I AM SURE

BASIL VINEY

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The Autobiography of a Theistic Parson

by

BASIL VINEY

(Foreword by John Rowland)

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FOREWORD

This is a true picture of a man of eighty, looking back over a life that has been characterised by devotion to many good causes. Not all those causes will be shared by all who read the pages which follow. They will not be read only by vegetarians, not only by those who dislike professional sport, not only by those who have a lurking mistrust of some of the fashionable tendencies of our time. For Basil Viney, during most of his life, has felt strongly about many issues on which thoughtful opinion is divided. But in telling the story of that life he has not attempted to hide the strength of his feelings on these matters—and this is as it should be. In a letter sent to accompany the manuscript when it was posted to his publishers, he wrote: "I don't feel like toning things down. After all, it is *me*!"

Those who have known Basil Viney throughout his life, and those of us who are younger than he is, and so have been able to know him only for a lesser time, will, I am sure, agree that this book reflects him and his ideas honestly and whole-heartedly. That there are points on which we do not completely agree with him it would be foolish to deny. To take one small example, I am interested in County Cricket, and I would not apply his strictures on professional sportsmen to those who have given me much pleasure on the cricket field, whether in Hove or at Headingley or at Lords. But that he has always been honest and straightforward, knowing that some of his feelings might be dubbed "cranky" by those who do not completely share them, we would all hold as quite clear and obvious fact.

The life of a dissenting parson might seem to some people to be a not very exciting life. And Basil Viney's life, in London, in the Lake District, in Wales and in Sussex, may on the surface to such people appear a quite ordinary life. Yet he has spent time in the United States, during an exciting and worth-while exchange of pulpits with an American colleague. He has spent periods in

Italy, where he became the friend of some of the most independent-minded Italians. Closer home, with his interest in vegetarianism, with his feeling that free religion has to come to terms with the insights of the Spiritualists, with his outspoken pacifism, he has always commanded great respect, if only in that he has never hidden his views or trimmed his sails to the passing breezes of opinion.

The Unitarian ministry has in its time commanded the allegiance of many people of differing points of view. Its ministers range over a wide spectrum of theological opinion, and it has been possible for a man of near-Anglican views to remain good friends with another minister who is a near-Humanist. This is one of the glories of a free form of religion, without a fixed creed—though, here again, Basil Viney would not wholly agree, as he has often felt that some creed could be worked out, on which all Unitarians, ministerial or lay, could come to agree.

It will be sensed, from what I have written, that Basil Viney is a man of firm beliefs himself. This book expresses those beliefs trenchantly and without any form of pretence. That, too, is what one should expect to find in an honest autobiography.

I have known him for a good many years now. As I have suggested, there are things in this book of his with which I should not be wholly in agreement. But I would not have had him change a word. He has long been looked upon with respect—perhaps I should say "with affection"—by his ministerial colleagues and by those layfolk whom he has so thoughtfully and helpfully served in the various churches in and with which he has worked.

This book from his pen deserves to be a great success. It records a long life of service and of deep thought on many subjects. For that reason, and especially, perhaps, for a quite charming picture of a childhood about which we, his friends, will have known little until he committed his early memories to paper, I would commend it to all who share his ideas—and perhaps even more to those who do *not* share his ideas. Part of the attitude of Unitarianism is an attitude of tolerance—and to tolerate views which we do not share becomes increasingly needful in such an intolerant age as that in which we live.

John Rowland

Chapter 1.

ON BECOMING ONE'S SELF

ONCE and once only I took part in a curious competition. We were asked to bring photographs of ourselves as infants—as mere babies if possible—and we then tried to identify each other. For most if us it was quite an impossible task. Each one of us knew his or her own—not through recognition. As for the others —mere guess work. Most of us got one or two marks out of a possible score, but only by chance.

At the age of six or twelve months one was not quite one's self. One was a fat baby or an extra fat baby; one had blue or brown eyes; features were still quite plastic and unformed.

So there was no competition. But there was a winner. There was one young girl who had nearly all the pictures correctly identified. It was amazing. To her alone these plastic features were sufficiently moulded to give some idea of the forthcoming face.

No. She denied all psychic powers in which some of us saw a possible explanation. One baby is not just like another one. Nor was the girl a portrait painter, though the potentiality must have been there.

So one is at least becoming one's self at a very early age, at least as far as the face is concerned. And the mind? Presumably one is one's self mentally as soon as memory starts—once consciousness is no longer there merely in flashes, forgotten almost as soon as experienced, but traces a continuous line. The first experience permanently remembered would be the significant point.

But at what age that starting point? At six months, at twelve or eighteen months: two years, three years or four years? It would seem to vary considerably with the individual. Unless

those psychologists are right who say memory is there even before birth, and that these very early primeval or infantile memories are still intact, and that some day, in the distant future, when we are developed enough to bid farewell to earth for the last time, they will lie stretched out before us, ready to be relived at will.

Previous lives too, if there is reincarnation! A fascinating idea to recall the day when you were present at the first performance of a play by Sophocles or heard Jesus preaching in Galilee.

