day John teased 6d out of us, and went to practice rowing in the pond at Bushey Park. I tried to read but failed miserably –with hundreds of books to choose from. John spied Merrit and Carter on the prow after Joan – it was a joke to see him whispering to her. Eventually they cooked up an

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errand to the sweetshop, but the lads had despaired and gone.

25 May. 1938.

Have just reluctantly put down a book, one of three I took out of the Public Library tonight – Viscount Samuel's Belief and Action in Everyday Philosophy. To read, straight off the reel and without unrest, boredom, or a musical background, over one hundred pages of a book, and one upon a fairly abstruse theme, is as unusual with me as it is refreshing. My search for truth, a workable philosophy or religion, so often finds the spirit easily damped, and the flesh weak. Mrs Kent asked Em for the return of her curtains today, now gracing our sitting-room upstairs, and which we have had the loan of all winter. It will leave us in a mess, but after all, it has been very decent of her to leave them here for so long. Em went to see Joan's Headmistress this afternoon. Joan's attitude is one of – well, it is not so bad after all, you see. There is one aspect of the report which is not going to be quite so pleasant to bear – we may not get her clothes grant of £3.

The Diary now took a somewhat curious turn, consequent upon the renewal of my absorption in the countryside; the entries resolved themselves mostly into records of weekend walks in either Surrey or

Sussex, and with but little record of my other activities. The Bibliography dried up about the same time, an application for a short service admin commission in the RAF had been turned down, and I had to cast about for other sources of employment – faced otherwise with the Means Test and the U.A.B. Turning to old familiar sources and faces, I was taken on again

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as a 'temporary' licence clerk at the County Hall, commencing upon my duties early in July. The walks and cycle-rides continued, one or other of my children accompanying me upon occasion, when not otherwise engaged at their beloved Esher or Oxshott Common with pals more of their own age. The County Hall job lasted exactly one week, but a visit from a representative of the Air Ministry, with reference to my application for a job, started me hoping once again. His visit (in my absence) lasted two whole hours, and he went pretty thoroughly into my literary qualifications with Em. Could they be considering me for lecturing upon national defence? Meantime I was once more back upon the Means Test.

6 August. Saturday

A good deal has happened since my last entry (July 22nd). An offer, at 35 shillings inclusive of rent and rates, we had made for the tenancy of a modern house in Westfield Road, was unexpectedly accepted, and last Friday week we moved in. The house is of course a sheer joy, particularly to Em, who is spared many stairs and much work keeping clean the various and difficult rooms, etc. of 2, Cadogan Road. I have practically all my books shelved on the ground floor, and Joan at last has a separate and pleasant bedroom. We have brought Mr Pennycook only of the boarders along with us, and we hope we shan't find it necessary to sublet our front room, if only my Air Ministry job is realised. And with regards to that, their 'detective tout' (as young Headicar called their representative) called upon him at the bookshop last Thursday, to follow up

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the references given. He was particular once again with regard to my political past and though H. was very guarded of course. I decided last night to write and give a clear statement, defining my present inclinations and favour of democratic government, and I hope that they will now feel satisfied and produce / the draftsman's job for which I have applied.

Aug 20th / 38

Today's ride was my first outing for a fortnight—on Monday morning, the 8th, I received a telegram from Amy to the effect that Dad died the day previously, suddenly but quietly. I went up same day by the 2-10 p.m. having signed out of my time for the purpose. I arrived at Darton in the evening to find Amy under the hands of Dad's nurse—the first thing to meet my eyes indeed was a most horrible patch like raw beef on her forearm, being subject to radiant heat. It was quite 4 inches in diameter and for a moment I really thought there had been some trouble with Dad, but she quite cheerfully informed me that it was only a carbuncle! And really for some minutes I was more than a little shocked at what seemed to me her indifference to pain and indifference too to the fact of the coffin lying in the bedroom immediately above—laughing, joking—but I put it down eventually to her way, and in part the reaction after the strenuous time she must have been through during the last three weeks. It appeared that early on Friday morning, Dad got out of bed—he had not been downstairs for the last three weeks, but had been able

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Nevertheless to sit in a chair at the window at times—and Kathleen and nurse found him asleep on the floor. As his pulse kept high, instead of relaxing during the afternoon as it had been in the habit of doing the doctor was alarmed and on Saturday night, after much difficulty, he managed to secure the services of a night nurse. She arrived at Darton at 2-30 a.m. on Sunday morning, took over from the day nurse at 3-30 a.m. and by 4-15 Dad had passed away in his morphine induced sleep—his breathing simply slowed down to nothing. Aged 71. For the last 4 months, owing to constriction of the oesophagus, he had been fed through a stomach incision and towards the end had had a wretched time of it vomiting frightful smelling bile which stank out the house; his last three weeks had necessitated morphine injections, so though he maintained his faculties to the end his memory failed him and he confused days, weeks—even hours and persons. Fortunately he did not notice Amy's sling. Only the night nurse was with him at the end—a stranger, but two hours in the house! He was buried in Barnsley cemetery, in the grave which holds my little Sonny, dear playmate of 30 years ago, whose loss I shall never recall without a pang; and Mother, who died in 1920, 4 months after our wedding and two days after May's. I did not go to see him until he was in his coffin on the morning of the

internment. Indeed I had not intended going in at all presuming upon something rather horrible. However, without premeditating it, I did go in

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The weather had been hot and thundery—there was a storm raging when the men brought the plain elm coffin the day previously and there was a faint aroma of decay obvious in the room. His face was visible under a gauze covering—emaciated, colourless, waxen, heavy lidded—but pathetically noble, almost as if it were an aesthetic—it was Dad but I could never hope to put into words my utter amazement at the splendor of that splendid head—the wispy hair, the trim beard and moustache—a small weight lying on the mouth to keep in the teeth. The expression of the features was ineffable peace—a little shade of tiredness and much weakness passed. For some time I looked at him—we had differed almost all our lives, both of us had deliberately hurt one another and even the approach of death had not drawn us together. He was beyond me now and I could only whisper Goodbye Dad, you have had an unhappy life. I knelt down and said the Lord's prayer, then took a single flower out of a vase and laid it on him. An hour later he was screwed down and I believe I was the last to see him. The service was held in Darton Church. All the way to the cemetery I tried to fix my attention on the business in hand but there was no effect, no pretence, at the graveside—there quite without warning, I broke down utterly. And so, goodbye, Dad. We all understood, of course, that he had left everything to Amy – despite differences, even pitched battles over the unjustness of such a course, between him and members of the family. Amy anticipated trouble and no doubt felt guilty for she had made no arrangement even

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to have the will read – it had to be telephoned for –hoping her word would suffice. It did not. And after we had read the will, we one and all demonstrated our disgust – so much so and so much in concert that our victory came much sooner and more completely than we had dared to hope for. She solemnly promised a fair share-out as soon as could be arranged. I got Dad's gold watch which he had always promised me, but which he had struck out of his directions. He left £3000 foundry shares and some rubber and colliery shares.