Now let us leave these curious and possibly valid speculations awhile, and return to the apparent beginning of my own present life. What is the first thing I remember? Strangely enough I am not sure. Certain very early memories are quite fixed and quite reliable, but I could not vouch for the order. Thus I distinctly remember being wheeled along, lying in a pram, looking up at an awning to shade me from too brilliant sunshine, and I clearly remember the pram being exchanged for a "go-cart", a much lower contraption, in which one had to sit upright, with no shade overhead. And I remember the first time I dressed myself unaided, and the first time I tasted tea. But not the first time I tasted other more delectable things like coffee or pears. But I do not remember sitting on a cat (which I am told I did about the same time, to the apparent terror of both of us). So I am not confusing narrative about myself with recollection. It was my Aunt Nell, long since dead, who told me about the cat. It was when we were discussing early experiences. She was surprised that I had forgotten, for apparently both myself and the animal were terribly scared. Now I haven't the faintest idea when this conversation took place. It might have been any time between my tenth and twentieth year. Is it a personal idiosyncrasy that many memories stand out clearly which yet it is impossible to date?

My next outstanding experience must have been a couple of years later, for my legs had long since scorned the go-cart. My mother and I were walking home from the "Fields" (Parliament Hill fields, Highgate). We went into a linendraper's shop to buy a reel of cotton. There was some small talk, and the draper asked my mother how old the little boy was. "Oh, he's a great hulk of four, and to-day's his birthday", was the rather astonishing reply. Whether I remember the incident because it was my birthday I cannot say. It's the only thing about the day I do remember. I hadn't the faintest idea what a hulk was, but felt rather proud of being one, whatever it was. And how typical it

was of my mother never to praise, never to make a fuss over one, and seldom fondle. I rather preferred it so.

Presently I was allowed my first walk alone to aunt's house. How proud I was. But when, the goal nearly achieved, I turned round and saw "Dad" a little way behind I felt we had both cheated.

By this time I had passed the line between infancy and childhood. Memory is now continuous, but special experiences stand out distinctly against a hazy background. It was probably on the next birthday that I was given two notable presents. One was a long train, engine and all, which you had to put together by slotting sections of wood into one another. It was elaborate, large and expensive; the silliest thing imaginable. A sort of innate politeness prevented me from telling the donor, my Aunt Kate, what I thought about it. I even said I liked it, in a tone of voice which plainly showed that I did not, and then felt uncomfortable because I knew I had told a lie. And when, the donor absent, I complained to Aunt Nell that it didn't go by itself, and therefore wasn't a proper train at all, and she said "you pull it along with a piece of string", the implication that I was still such a baby left me speechless.

The other toy was a cheap cardboard switchback with which I played for hours, pretending that the marble which I set racing through the spirals, down the long descents and up the short final ascent to the goal, was myself.

Later on someone gave me a clockwork engine, but that wasn't quite the thing either. Now I wanted one that would go by steam. Eventually my father bought me one, but it wouldn't go at all. Maybe that is why I never shared the desire of almost all Victorian little boys to become an engine driver.

One day Dad brought home a musical box. Not the old fashioned sort with the tunes on pronged cylinders, but the latest variety with the tunes on discs. You had to turn the handle all the time, but I didn't demur till I learned that there was a more expensive "polyphone" which, on being wound, would go by itself. However, I got a lot of pleasure out of the box: it was my introduction to music.

I could tell what tune was on each disc by the pattern made by the holes and notches; the latter of which plucked the notes on the comb. This ability to remember the pattern of holes or notches and associate it with the corresponding tune amazed the adults. Even my undemonstrative mother was inclined to show me off in this one matter. But it seemed quite ordinary to me.

I did not get stuck up about it, and wondered why anybody could not do the same.

I am now a small boy ; so small that bracken of average height just brushes my eyes. It is a sunny day, my parents are near by, but all I am aware of at the moment is a level sea of green bracken before me, the fringe of a copse behind, and, for the first time in my little life, a dawning delight in being alone awhile, and so more conscious of my own body, of the power to wave my arms and to run through the bracken, of the warm sunshine and the fresh breeze. It would be an exaggeration to write of a dawning sense of beauty. That was still a few years away. An exaggeration also to write of a sense of wonder at the power of waving arms and running about. That was taken for granted. The little child wonders about many things, but not yet about himself.

Musing on that day (though I do not recall either the occasion or the locality) another memorable picture lights up. Away beyond the bracken was the edge of a larchwood on a low hill. I was curiously pleased by the outline of the conifers, like the teeth of a saw. Not long afterwards I had my first sight of the inside of a firwood. But why did those conifers seem so much more attractive to me than " ordinary trees " ? Was it merely the charm of the unfamiliar ? I hardly think so, not so early in life. Besides, they didn't seem unfamiliar. Rather there was a queer aroma of homeliness about them, as though a long time ago I had lived among them. Absurd, of course. Intimations of pre-existence ? If so the only ones I have ever had.

A few years passed before the aesthetic suddenly awoke, and I realised that some deciduous trees were more beautiful than most conifers.

There was a contrast between the families to which my parents belonged. Each was large—my mother had five sisters and two brothers, my father four brothers and three sisters—and each took its tone from the grandfather. My father's father had left this world before I arrived. The maternal family was radical and non-conformist, the paternal conservative and anglican.

The maternal home was in Highgate, the paternal near Regent's Park.

I was thoroughly petted and spoiled by both families, but for some obscure reason had a distinct preference for the paternal home. There was something about the district even that pulled harder ; or it may have been that it was farther off, and more rarely visited.

There was my Aunt Ada, secretary to an Anglican clergyman. She always seemed to me the incarnation of piety and goodness. In later years she once remarked to my mother (on being told that I was quite a young sermontaster, flitting Sunday by Sunday from chapel to chapel) " it doesn't really matter where he eventually settles so long as it's not the Roman Catholic or the Unitarian ". There was my jolly Aunt Jess, who wanted to be a vegetarian, but was too fond of her meat, and who remarked after every Christmas dinner " I don't think I'll eat another turkey next year ". But she always did. There was my Uncle Park, designer by trade, naturalist by desire, married to a French wife, and living nearby.

Memories of wonderful rides in hansom cabs come to mind, and especially of one in a horse bus through the brilliantly lit streets on Jubilee night. The next day Dad brought home a book called " Sixty years a Queen ", and as I read the notes under the pictures I thought what a splendid person she must be. She would be riding through the park next day. I felt quite thrilled. We would go and have a look at her. They pointed at a little old woman in a carriage as it drove by. I could hardly believe it. " That the Queen ? " I shouted, " Why she's not as good as grandma."

Which calls to mind another occasion, when my Aunt Alice (maternal) took me to a Roman service. It must have been high mass. My chief recollection is of two boys holding up a book for the priest to read from, and the waving of censers. " It reminds me of a Punch and Judy show," was my not inaudible comment. The radical and the heretic were breaking through thus early, though not yet the internationalist. One day I saw a pro-Boer pelted by a mob, and escorted by the police to a basement under the bandstand in the park, the only refuge nearby. That anyone should go against his country puzzled me. The atmosphere of the paternal home presumably !

Childhood is, unlike infancy, self-conscious, even though mind and body are not yet clearly differentiated in thought. A sense of power develops. Quite early the small boy absorbs that he is male, stronger than the mere girl. Now on one occasion one of my schoolmates, a little girl called Margery, was looking with me at a book in our home. My Aunt Alice was with us at the time (my favourite aunt through the years, though on my mother's side). She got us to stand back to back to see who was taller. We were exactly the same. " Now let's see who is the stronger," she continued. " But of course Basil will be. He is the boy." She joined our hands, and told up to pull as hard as we could.

I won fairly easily. Just then she was called out of the room, and I was left alone with Margery.

"Let's have that tug of war over again," said the little girl.

"But why ? I should only win again."

"Never mind. I'd like to have another go."

Again we joined hands. Again we pulled. But this time, to my amazement, not to any distress or disappointment, she pulled me over quite easily. She was much the stronger.

"But why didn't you pull as hard as you could before ?" I asked.

"Oh, I didn't want to disappoint your aunt,"

They say that early impressions cut deep and last long. I wonder if in this childhood encounter the seeds of my later feminism were sewn.

Incidentally, up to the early teens girls are, on average, stronger than boys, but the absurd cult of dolls keeps all but the tomboys from making this discovery.

At the time of this incident we were about seven, and at a private primary school.

Childhood has a distinct sense of right and wrong, and may be guilty of sophistication or rationalization (to use the current jargon). I was horribly selfish, but very clever in deceiving myself that I really had the right to anything I wanted.

"Give me that," I would say.

"No."

"Why not ?"

"Because it's mine, and I want it."

"But I want it more than you do."

And I would be quite sure at the moment that I did.

Yet the little child, for all its egocentricism, has sometimes the queerest and most unselfish thoughts about sufferings that do not exist; due to his habit of personifying things. I well remember my father telling me "Your heart goes on beating through the whole of your life. It never stops."

"What would happen if it did, Dad ?"

"You would die on the spot."

On which two emotions assailed me. One was overwhelming pity for my heart. How tired it must be. Never to go to sleep for perhaps eighty years. I realised it as though it might be another person inside myself, or at least a faithful animal. And very grateful to it and terribly sorry for it I felt. It wasn't fair.

The other emotion was fear. How could it go on like that, almost for ever ? Impossible surely. Yet people did live. There were old people. How tired their hearts must be ! I took a piece of paper and worked it out. There was old Mrs Crane (a lodger with the paternal family), three hundred and sixty-five multiplied by eighty-one came to twenty nine thousand five hundred and sixty-five days. And all the time her heart had not had a holiday, or even a rest !

My pity for my heart, my fear for myself, both increased.