Altogether he dropped about £12000 on settling my brother – in – law, Claude's, default over the Halifax Building Society affair of 10 years back – a smaller matter to him apparently, alas, than the £250 he lent me and which only a fraction of I have been able to repay. But if he has been unkind and distant, I have been ungrateful. May He who will judge make allowances for us both—which we would never do for one another. And if it has but taught me to do differently where my own children are concerned, then my father's best legacy will be a better understanding between father and children of the second generation. Bill and Ev took me over to their place at Youlgrove on the same evening. The following morning I rose at at 6-30 and took a slow walk through the valley from Bradford to little Alport and through the meadows beyond to the road. The last time I went down the valley in early morning a hoar frost was on everything and the sun rose blood red. This morning it was dull, cloudy, with occasional spots of rain—but I enjoyed it. It is such a strange change after the different type of natural beauty in Surrey. The grey stone walls particularly strike one as definite and deciding features of the landscape. Later accompanied Bill on his round,

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finding time to meander about the hillside alleys of Winster, whilst Bill attended to his patients. After dinner he ran Ev, Robin and self into Derby to Edie's place, seen by me for the first time. Caught the 7-45 train and was home before midnight. Since then it has been a case of waiting for news about the Air Ministry job, but beyond news of their representative coming down to interview the references given (and making particular enquiries about my political views), nothing has transpired. I have put in an application for temporary Government service too. Meantime the means test folk have increased my pay to 47/6 a week – 5 shillings being granted for 6 weeks only, to give us opportunity to sublet the front room, a course we hope will be rendered unnecessary by the Air Ministry job turning up in time. Amy's money of course we cannot count on probably for some months so at present it is a tight squeeze financially. Uncle Tom gave me 10s, as also did Edie, but this week will see the end of what bit I had in hand to eke out Em's housekeeping money. We sent John off on Friday to join Mrs Kent and David in their lodgings at Harwich and I managed to pay his fare and give him 2/6, to which Em added another shilling. Joan of course is disappointed but Em & Bunk are resigned to the inevitable. They may get there yet. We are all happy in the change of domiciles and that's something gained indeed. And I have at last finished the index to Miss Weeton II all except for the Epilogue which is yet to come, I feel that this volume will place her decidedly in the ranks of the truly great diarists.

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Em and the other two children in the end got down to Harwich, where even I managed to join them for a long weekend, lazily watching the Sunderland flying-boats landing and taking off, or continuing my walks, penetrating the unusual and lovely country around. At last I was in the real Flatford country; the fates were being kind, for in addition, and contrary to expectations, even Joan's school grant arrived. Meantime a crisis of the first magnitude was developing – but this time, not in our, but in European affairs; so much so, that its repercussions as far as, and even penetrated 70 Westfield Road. Hitler had spoken, and what successive Conservative and Labour governments had been either unable or unwilling to effect with regard to the unemployed and distressed areas, his fist should. Once again, the mounting file of reports upon the ex-Communist and ex-Officer pilot, Edward Hall (a doubtful character with a record of unemployment stretching back over two years, and with no real evidence of his ever having endeavoured honestly to secure employment during that period), was called for out of the Registry Department, Adastral House, Air Ministry, and in consequence of the extreme gravity of the international situation as it affected this country, everything was forgiven, and the applicant was to be directed to gainful employment – to wit, in the Registry Department itself, where his specialized knowledge of card indexing, cataloguing, and shelving, could be used to the best advantage of his country and the interests of the liberty of the subject, at an inclusive salary

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of 62 shillings per week – it being understood that the post was purely upon a temporary basis, and that all necessary travelling expenses to and from place of employment, were not recoverable, and payable by the applicant.

So, early in the month of September, 1938, I reported at Adastral House, was duly interviewed by the Head of my particular department – a harassed individual upon whose office mantelpiece was displayed, curiously enough, a photograph of my friend Hitler, – and sounded once again as to my political views before being conducted into the bowels of the building, past what appeared to be miles of tall shelving, and along alleyways where middle-aged men, decent looking types in overalls, were pushing trolleys loaded with red-and green-backed files. The ex-officer had at long last found his correct level. Begging at the gates of H.Q. R.A.F. Uxbridge, was not good enough – on this point both parties were in full agreement; employment in, say, the

historical records department, was quite out of the question – there again we almost agreed; but here the ideal solution, though temporary, had been arrived at, whereby the ex-Communist ex-officer unemployable, came under the watchful eye of a disciple of Hitler, who also, though in greater degree perhaps, was indebted to that man for the position he held under the British Government. And if I did not like it – well, there was a long waiting list of ex-officers, eager and willing, poor devils, to tread me back into the mud as they stepped into my place.

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Oct.15 / 38

The crisis over Hitler has passed. I have got a temporary clerk's job in the Registry Dept. at Adastral House, Kingsway, where I have been for the past month -and very happily too amongst a decent crowd. The wage works out little enough –55/- when I have payed my fares – workmans, as I go up at 7-30 to commence at 8, working until 3-30, with an hours break for lunch. To pay the back rates – or at least part of them, I have had to deposit Dad's gold watch with Mr Key, the jeweler, who has lent me £8 upon it. I have to find another £2 by the month end. In addition I have sold some of my books and pawned my signet ring to make ends meet; and been very occasional walks indeed.

Notwithstanding, the walks did continue, in effect just keeping the diary alive.

Nov. 12th / 38

At last news of Amy's attitude over the promised share out of Dad's estate. A letter from Ev on Wed. said she had repudiated her promises – another this morning declares she has only decided to keep the Foundry shares and may yet pay us out – meantime, Ev takes me to task for writing to the Uncles about the Foundry shares. It is not worth spilling more ink about. I have done what I think necessary to keep Amy to her promises and I leave it at that for the present. Still selling off my library piecemeal. I am keeping this record only of walks in which the children take their part, so that someday they will be

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able to revive memories of days in their childhood which were really lived and enjoyed. On Monday I have a day off and I intend going down for a walk between Guildford & Godalming. Received word yesterday that Miss Weeton will not be published until Jan. 12th. Asked them to let me have £10 for the American edition as I have to pay 18s. this weekend on overdue rates and as I have come to the end of my book sales resource. Bunky doing particularly well at his new school. John too, is showing up better and Joan is preparing for her Civil Service exam in January. Meantime she is very happy and so am I at my work at the Air Ministry. A bit more money each week as wages and Em too would have reason to be happier.