Was that the beginning of the hypochrondia I suffered from in my early boyhood ? I doubt it; but the hypochrondia from which I have been completely free ever since the teens was real enough before. I got hold of a medical dictionary and well remember one nightmarish night when I murmured (having too many bed-clothes on me) "Oh mother, I'm so hot I'm afraid I've got scarlet fever." Then, a few minutes later (having thrown off the clothes) "I'm so chilly now I think it must be pneumonia" !

Another queer idea. My father told me that if I stopped breathing I would die. But I did not personify my lungs. My heart went by itself; I could neither start nor stop it. It wasn't really part of myself at all. But my lungs were. I could stop them. It was I myself who breathed. There was a difference. At the time I took it for granted that I could stop breathing altogether if I wanted to. I well remember sitting on the "leads" of the built up kitchen and wondering how long it would be necessary to hold one's breath in order to die. It was not till I came to know of the painful and curious ways in which people committed suicide (turning on the gas or throwing themselves in front of trains) that I realised the difference between holding one's breath and stopping it—and therefore that there was no ready way of ending life.

Another idea that sometimes bothered me in those early days was that I might not wake up. Sometimes I was half afraid to go to sleep. I was terrified by the thought of annihilation. I did not know the word of course, and I had never been told about hell, and cannot remember having any idea of heaven. But the idea of annihilation was there right enough, and it was simply more horrible than anything else.

I must have been at least six before I realised that doctors and clergymen died. I took it for granted that they were immortal.

"But do they really die like we do ?" I remember asking my mother. "Why, what frauds they are," I continued. "I wonder if they really know any more about illness than we do, or about

heaven either." I felt thoroughly " let down." Presumably some psycho-analyst might find in these almost infantile ideas the germ of the anti-clericalism and anti-orthodox medicine that matured later on.

I was a pretty healthy specimen on the whole, but for a slight rupture which necessitated wearing a truss, and an occasional visit to a bearded and rather solemn doctor. My feelings towards him were neutral until one day he described me to my mother as " one of Pharoah's lean ones." I had not the least idea what he meant, but took it as in some way disparaging, and felt an instant dislike to him. (So absurdly can the most casual remark be misunderstood by the simple mind). But on the next visit he put himself in my good books again by asking me " and how is the hernia getting on now, my laddie? A little smaller I hope." I hadn't the faintest idea what he was talking about, and my mother chipped in with " Oh, he doesn't know anything about it." " Well, it's time he did," was the retort.

I remember being taught by my mother to read and write, and a waste of time I thought it. My tiny mind was rational enough even then to protest against the stupidities and inconsistencies of English spelling and the linguistic inadequacy revealed by the bare possibility of punning.

But I soon changed my mind and started writing. I bought an exercise book, and cut out a " window " in the cover in which I inserted on a piece of cardboard the title—" Animals and their Habits ". I can visualise that book even now after some seventy years and more. It started in the most puerile vein—" The Lion is the King of Beasts " and it closed with " so you see there is use and beauty in everything, even in a tape worm "—a purely dogmatic affirmation, for no use or beauty had been ascribed to that wretched parasite, only a quite accurate description of its mode of life and reproduction. But I do remember being chagrined by the amusement of the adults at this production, which I thought pretty good.

Incidentally one page consisted of a quadruple column showing the special names given to the male, female and young of a few of the animals. Thus: ox—bull; cow—calf. I was distressed that there were so few double entries, hardly any triple. My father said, " But you've left out the monkeys ". " The monkeys? " I gasped. " Are there special names for male and female monkeys? " " Yes, of course there are," said my father, " monk and nun." So they went down; and very disappointed I was when told the real meaning of the words. A poor joke it seemed to me.

I had occasional nightmares in those days. Two I have never forgotten. In one it seemed I was being forced out of my body. Only by the greatest effort could I remain there. Then suddenly it was all right again. I was in my body safely, and wide awake; but not till I had won another struggle could I open my eyes. I had already been scared by a few ghost stories, but fortunately knew nothing of the theory of possession.

The other nightmare? I was walking happily along a lane well known in waking life when a little girl in front of me whom I was vainly trying to overtake (merely for fun, I did not know her and could hardly keep pace with her) turned round, and she had no face, only another back to her head. In horror I turned round and started running away, scared that she was running after me, that she would catch me and grasp me, that she would be stronger than me, so that I would never be able to get away from her. It was like the falling dream so many of us have—you wake up before you reach the ground. I woke just as she was about to hold me. I had no return of the dream, but it was a long time after that before I dare go to sleep with my face to the wall, as it had been on that occasion.

To complete the list of childhood eccentricities I must add that (though years were to elapse before I knew the word) I was haunted now and then by solipsism. I well remember the first time that this horrible idea occurred to me. It was at a fairground, and we were looking at a roundabout—wooden horses swiftly moving, children on them, and wooden statues upholding the roof. They were not alive, those statues, nor were the horses, though they were galloping around. But the children on the horses, the adults looking on, the donkeys munching the hay nearby? Suppose they were not really alive either? Suppose they were just more cunningly made machines? And everybody else too—my mother and father, my aunts and uncles, Margery, who pulled me over, and Charlie, whom I could so easily get down—they might all be just cunningly made mechanical dolls, not even pretending to be alive (they would have to be real, conscious, to pretend). Then I might be the only conscious being in the world. (I could not so have put it, but the idea was there in all its stark possibility). It was too horrible. It was worse than the faceless girl. She was only a dream anyhow. It was as frightening as annihilation.

I have no idea if these fantasies are very unusual—if perchance they are met with more often among only children, of whom I was one. I kept them strictly to myself, told them to no one till childhood was long past.

By now I was attending a nearby kindergarten school, and learning quite a few things, some of them very wrong. Well I remember the headmistress, Miss Amos, a not inappropriate name. A Scot, she gave us our first lesson in patriotism. She went round the entire class individually, atlas in hand, open at the map of India, with an inset of Britain in the corner, to give an idea of the relative size of the two countries. In front of each child she put her finger on the inset. " Look, that's England," she said. " I put my finger on it, and it covers it up. And now I put my finger on India, and it hardly makes any difference. Yet little England conquered great big India, and our gracious Queen is now its Empress. So you see how proud you ought to be to be English ! "

" Ooo," from each pupil in turn.

Thus insidiously are nationalistic ideas sown in innocent young minds by stupid adults.

Chapter 2.

THE DESCENT TO BOYHOOD

CHILDHOOD and boyhood are very different phases of life, and in some respects the child is more mature than the boy. In some ways boyhood is a step backwards. For the first time one is really aware of sex, not by attraction but by repulsion. And here let me protest against the long established abuse of English involved in calling young women girls. Also against the new and increasing habit of calling young men boys. Let us use the good old English words of boy and girl as they should be used. Then it will be true to say that boys and girls, more aware of the differences between them than they were as children, slightly dislike each other ; unless, of course, they are members of the same family.

This dislike may be fostered by the social atmosphere—by the exaggerated association of boyhood with boldness and girlhood with feebleness, and by segregation in separate schools, even as it may be toned down by coeducation. But to some degree it is normal and not improper.

Not that there was dislike in my case ; merely ignorance (I had no sister) and indifference. Nor was my boyhood normally boyish. Whilst I could enjoy a good rough and tumble or a game of touch, it never bothered me the slightest who won. It seemed to me that once you took a game seriously it was no longer a game. All the fun has gone out of it, and it becomes a bore, either to participate or to watch. The only time I enjoyed a cricket match was when everybody fooled about ; and the only condition under which I could imagine myself watching billiards with a degree of fascination would be were Gilbert's " elliptical balls " used. Alone among games chess held a mild interest for me if not taken too earnestly. Card games, if depending solely on chance, were simply silly : and if involving an element of memory became merely tiresome.

In later life sheer duty as a parson compelled participation in whist drives, but always boredom reigned supreme. Maybe here lies the explanation of my aversion to gambling. No credit to me, for so stupid all forms of gambling have always seemed that not the least scrap of temptation ever lured.

No doubt entirely to cut the competitive element out of sport would take the edge off it; but to play as though * "eternity were hung on the conduct of a pawn" (or of a ball) is to go to the other extreme, and to lead, as often happens today, and mostly among spectators, to sheer hysteria or thuggery. Instead of becoming a welcome substitute for war, sport becomes but another sort of battle.

I well remember my introduction to the boys' school: a small private one. It was preceeded by a long talk with my mother about the future—the prospect of manhood in the dim distance. I was about ten at the time. I would spend five years at the new school, and then go on to office life. I was not thrilled by the prospect, but had not given any serious thought yet as to what I would like to become.

The new boy (I was the only one that term) was left alone for some reason in the junior schoolroom, looking on to the playground. It was the recreation hour, and I was soon spotted by the others. They crowded round the window, pointing at me and yelling out "new boy, new boy." I was not scared, and soon got on well with them. There were one or two bullies among them, but they left me almost alone.

I had often wondered about birth; but none of the "grown ups" in my circle would satisfy my curiosity, merely saying that I would know when I was older. But I had worked things out for myself up to a point. I knew that mammals didn't lay eggs, and decided that the female must bear the youngsters alive, like some reptiles did. But of the function of the male I knew nothing, and could imagine nothing. Then one day at the zoo, with my special chum of the time, we saw a lion and lioness copulating. "That pair will have cubs now," said my chum. I could not believe it easily. It all seemed so revolting. I have wondered since if my reaction to the sudden revelation was usual.

Not long afterwards I found in a book in my grandfather's library an illustrated account of the reproduction of mammals. The next time I looked for the book to refresh my memory I could not find it. An aunt had hidden it. I complained to my grandfather and he demanded the book from her and told her not to be

* Cowper's *Task*

so stupid. "The lad should have been told about it all long ago," he said, but his daughter shook her head sadly.