Nothing to report from Darton and no answer from Ev in response to my letter of last weekend. Cheque arrived from O.U.P. today, £10, royalty on the American edition of Miss Weetons II. Paid it to Mr Key tonight in return for the loan he had made on Dad's gold watch a couple of months back. Shall have to pledge it again on Monday up in town –train fares, Xmas fare, etc etc, to come out of it .And if Amy does not keep her promise and pay up– well it will finally have to go. But I have no compunction about my act – Dad struck it out of his will, to me for one thing and domestic comfort is of more importance to me than the possession of a watch gold or otherwise – for I managed for years without one .

Bunky is top in almost every subject in his class. A party of boys and girls in progress in the lounge tonight.–Joyce Frank, Joan, Guy, Jack Tyson, Hugh Searle, and a pal of Bunky's called Almand. Em at a whist drive at the Kingston Barracks.

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January. 10th 1939.

Took the boys a fourteen mile walk today, in Kent. Home in time for Greig's pianoforte concerto (which I love so much) and a first pre-publication notice of Miss Weeton II. A great day for the boys and myself. I felt I must make a note of their day – fourteen miles, done in great style by two boys, one 10, the other 13. Christmas has passed – Mr Kay, the jeweller with whom I entrusted my watch, murdered in his shop on Xmas eve; Em went home to Wigan; I cooked what I thought was a turkey, but which proved to be a goose, sent by Amy – who has not kept her promise, offering a mere £10 each, which we have all refused. I am still happily fixed up at the Air Ministry, and with

the £10 loan raised on Dad's watch, the £10 American 'royalty' on Miss Weeton II, and another and final payment for work done upon the Bibliography, our financial situation has been much eased. Joan had a back tooth taken out to-day.

And at that point the pre-war diaries came to an end. But neither the walks, nor the employment ceased. – the latter affording me many an opportunity, at the sacrifice of my lunch frequently, of attending organ and musical recitals in city churches which are now bombed-out ruins, alas. In the evenings at home, I was happily employed upon the editing of the letters of a subaltern written during the Peninsular campaign under Wellington. As for the walks, I still maintained notes of them, which expanded on arrival home, contemplating a book of Spring Walks, with the title: THE POOR SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH. The book was never completed, though I still think that the title was the worst feature of a promising venture; at least, it was an improvement upon

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ENGLISH JOURNEY – WITH BELLS! For was I not now upon a different footing with regard to the Government; upon a scale of remuneration, too, which though little removed from that provided by the U.A.B., was at least earned, and gave me a status. And the opportunities for walks, though limited to the weekend, were accordingly more prized and enjoyed. Take the walk performed upon Saturday, 25th March, for instance.

DOG'S MERCURY.

It is hardly two o'clock, when I find myself standing beside the dancing, swirling, shallow Mole, within a stone's throw of the many-arched span of old Leatherhead Bridge. I have just discovered and penetrated a narrow passage-way between some garages in process of being very much 'run-up', and an older, weather-boarded storehouse, at present conveniently 'to-let'. Here I am a privileged and undisturbed visitor upon this narrow spit of ground; obviously I could not have been chance-led to a better vantage ground. The bridge trails off obliquely across my line of sight; and what an absurd business it makes of spanning the insignificant, though occasionally turbulent Mole! I count no less than fourteen projecting buttresses, round each of which the waters mockingly eddy, glancing back myriads of light facets, as the sun smiles down a lingering caress. Through the arches I glimpse a flat green islet, tree-dotted, which a rise of a foot or two in the level of the stream, would completely eclipse.

It is very pleasant. With my blind eye in operation, excluding

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the undertakings of the Corporation, I for some sweet minutes resist the lure of that land of promise lying upstream, where the Mole lazily winds through the water meadows – that same Mole which in its present irresponsible Peter Pan-ish mood, distracts my attention from the white, stone-faced parapet, and the charmingly quaint half –moon embrasures, provided in a coaching age for the accommodation and protection of surely very 'jay' pedestrians. Ever the very merry dancing stream coaxes me back from other distractions, as it slews quite knee deep under the arches, every ripple reflected in bars of flowing undulating light on the vaults, so that it is even lighter under the bridge than around it ; every old red brick and Roman-looking tile, contributes to the cumulative total of complex inexhaustible, moving beauty. How could one ever have enough; how can the measured arbitrary minutes suffice in the presence of values so absolute, so inexpressible witnessed in such haunting fleeting snatches? There are moments when a sky-reflecting, sun mellowed old brick catches and fixes the roving, insatiable eye, and the soul is possessed with a longing unutterable, positive nostalgia for something dimly sensed as but temporarily lost; every bewitching light facet, the illimitable depths of cloud –flecked blue descending to the stone parapet, breeds fugitive fancies, which are not even the swift passage of the black, shiny roof of a passing motor-car, traced along the parapet, can dispel.

From the bridge itself, the nakedness of the tall trees permits a view of a derelict, undershot water wheel, a gaunt black skeleton of iron which will nevermore be prodigal of diamond glancing trickles. It

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spans a branch of the wandering stream, and connects the picturesque, dilapidated, tiny mill-buildings on either side. In Spring mood, the Mole's proper course, parallel with the bridge at my feet, capriciously choosing one or any of the many arches, are entering upon the shallows below the Bridge. Today, no king-fisher's flashing flight of electric blue and red is photographed upon the memory; and perhaps it never will more, for what man can do to spoil and vulgarise the immediate approach to one end of the bridge, man has done in his corporate self-sufficiency. What pitiful discord with that inspired work of an earlier generation, imaging and symbolising a contact with a higher purpose, more certainly found and expressed then than perhaps ever before or since in our history. A mile upstream as the crow flies, perhaps two as the Mole sinuously winds, the stream has assumed another of its hundred-fold moods; sulking – for the sun has become obscured by a heavy pall of snow-bearing clouds. Inkily the stream laps the loamy banks, flowing leadenly round bends, refusing

to frolic with the shingly bank below the aged, riven willow, half collapsed across it. The very ripples are sullen, half-hearted affairs of an oily contour. It is a melancholy quarter of an hour, punctuated by the minute bell, the sound of which floats across the low-lying meadows which intervene between Leatherhead church and the stream. Two deaths have synchronised – one taking place in a pillowed bed, the other from an earthy bed, which has hitherto housed the poor sad thing which I turn over with my stick – a water vole, no longer tortured by the hideous canker which protrudes from its side. Ahead of me, a thrush rises from the grass, having satisfactorily put a period to further life, and departs doubtless to sing a merry dirge elsewhere.

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Leaning against a nearby fence, I chance to glimpse what at first sight appears to be a group of late wild snowdrops, nestling underneath a leafless sapling, but which upon closer scrutiny may perhaps prove to be a discarded branch of white blossom, cast as unfeelingly over the fence as when first gathered. But stay – can there be white blossom such as this just yet? Blackthorn perhaps? I climb over the fence, kneel down upon the sacred bank and know at once that for the first time in my life I am in the presence of a bank of white violets, perfect, virginal, odorous, in their natural habitat. Within a yard of the cluster, there are a few of a deep purple colour, too, peeping out delicately from their heart shaped leaves, and topped with a few withered grasses of last season. Perhaps they number a score of the white variety, within an area of a foot square, and for a brief handspace of racing blue sky, the sun blesses the spot; then, gloom again descends, and the world seems a very unfriendly place for the pathetic, drooping little objects. My great walking boots would obliterate the lot almost as I strode heedlessly by. Forty years old – and my first white violet – the common heritage of infancy and childhood.