All this sounds incredible, but it was about this time, 1902, that Huxley's physiology was reissued—a book with a detailed account of all the organs and functions of the human body with the exception of those concerned with sex. There is no mention of ovary or testicle, and the book leaves one with the impression that there is no such thing as sex, no difference between man and woman, no answer to the persistent questions of inquisitive and intelligent children; "where do babies come from?" Of course the book wasn't written for children, but was often used in evening classes on physiology for teenagers! I cannot imagine that the omission could have pleased the progressive minded author: it must surely have been imposed on him by benighted educational authorities. Reflecting on the obscurantism of Victorian prohibitions one can better understand the equally erroneous permissiveness of today. The pendulum swings inanely from one extreme to the other: will it ever stop on the point of rest—the sweetness and sanity of the middle way?

At about the age of twelve or thirteen, rather suddenly, a change came over me—the dawn of adolescence presumably. I was no longer ever bullied, but rather respected. My opinions were sought. One day I found myself in serious discussion with another boy, slightly elder, about Satan. I said I did not believe in him—he was only a personification of evil. "Maybe. But if so then God must be only a personification of good," retorted my companion. That rather took the wind out of my sails. It was quite unexpected, and seemed quite logical; but I did not agree. What I did say slips my recollection, but I have a vivid picture of the other boys listening with some sort of admiration for the two young philosophers. Incidentally my protagonist, Wallace Dana, was the only one of all my schoolfellows with whom I was in contact in later life. I have a vivid recollection of his clever acting in school plays, especially as an Irishman with an oft repeated tag of "Pat's the boy to do it!" Then a break of some ten years till we met again accidentally and quite unexpectedly in a cafe at London Bridge. We were both discontented clerks. Some years after I had become a Unitarian minister he became an Anglican clergyman. He was thirty-five when he went to college. "Half of life over," he commented at the time. We remained good friends through the years, interested each in the other's viewpoints, though seldom in agreement about either theology or politics.

In boyhood there were no more nightmares, no more solipsism.

As to lessons: I was very good at geography—I could have been good at history too, had it been real history, and not mere chronicles of the accessions and deaths of kings in the one small island of Great Britain—in the southern half of that merely till the union of England and Scotland! Not bad at geometry; but mediocre in algebra, perhaps because we were never taught the purpose of it. Irritated beyond all bearing at Arithmetic, because of the sheer stupidity and needless complexity of English weights and measures. Even then I marvelled at the insanity of my country in not having adopted the metric system when other countries had done so.

I was terrible at languages, because I could not see the sense in learning what were after all merely alternative means of expressing the same thoughts and feelings when there was a single branch of science or art of which one knew nothing. (Stupid too to give boys a mere scraping of three foreign languages, Latin, French and German; ninety-nine times out of a hundred all forgotten in the first year after school).

Science? But apart from a few occasional lessons in physiology there wasn't any. I would have liked the biology in the modern schools—my first love was zoology. There were supposed to be physics—at least light, heat and sound—but we had no light or sound at that private school; we were stuck in heat all the time, and that was used only as a device to exercise our mathematics. In other words, it was a fraud, and so I remained a deliberate duffer.

A born rationalist I must have been, with my objections to the irrationality of English spelling, of English mathematical tables, and of the learning of other tongues. To a certain degree this innate rationality even spoiled my enjoyment of poetry, at least when the poet used false rhymes (words that rhymed in spelling but not in prononciation).

At drawing I was hopeless. I could not understand this, for at "mapping" I was excellent. So one day I drew lines of latitude and longitude across a picture of a group of birds—an accurate drawing at least, I thought, as I rubbed the lines out. But the result was disastrous, and I never tried again.

I kept pets—reptiles usually. There was a chameleon who survived three years. He must have been very tenacious, for his domain was but a small ferncase heated through the winter by a tiny nightlight. In another larger ferncase lived one small grass snake and a large toad. Here it was I witnessed an encounter

between these two animals the like of which must happen not infrequently, yet which I have never seen described in the books. The snake circled round the toad as though preparing to attack and eat. He could never have succeeded; he was too small. The toad raised himself on his long hind legs and small front paws, looking like some sort of grotesque monster, and moved round so that he was always facing the snake, who slowly slunk off.

Among a few pretty and lively wall lizards there was a delightful green lizard, a larger fellow, who soon became very tame. He would sit on one open hand and eat fruit or lick castor sugar off the stretched out finger of the other. He also relished worms, and above all daddy-long-leg spiders. At the time we were living in a house with a large cellar under the ground floor. And it was full of those spiders. They lasted him all the winter. But by springtime he had eaten the lot, so it was back to the worms. But for days he would have none of them. "No spiders any more? Then it must be orange or banana please!" One would scarcely expect such nice discrimination in a reptile.

In which respect lizards are certainly more intelligent than toads. A toad (the same fellow who defied the snake) spotted a woodlouse in his domain. He snapped it into his mouth on his sticky tongue; but there was no taste to it: nothing but those scraggy legs and that hard carapace. So it was ejected. None the worse, it unrolled and began crawling away. Immediately it was again in toadies mouth, again to be quickly rejected. That happened eleven times, perhaps the toad waiting a little longer and ejecting the wretched crustacean a little more speedily each time. At last he turned his head away, almost as though he were afraid that if he still looked and the prey still moved he would again have to try it. The woodlouse seemed none the worse for its ordeal.

In those days we also had a canary, an affectionate little bird who, after we had been out awhile, would always strike up a song of welcome as he heard the key move in the keyhole. It was after one such song that, quite suddenly, he fell from his perch to the floor of the cage and died.

Towards the end of my boyhood we moved to a large corner house in Holloway (the one with the cellar mentioned above). There was a fair-sized garden in front and a small triangular one behind, all asphalted except for a tiny bed about twelve feet long and one foot wide. The idea came to me from somewhere (perhaps from a little book on gardening) to make a pretty flower

garden of it, with beds all round and a lawn in the middle. During the school holidays two of us, the special friend and myself, worked like Trojans carting loads of earth in buckets from front to back, covering all the asphalt, except for the paths, with about six inches of mould. We drew a plan to work by—snapdragons here, ferns there and all was ready for seeds!

But nothing happened. The day after all was ready, a workman arrived to do something in the house. He pointed out (what should surely have been obvious to two boys of twelve and to my mother) that the first storm would wash all the soil down the drain and lead to a serious blockage. So we spent the next two days of our holidays carting all that soil back from back to front—this time up the steps, and with many a fearsome glance at the ominous clouds now gathering. We just finished in time.

But we had not done with those drains yet. One day, alone on a nearby common, I saw a strange motion just under the earth, and presently a little mole appeared. I watched him breathlessly. He rested on emerging, and to my surprise and delight let me pick him up without struggling! I carried him home in a 'kerchief and liberated him on that tiny bed in the yard. After a large meal on worms he buried himself, and I went indoors happily, hoping he would soon become tame. Indeed he seemed so already. But not a trace could be found of him later on. Only the bath wouldn't empty. That small mammal had crossed the yard, gone down into the gully into which the outflow pipe emptied, and climbed up the pipe to the very bathplug itself. There the pipe narrowed, and there he was fixed, unable to get out or go back. We had to send for the plumber to put things right again.

Why this story has so sad an end surpasses me; for moles' hairs are clubbed at the tip and can be stroked as readily backwards as forwards without going against the grain. The animal can therefore move as easily backwards as forwards in his burrow. Nor is it easy to understand why he ascended the pipe. It was the nearest thing to a mole tunnel on our premises, but it was perpendicular, not horizontal. Anyhow it was too much for him.

Memory is made of more durable stuff than is sometimes realised. I read in Boyd (the "Country Person") that one remembers very little—that what is called continuous memory is very intermittent—that of years gone by only a few red letter days remain. This is his reason for keeping a diary. The passing time is made to trace a line through the years.

On the other hand there are psychologists who hold that nothing which really impressed the mind in the passing moment

is forgotten. It may seem to have disappeared; no effort can recall it, yet it is still there in the subconscious, hidden but indelible. This is not the place to enquire into the mechanism of memory, whether it is spiritual or material (of this more later) but the manner in which quite trivial and pointless incidents will pop up spontaneously, maybe five or fifty years afterwards, sometimes without anything in presnt circumstances to account for the recall, seems to prove the psychologists right and Boyd wrong. The diary, the snap, will aid recapture, and for voluntary recall (especially for the date of the incident) may be invaluable, but they are not essential.

Often the effort to recapture may drive the ellusive memory further into the background. A more general approach is usually more useful. Concentrate on any special period, on any room in the gallery, and the pictures, hitherto invisible, will begin to reappear in their places. As one gazes on any particular picture the details and colours clarify.

Think, for example, of the days when your legs were so short that they dangled when you sat on a chair. Memories of early childhood, even of weanlinghood, will begin to take shape—no diary needful.

Come boyhood, as already said, and there were no more worries about nightmares or solipsism. But there was plenty of sophistication, more open and obvious than childhood's claims "I want it more than you do, so I ought to have it." Not as banal or brutal, but even stupider. Thus I had a mania for maps of all sorts, but especially for a map of the county of London (heaven knows why) and for another of the London Zoo. Now London is shot through by the Thames and the Zoo by the "outer Circle", and it seemed to me (why I haven't the faintest idea; unless driven by a subconscious passion for symmetry) that in either case each half should be a half. But in each instance the southern sector was the larger.

Merely a stupid whim? No: the trouble was much deeper. It was serious. I drew two maps, one of London and one of the Zoo, in which the north and south scale of the northern sector was multiplied by one and a half, thus making the two sections about equal. And though I knew that these maps were false I had satisfaction in looking at them. Let's pretend!

I suppose I am giving the critics stones to hurl at me in these confessions. Wishful thinking, blatant and unashamed. How much wishful thinking then in later and more serious statements about more important beliefs? I don't think so. One could even

argue that in later years distaste of such boyish dishonesty has made one more careful to guard against any recrudescence thereof. But that a not unintelligent boy should ever have been guilty of such laborious cheating seems worthy of note.