I turn my back reluctantly upon one of the greatest discoveries of my life, one of its truest thrills – an annual miracle for the finding. Am I but just beginning to live? It would seem so. Shining yellow Celandines on silted, low-lying sand deposits; ground ivy coyly peeping, piping their shrill purple trumpets from perpendicular miniature cliffs of crumbling mould – these I could not help but notice as I progressed at the rate of something less than one mile per hour along the river's verge; but no more white violets, and only an occasional purple one.

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but before I quit the Mole, (a single wild swan eying me dubiously as he shelters below a fir-clad, high-shelving bank), I light upon a crop of dog's mercury, luxuriating wherever tree or shrub affords cover and protection.

They are of the van for, as I strike uphill past the keeper's cottage in the shelter of the old quarry, and under the unobtrusive, moss-grown railway bridge, I enter upon the undisputed territory of dog's mercury – regular colonies of erect, six-inch high stalks, bearing leaves not unlike mint in appearance, from which spring delicate fronds bearing spaced, distinctive clusters of unattractive green florets, destined to become the wind-borne pollen of a later development. Particularly within the far-flung area shadowed by the boughs of birch trees, they thrust upward in their regimented thousands from the leaf carpeted floor – delicate, almost transparently green in the slanting, weak gleam of the sun now setting behind the wood, low down in the trees. Everywhere, in wood, on chalky copse-clad hillside, on high banks protecting ancient sunken lanes, dog's mercury, tolerating only the broad arrow shaped leaves of the cuckoo pint in their midst, whose extraordinary spathe is not yet visible, striking upwards out of the somewhat repellent blotched leaves.

As I ascend the hill, passing evergreen box and budding larch, towards a magnificent clump of spruce fir, I am upon familiar ground, but not so familiar that I can ever remember to have been under the necessity of seeking shelter behind the bole of a huge fir, as the driven snow hurls itself, almost horizontally, at the dog's –mercury strewn floor, the wind meantime buffeting the towering, massed

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spruce and provokingly stirring a magnificent cedar out of its dignified, aloof repose. It is, however, but the swift passage of a vixenish gale – for ere I have reached the entrance of the famed Druids Grove, the pulsing snow- wraith is drifting, ever less certainly, though still majestically, across the face of the densely wooded slopes of Box Hill across the valley. I shield my eyes from the sudden glare of the sun, in order to admire the scene, and under a transient blue sky, I turn off before the Druids Grove, uphill, and toil over the rabbit –nibbled mounds and hoof-scored turf, glad to throw myself down at last in the shade and wind-shield of the dense box fringe to the wood which crowns the hill top.

Alas, the once-famed, breath-taking view over the beautiful valley watered by the hidden Mole, is in process of being ruined. I am not one of those who consider as an eyesore the peculiarly unobtrusive lines of green and white which indicate the by-passing of Mickelham down below there. On the contrary I gratefully acknowledge this triumphant expression of a bold conception in communications; and if at present there is a white gash down in the chalk-cutting there, it will

almost certainly be crimsoned over by the glory of the poppy, ere long. Yes, all that lies to the right of old Mickleham Church, is still glorious enough, though alas just beyond the church, compelling attention and clearly visible from here, is the saddening portent of a notice-board, backed by a stretch of tree-dotted parkland. And I know just what it says; and what is indicated, obtrudes half –left, where Givons Grove once was, and where now straggles a burrow of staring, higgledy-

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piggledy toy houses. And again behind Micklaham church, streaking uphill towards the fringe of the noble forest, council houses run in deadly parallel lines; and it is unlikely that they will cease at the fringe of the forest, for it is not beyond the mechanical ingenuity of man to blaze a path through it almost overnight, even as two hillsides have already been so abominably scarred.

I turn into the tree-crowded ridge, and immediately that which portends the next blizzard greets me with a clashing together of ash poles, whose interlacing, clack-budded branches, dance madly against the blue. Skirting the sides of a depression, wooded on both of its sloping sides, I make contact with surely the longest and most winding and steep of private drives, leading to Norbury Hall, glimpsed on the left; indeed, the Hall seems to resent the stares of this generation of ramblers, and I notice that the pleasant grassy path which once crossed the front of this typical, rather ornate expression of eighteenth century domestic architecture, has been barred, and diverted below the copse. Certainly, that stretch of intervening lawn, or more properly meadow, which divided path from Hall, invited loitering especially upon a sun-steeped, insect humming afternoon. Never yet though, have I seen a sign of life about a place whose echoes have known the ringing laughter of a Fanny Burney not upon her dignity; and I rather think that her generation made more of the nut-strewn wood than does ours.

I emerge upon Fetcham Down, and at once encounter the full force of the boisterous wind. Fetcham is rather a shy infant among Surrey

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Downs; a pretty little thing, tucked away among glorious beech woods, and cluttered with copses of hazel, shining silver birch, and sapling ash; here and there are patches of land under the plough, and pleasant prospects are afforded over gentle slopes and sheltered hollows, towards a distant grassy ridge, fir dotted. Green rides of the genuine springy turf, temp one in all directions ; but a signpost,

armless, in all directions decides the route today – to Roaring House Farm! The path dips down into a shallow, broad valley, and the declining sun is flooding the silver- birch strewn slope, revealing a seasonal aspect of their beauty, rather unlooked for; for, at this time of year, twigs, branches, even the upper trunks, are peculiarly, distinctly reddish in tint. The whole of one birch before which I pause, shines as if newly varnished- a burning bush, neatly cleft with a knife-edge of concentrated sun-sheen. There is a comely swell on the other side of the depression (it is really only a modest valley), dominated with an ordered belt of planted birch, so dense as to present a tolerable barrier to the rising gale, despite the individual ineffectiveness of the slender, shapely boles. And perhaps the dull roar produced by the stringed wind, accounts more for the romantic-sounding name of the little old farm beyond the ridge, than the legendary smugglers and their connection with the isolated place in mad eighteenth century days. So I am inclined to surmise, at any rate, today, as I stand awhile, tracing the tortured twineings of a parasitic creeper, on which, high flung, nod the fluffy, silken, tufts of old man's beard. It is difficult to visualise the snug little farm of blustering smugglers, however one gives rein to the storm

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conditioned imagination today; even the presence of green and yellow-painted gipsy vans affords little stimulation to the fancy; but perhaps when next I come this way, say, in blossom time, I shall people the place with a motley, cursing crowd, whose savage dogs will make more account of the passing stranger, than that mild, kennelled creature who stares, unconfounded, in my direction now. The deep bass of the wind is suddenly pierced with a shattering din, proceeding from an abused two-stroke motor-cycle, upon which a tyro is practising along the track which runs parallel with the next ridge; he is ensuring to himself a safety which is surely not provided for or tolerated in the local by-laws. It is a foretaste of unpleasant contacts I must now perforce for a while make, as I turn towards the Beech Walk of Mesden Lacey. Granted folk must be housed, and cheaply; but the smear about and above old Bookham, has grown with my loathing of such growths, from those days when such offences were just striking their cancerous roots into the earth's fibres, and ours. It is not so many years since I first recoiled from shack and shanty littering the rutted slopes; but since then, progress municipal has been made; a stage further in the development of Bookham has been reached; and I am now provided with the option of one of a number of smooth, black roads, and though I am tempted to drop down into Bookham in order to renew my acquaintance with its still unspoiled, peaceful churchyard and church, the distant line of beeches away to the left draws me down the most direct of the approaches thereto, past a 'Fairview' facing a 'Bushbury' (palpable untruths, both) and bungaloids of the type labelled 'Goorange'

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Or 'Josella'—the latter, probably the major item in the hire purchase ventures of a Joseph and his Ella. The sun reflects somewhat painfully back from the macadamised surface of the road, and no border of saplings as yet relieves the ordered sameness; but I soon put all this behind me once I have entered the lines of lance-budded beech, which enclose one angle of the large meadow on my right. There is still no avoiding the sun, but I walk confidently towards it, my back turned upon the flaunting, tawdry ugliness of Bookham; behind me, men in gum boots, and women in carpet slippers, are still busily weeding their little allotment plots, or laying self-consciously winding paths, in inferior cement, to stereotyped design, in a pitiful attempt to express their urge for loveliness, having done most dreadfully to death so much of natural beauty as was Bookham's special claim prior to their event. I meet not one of their kind as I leave the solitary avenue of beech behind me, and, crossing the unfrequented road which leads to Polesden Lacey, take the uphill track which borders the spacious grounds of the historic mansion. The gale is gathering force as I proceed through the hazels which afford some protection from the wind-swept meadow on my left. There is a gap in the fence near the hill-top, at which I pause awhile, drinking in the distant view of Boxhill spur, glowering beyond the dull green of the meadow. A savage blast icily courses along the hedge-side, setting all the hazel tassels a-dancing, and a scurry of scented white wood ash flits across my front from the embers of a wood fire. Behind me, the little lambs bleat to their answering dams; one of them, sheltering under the lee of the copse hedge, is not

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to be restrained in its zest for life, and playfully lowers its head, the bound though taking quite an unexpected direction, backwards.

Boom, boom, boom. Goes the wind – a mighty travelling volume of sound not altogether tree-produced; for where it courses is almost undisputed over the grass, the air disturbance is articulate, varying with the velocity of the currents converging upon the exposed hill-top. Awe inspiring as well as fascinating is this interplay of the great winds under the massing of the storm clouds overhead. At present there is a fugitive, indefinable half light resting upon Box Hill, which dies off into a mist-suffused, faintly reddish tone, as I turn away from the wooden top-bar of the fence (barb-wired against intrusion upon the beckoning meadow). Now the flush, too, has died off magically, and Box Hill is promptly swathed in a black pall, against which the green of the meadow provided a vivid foil.

I am positively blown down the other side of the hill, and it is only when I have wound round the clearing half-way down – where, at the mouth of a rabbit burrow I pick up an enormous shell, discarded by the chalk loving apple snail – that I find comparative calm, deep in the recesses of a grand beech wood, overlooking an ornamental bridge which spans the steeply descending, sunken track. For awhile, I seat myself upon the exposed roots of that same magnificent beech which one summer's day last year, provided chequered shade for the garrulous old faggot-gatherer, and myself. How she rambled on, fondly discursively, upon the subject of an idealised brother's childhood as linked with and affecting her own –an idyll of some sixty years ago, the memory of

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which the sad realities of their present lot—he in the Epsom asylum, she existing precariously enough in a single -room lodging -could in no wise dispel. Today, however, I have the place entirely to myself and the trees are bare and gaunt enough, with the exception of a glow from about three feathery larches below bridge, now about to shake off their winter, scarecrow appearance. Around me the thick carpet of beech mast and leaves has proved almost too much for the ubiquitous dog's mercury, which has conquered but one patch of ground so far. The spell of the solemn place, its strange, eerie solitude, where only an occasional leaf stirs, is in strange contrast to the battle still raging overhead as the furious wind takes the valley below in one giant stride, leaping for Ranmore and beyond, on towards the vast, flat Wield. It surges along with a sustained bass note, too precipitate to produce aught but a tired creak of protest from the field gate which I shortly pass in the pocket of the valley. And, despite the protection provided by the hedged, sunken lane, a shallow muddy pond nearby is quite tenantless; bird-life is subdued, in apprehension of what is certainly shortly to come.

How utter and absolute is the feeling of solitude! Indeed, I should hardly feel comfortable were I to be approached by another human being now. in this isolated, gloomy place; the town dweller in me is not attuned to either such surroundings or to the oppressive, threatening black pall which has thrilled the very birds into silence – not excepting even the protesting, blustering blackbird of every disturbed hedgerow. The very dog's mercury takes on a sickly, pallid hue, along the steep banks of the now rising track; and the green of the broad,

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speckled leaf of a solitary cuckoo pint is almost that of vegetable slime. I happen upon one leaf which has strangled itself in an endeavour to penetrate a tiny hole in an obstruction, a decayed but obstinately tough oak leaf; the spiral it has perforce assumed, tapers from the broad fanged tips of the broader base, to a waxy, milky volute. The dead leaf itself looks more healthy in contrast.

It is a likely bank for primroses, but not even the crinkled, curled leaves of the town-dweller's own particular flower, are there to hearten and reassure me; and at present I am a little tired of dog's mercury, in such profusion – of all flowers the most needing sun to enhance its not too obvious charm. The concealed path winds slowly uphill, parallel with the green valley, and I begin to find myself in the track of the wind again; a relatively gentle, normal wind sometime assails me from the rear, as the all – absorbing tyrant overhead rides the swaying pines, oak and ash trees, almost at right-angles to the current which is playing truant down below. And at last, just as I come into sight of the discoloured, once white gable – end of a pair of deserted game-keepers' cottages, peering through the tree fringe, the snow swirls aslant, and soon envelops the valley in drifting white folds. The maltreated shell of the ancient habitation affords timely shelter, and I have no difficulty in entering a place which has provided an outlet for the destructive talent of passing hooligans.

It is always something of a thrill to prospect the inside of a deserted, derelict house, and especially so when the half timbered exterior does not belie the suggestion of a beamed kitchen, or steep-pitched attic, through whose tiny windows, at floor level, how many

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generations of sleepy eyes have awakened to the call of the garden below, sweetly a-smelling and swelling with bird song. And now the end has come. The snow drifts through the bashed, gaping window frames and the hinged latchet gate at the head of the cranky staircase, no longer bar egress to infant feet. A tattered, coloured supplement from a screen magazine, final relic of human occupation of that room, flutters disconsolately upon the stained wall. Upstairs and down, and in my lady's chamber, there is the same tale of senseless destruction, perpetuated doubtless by the same pairs of hands which have torn at the four arms of the white signpost near Roaring House Farm. Out in the weed-strewn garden, there is that which they have only partially succeeded in wreaking their thwarted, ignoble malice upon – the old well, whose oak superstructure, proof against the wind and rain, season in and season out, has not yet gone the way of windows, fire-grates, doors and stair-cases. But of what avail is staunchness in this drift to the towns of country-bred folk, no longer vital to the economy of this island! Too far from the rubber-tired, beaten track of the wealthy weekend-cottager, the eye-less

thing will rapidly become a mere shell, then a heap of rubble over which the nettle, the yellow ragwort, and the stringy shepherd's purse, will run riot.

The snow is not suffered to settle by the wind, save in slight drifts against the hedged surround of the garden, and I feel saddened for the fate of the place, left so utterly to the mercy of brute force, animal and elemental. A broad leaf-strewn track leads directly uphill towards Ranmoor Common, through a wood of hazel, oak, sallow and strip-

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-ling ash, dominating a leafy floor of subdued hues of grey and green. As one approaches the more open part of the Common, the avenue of half grown yews, sombrely green, looks to perfection with the snowflakes dancing and eddying down.

The main road is pathetic in its total absence of life and activity, apart from the impudent intrusion of a couple of magpies upon the grass verge, where lie great piles of sawn tree trunks awaiting transport to the saw mill. I turn left, towards the tall spire of Ranmoor Church, familiar object from a score of walks and vantage points beloved of ramblers. Paths strike down at frequent intervals, into the great wood out of which I have emerged, but I take a chalk path just ahead of the church school, pass a tiny pool, penetrate down the steep side of the valley, over the valley road, and up out of the woods past a snug farm onto the West Humble road. Just before I reach the road, I chance across a lovely bank of celandines, the most striking I have yet seen, the yellow petals not yet closed to the deepening twilight; but lovely and detaining as is the sight, a better is reserved for me, as I wander, somewhat fatigued, along the narrow West Humble lane, sunk below the level of the meadows on either hand. Peering into the banks for the queer toothwort which is reputed to have its habitat hereabouts, I strike a bank of barren strawberry, whose scores of grouped white and yellow florets look like so many stars in the gathering gloom – and there, down among the tapestry of strawberry leaves, coyly hidden, and in perfect harmony with the massed strawberry, I uncover –white violets!

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I really cannot resist the temptation this time. I have a wife at home, who takes pride in her little garden. I grub with my fingers, until I have secured intact just one root, getting well nettled in the process. But what care I? If I have a care at all, it concerns the difficulty of carriage for the shrinking, delicate burden, which certainly cannot be put into one of my capacious pockets. I suddenly bethink myself of my cap,

into which I place root, potent-smelling earth, and all. The field path up the hillside is not without its violets, too, but they are not of the precious white variety, and it is getting difficult to detect them, so rapid is the combination of dusk and impending storm, closing down upon the countryside. I leave the last of the woods behind me, and head towards Roaring House Farm, straight down the gently sloping valley, whose outlet is merged in the tremendous bank of scud travelling towards me, and it; and shortly I have to bend to the blast which assails me. It is a weird experience to walk in an unseen blizzard, past dimly seen ploughed fields, stumbling along the terraced chalky track, the mournful cry of the anxious peewit accompanying me in the almost total darkness. I am almost upon Roaring House Farm before I see the welcome light of one of its windows; thereafter I have landmarks sufficient, for I am approaching the main road between Bookham and Leatherhead.

The storm has passed upon its way; but not so the storm bird, who, fearful still for its young, performs mad aerobatics immediately around and above me, as I toil up the last of the day's crop of valley sides. I deliberately invite the peewit's attentions, standing awhile near

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a stile; its great wings faintly drum as it lurches madly and lunges against a background of cloud rent sky, through which the floating yellow crescent moon drives its way – a fitting end to a day sufficiently crowded with thrills.

A bus obligingly draws up as I emerge from the last of the fields, and I wonder at first why its occupants stare so as I take my seat – it is, of course, at the singular fellow who apparently prefers to lug home a piece of snow covered turf in the cap which any normal person would have used as protection against the driving snow.

All very well, but had I not once started in my tracks at an unfamiliar sound during one of my recent walks – a horrible rising moan, resolving itself into the baleful ululations indicative of the wrath to come. England was, not without protest at the nuisance of it all, reacting to the threat from the Continent. And, at last, the despised ex-officer was getting a look in, and the competitive vacuum cleaner firms were turning, not without relief and satisfaction to the making of war munitions. An ex-officers Volunteer Reserve was being initiated, and I suppose other reasons and inducements than the basely pecuniary, impelled me to submit my name in the course of the summer of 1939. With a promptitude somewhat startling after my experiences over the application for a temporary clerk's job in the Air Ministry, I was told to hold myself in readiness for interview; and the interview was not long delayed, either, and proved a most

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gentlemanly sort of affair – all brothers now, old chap; you'll be hearing from us in less than no time. And early in the month of September, 1939, and almost before the echoes of the first air-raid warning had faded out of our ears (and certainly not out of our memories) my wife and I were awakened in the early hours of one morning by the clatter of a motor-vehicle which pulled up with important screech of brakes outside our house, and out of which a policeman dashed. There was an urgent rat-tat, repeated, at the front door – an official paid envelope – an official letter inside – Mr Hall not wanted yet, but to hold himself in readiness!

The next intimation was not quite so realistic, but more to the point. I was stacking away the files up at Adastral House, when I was informed by a fellow clerk that I was wanted upon the telephone. A telephone not being part of our office equipment, I wondered a little what it was all about. A blasé voice requested to be informed, was that Mr Hall? Yes it was. Oh, well then, you are commissioned as and from 19th September. You are to go overseas at once. Report to so and so for instructions.

And that was that! Just that and no more, after twenty years as a thoroughly domesticated civilian. And what about my wife and the children? Even if the Air Ministry didn't consider their reactions, I should have to. Overseas, too – where could that be? And suddenly I discovered that I was a most important man. Could I, would I, be ready to leave at once for France? No, I couldn't ; what about kit and uniform, for instance? Could I get through those formalities, say, in three days? Yes, I thought I might. Righto, here's a cheque for your

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uniform allowance; you will leave by air from Hendon, on the 29th. And at 7 a.m. on the 29th goodbyes were said upon Kingston platform, and in due course an R.A.F tender picked me up in London, depositing me at Hendon by 8 a.m. There were a few planes scattered about, but no signs of activity. My uniform was aggressively new, but there aggressiveness ended as far as I was concerned. I couldn't even name the aircraft I saw; and as far as any assumption of authority, I approached a group of 'other ranks', at work in a hanger, with all the diffidence and deference of a conscious and complete ignoramus. Yes, a plane was going to France, but not before 10 a.m. I wandered disconsolately about the huge, echoing, and almost empty hangers, avoiding anything I saw which possessed rank-braid wider than mine. I even ventured into the palatial officers' Mess, suffered the haughty stares of a small group who obviously resented my intrusion, and was

promptly whisked out of the only empty room I could discover, by a mess waiter.

Ten o'clock, and still no sign of life on the 'drome'; but as I turned the corner of an office block, I ran into an officer with two gold rank-braids upon his greatcoat. I saluted – my one useful legacy from the last war – and desired to be informed, Sir, whether an aircraft was leaving for France? My salute appeared to excite more embarrassment in its recipient than in the giving, but the man was at least human, and could actually afford some useful information. A plane was leaving at 11 o'clock, and he would be piloting it. And at 11 o'clock, we met again beside a Dragon 'Rapide', where more

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embarrassment awaited me. Was it absolutely necessary to wear that contraption, and how did one get into it? More mystified than ever, the grand object of the gold braid buckled the parachute around me, and in a very short time the 'Rapide' was in the air and I was off, on the great adventure into the unknown – very unknown; for, beyond a hint that I was to liase between two squadrons (I wasn't even informed as to whether they were fighter or bomber) somewhere vaguely in the north of France, that was all I knew.

We touched down in a driving rain squall at Shoreham, and there was some doubt expressed as to the advisability of carrying on any further for that day – doubts which were fully justified, when, half way across the Channel, we turned back and returned, almost at deck level. Over dinner later, the air was cleared somewhat – I admitted that I was a fraud to all intents and purposes, and that it would be advisable to ignore any ribbons I wore, or at least to treat them for the anachronism they were; and on his part, the pilot referred to the salute at Hendon, and put me wise to the uniform of Western Airways, which was indeed rather a bare-faced copy of that of the R.A.F.

Over the Channel next morning, in brilliant sunshine, we had it absolutely to ourselves. There was not even a surface craft to be seen, and no call for the use of a revolver, even if I had been possessed of one. At Amiens I was unknown, unexpected, unwanted, but I had suspected that this might possibly be the case; however, I soon obtained a lift to Air Headquarters in the neighbourhood, where

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my case was investigated at some length. The roses in the secluded garden of the old Chateau were the last of summer, and rather depressing, as was the atmosphere of the Mess; and judging by the

depth of braid on the gentleman's sleeve, that I was in the presence of the hierarchy, I jumped smartly to attention upon his entrance, a gesture which he dismissed with a courteous wave of the hand, and as we proceeded to discuss the weather and gardening for want of courage on my part to open up on the subject which most concerned me.

And so, noon passed, the shadows lengthened, and I wished I was back among the filing racks. At last, in rushed a diminutive officer, wearing muddied flying boots, with hair blown awry, and in his hand a flying helmet. Was I ready? was I ready! A Magister (not that I knew its nomenclature) was revving in a field close by, and I was once more buckled and adjusted into the parachute, my shame and embarrassment the more keen as I noticed that the officer was possessed of no less than two and a half rank braids, and of the right colour too; and either he was mad at me, or just so by nature, for we hedge-hopped the whole fifty miles to our destination (just to prove the alertness of the gun crews en route, he yelled back to me – and certainly the business-like manner in which one or two machine guns were trained on us in our rear, testified to the fact that this particular 'Maggy' was not unknown on this route, and that it was perhaps fortunate that the war was really phoney as much later it was concluded to be). With a magnificent surge upwards, and a magnificent feint attack upon the unfortunates in a gun-pit on the edge of a large field in which were grounded a few fighter planes, we

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came to earth.'Thanks very much for a most enjoyable trip,' I idiotically muttered, and was at once chilled into a silence by a glare which boded ill for the ground-gunners.

And now I realised where the mud upon his boots had come from, as I walked politely and diffidently, in the rear of this gentleman. Spaced along a minor country road, and separated from it by a much tattered hedge, was a group of tents, settling down into the mud. My new black service shoes slithered, slipped and gathered cold wet douches as we approached a tent of somewhat larger proportions than the rest, in which, before an untidily littered trestle-table, was sitting a square-jawed, burly type, in a huge white sweater, his rank not obvious, but his importance very much so. I was introduced somewhat perfunctorily – this officer had reported at Air Head Quarters, Amiens; it was believed in some connection with No 1 squadron.

Some connection, indeed! And the supercilious emphasis on that aspect, or lack of same, of my mission. However, the reception I was now accorded was relatively kindly, and I told as much of my story as I judged would meet present circumstances; and at once the C.O., by name Hallahan, grasped the situation – another 'dud' body to provide

for. Meanwhile, I could take a look at the Operations Tent, and pick up the idea – I might conceivably be useful in there.

I saluted smartly, picked up my hat which the tent flap had removed and wandered off in search of the Ops. Tent. Five minutes of that atmosphere convinced me of my desperate situation. Those plotting charts; that huge board, a thing of queer squares and hieroglyphics; and above all the abominable field telephone – no, I simply could

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not face it. And everybody seemed so busy, so efficient, and so desperately polite and forbearing. I made my way to the Mess tent, and sat gloomily planning on a wooden form; I had it all to myself, thank God, and my plans quickly matured. It was all a ghastly mistake; I was more of a misfit than ever; and my job was probably still open at the Air Ministry. Suddenly there was a noise as of planes landing, and almost on top of this, a flood of the queerest objects swarmed into the tent, in all stages of undress – or so it appeared to me, who still thought that the modern aeroplane called for Number one dress uniform, and no less. Sweaters of all colours and design; torn trousers (some of grey flannel!); scarves of silk and wool; and an occasional hat which looked for all the world as if it had been mixed up in the laundry at some stage of its battered career. Pilots! My presence in no wise deterred them, though some curious glances were cast at the red – and white – striped ribbon upon my tunic. At last, one of them came forward, introduced himself, and asked what I would have to drink. Alas, I did not drink – but not so the others; there was a concerted shout for ‘shampers’, but not until the mess orderly responded, had I the slightest idea what ‘shampers’ could possibly mean. My astonishment upon seeing a case of champagne brought in, and the irregular removal of the corks of several bottles therefrom (at the rate of apparently one per pilot) was additional to my embarrassment at being the only officer present without a glass of sorts in front of him. Port, if I remembered rightly, had been our drink in the last War – dare I order one? Some good angel whispered ne,no, Definitely no, and I started upon the downhill track with a

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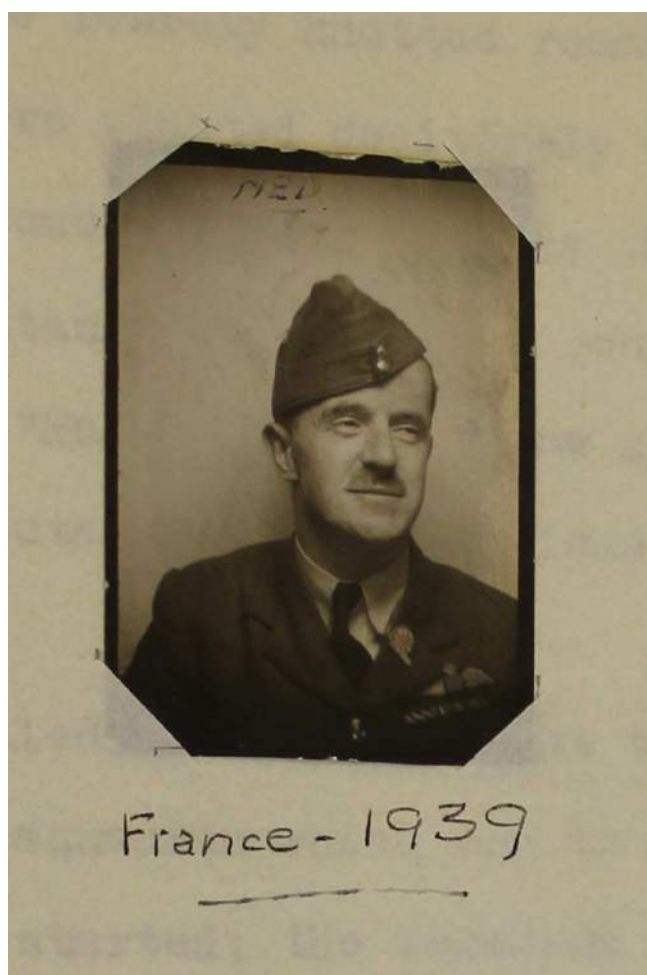
foaming tankard of beer.

Immediately I was among friends. At last I had struck the right note. Obviously I must forget that I had been in a rut for so many years. I had another beer, and I learned more about the R.A.F. in general, and of No 1 Squadron in particular during the next quarter of an hour than six months upon hot cocoa would ever have taught me. ‘Ops Tent –

nonsense! We'll see to that,' and the flushed faces gathered more intimately round the poor sod who had been so infamously treated by those so-and so's at Air Ministry. The clamour gained in intensity, and an empty bottle rolled off the table. Suddenly there was a pregnant silence as in walked my first contact. 'Mr ----, I thought I told you to do so and so?' – addressed at an unsteady pilot officer. 'Ye-e-es, sir.' 'Well, go and do it'.

Two beers had rendered me a little unsteady upon my feet; but that was nothing to the effect of a bottle of champagne upon one or two of those present. So this was the Royal Air Force! The noise and the tumult subsided; the Mess tent thinned imperceptibly out; and I became too obvious, once again. 'Oh, Hall' (no longer Mr, I noticed), 'we can't fix you up here for the night, so will you go down to Air-sur-Lys and report back here by 9 o'clock tomorrow morning, and we'll see in the meantime what we can do for you'. 'Thank you, Sir' (did one salute in a Mess, and without one's cap on?).

A tender was just on the point of leaving, and I managed to clamber in beside the overflow of junior officers, bent on some expedition the



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details and possibilities of which were vociferously canvassed by the hilarious crowd. It was good to be among the juniors – I wished I was joining them, wherever they were going, but I am neither hurt nor amazed when they dropped me in the 'black-out' of Air-sur-Lys. It was still only 9 p.m., but the place was dead; however, after repeated hammering at a hotel door, a night cap protruded from an upper window, and shortly afterwards I was ushered, supperless, into a perfect morgue of a bedroom, hung with hideously coloured draperies and furnished with the bare necessities in the way of furniture, including a kidney-shaped object at the foot of the bed, the use of which I vaguely divined. A monstrous crimson affair upon the bed proved to be the French equivalent and notion of our quilt. As for the breakfast on the following morning, I did not particularly favour coffee and rolls. I had still a deuce of a lot to learn.

At 9 o'clock, or thereabouts, the tender arrived and picked me up and I was due to report at that hour up at the camp five miles away! Whatever would they say? They said nothing –or rather, they told me to wander around a bit. This wandering around', though, was getting to be the giddy limit/ Did it never occur to them that I was ill equipped for 'wandering around'? And as I could never be sufficiently distant from the Ops Tent, I edged round the huge field, towards what appeared to be the tented camp of the sister squadron, of which I had heard somewhat last evening –No 73, so they had said.

It was a fateful walk. My career with no 1 squadron ended within a quarter of an hour of my tentative reporting to the O/C, an immense, beefy-faced, hoarse-voiced fellow, with a quite disarming smile

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though, to offset his abrupt manner and too direct approach. Sartorially he was even more independent than any specimen of the R.A.F in the field I had yet seen. His golf jacket exposed a knitted blue jersey; a scarf was loosely knotted round his thick neck; and his hefty size tens were planted decisively upon his office table, as he elicited from me some indication of my plight, and the more important fact of my acquaintance with office routine. His hand flew to the field telephone. 'Hallahan? Oh, Knox here. This chap Hall – I'm bagging him as adjutant. Any objections? No. Right!' And down went the receiver.

My fate was sealed. I was adjutant to the first fighter squadron in the field; the squadron which was to make history even before the actual, real war, started; the squadron which shortly would be headline, front page, hot news, and the resort of all the Press-correspondents from the world over; the squadron in which 'Cobber' Kain was a mere unit

at present; the squadron, one of four to become famous in Air Force history, which would eventually pit itself against the massed might of the G.A.F., and prove the Hurricane a match for anything which the Germans could produce, thereby paving the way for the more heralded and remembered successes of the Battle of Britain; the Squadron, in fact.

And I was to be its adjutant! A job at long, long last – a real job. Could it really be, that – I was no longer superfluous!



Editor's Note

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Transcript produced by Bill Melling, Archives Volunteer and Alex Milller, Archives Manager

All diary transcripts have been produced with the intention of faithfully reproducing the text of the original manuscript exactly as it appears. All spellings and punctuation marks have been transcribed as they appear; where clarification was thought necessary by the transcriber, an explanation, current spellings or punctuation have been added in square brackets or as a footnote.

The transcript of this volume was produced by Bill Melling, Archives Volunteer, to whom thanks are to be given for his efforts.