It was soon after this, soon after the highflown debate about the personalities of God and the Devil, that I did my first bit of serious thinking. Our headmaster, a devout Anglican, talked to us very seriously one Easter about the significance of the Cross. " This will be your last term before you go out into the world. It is most important therefore that you should know what our Lord did for us on Good Friday."

There followed the most crude of all theories of the atonement. God wanted to forgive us all our sins, but he could not possibly do so without contradicting his own just nature, because even a finite sin committed against an infinite being became infinite. Therefore only another infinite being could pay the penalty. That being was Jesus, and that was why Jesus cried out on the cross " My Father, why hast thou forsaken me ? " For God *had* forsaken him. At that moment not merely the sins of all people who had ever lived or would ever live were laid on his shoulders, but all the guilt too was transferred to him. " You see boys he had *become* sin and guilt, and therefore in those terrible hours his Father *hated* him. So now you understand, my dear boys, why you must love Jesus so much. After what he has suffered for you you must be loyal to him and do what he tells you ".

I was at first very impressed. I had never heard anything like this before. My parents, congregationalists, had never bothered me with any orthodox dogma. Poor, poor Jesus ! Yes, I must try hard to be good. I took down from a shelf somewhere in the back of my mind an idea I once had of the " perfect boy "; intelligent, kind, brave and witty ; and it looked pretty shabby, much too complacent and shameless. I must try very, very hard.

Then, just as I got into bed, two thoughts flashed into my mind, the first " What a Devil God is "; the second " I don't believe a word of it ! " Then I started reasoning it out, and soon had the whole wretched theology torn to shreds. How did a finite sin become infinite because committed against an infinite God ? It ought to mean less to him than to the man sinned against. And how had the price become infinite even if paid by another infinite being, when he only suffered for a few hours, and knew all the time how soon it would be over ? And how could there be two

infinite Gods, or even three ? So began and ended my short, sharp acquaintance with orthodoxy.

It was thanks to another teacher at the same school that I was aroused out of a political complacency in which my father's family were enwrapped. They were conservatives, as were almost all Anglican families in those days. And they had been horrified to hear that my maternal grandfather, a lifelong radical and republican, had been a pro-Boer. But in those days my Dad and my beloved uncle Park were my counsellors in all things.

Now while I was still a schoolboy the Russo-Japanese war broke out, during the course of which some Russian warships fired on some British fishing vessels in the North Sea. This was an outrage, the more so as most of the British were warm admirers of the " brave little brown men," and detested the Czarist regime. I remember my great schoolboy friend of the time saying, " We've got an alliance with the Japs. Why don't we unite ? Our two little islands could rule all the world ! " And I thought he was talking sense.

Then this other schoolmaster spoke. He hoped and prayed there would be no reprisals against Russia. It would only mean killing Russian soldiers and sailors who had no quarrel with us, and our men would be killed too. There would be widows and orphans in both countries, and what good would it all do ? And he launched into a recital of Robert Southey's wise and witty poem " The Battle of Blenheim ", with stupid old Gasper's insistent affirmation that " it was a famous victory " and little Wilhemmina's unanswered question " but what did they kill each other for ? "

I suppose I really became a pacifist after that lesson, as memorable a milestone in my life as that other lesson by the Head on the meaning of the cross.

Incidentally, a few years later, this other master became an Anglican clergyman.

Not long before I left school my maternal grandfather and I discovered each other. Hitherto he had been to me little more than an appendage about the house, but serious boyhood and elderly manhood may develop a great interest in each other. For many years my grandfather had been a highly placed clerk in a railway office ; but in his spare time, and now in his retirement, he devoted himself largely to " Christian evidences."

His quiet little wife, my grandmother, was still living ; and in their home were two daughters, and their two sons, both strangely

hermit-like in habit. One of them never exchanged more than an odd word with anybody, until, the sole survivor of his generation, and dwelling then in a nursing home, he opened out surprisingly to my wife and myself. Thinking about him now, it occurs to me for the first time that his loneliness may in part have been that of the only musician in a large family. A jeweller by trade, he was so ardent a lover of Bach that he bought himself a small but genuine church organ, heavy enough to bend the floor of the " music room ", and there he would play in solitude for hours. The other members of the family could perchance sometimes rise to Sullivan or even Mozart, but Bach never. A pity my Uncle Will and I hardly found each other, though he did read my musical history not long before he died.

But to return to my grandfather. After the Head's lesson about the cross had let to my rejection of orthodoxy we had great mutual interest in liberal religion and radical politics. Together we went to open air Christian evidence meetings on Parliament Hill (where in earlier years he had often spoken) ; together we went to Gospel Oak congregational church (now a church no longer) where the minister, Henry le Pla, was an outspoken liberal of quiet persuasive power. But though my grandfather admired Martineau he stopped short of Unitarianism, and so did I, arrested awhile by the influence of Joseph Cook, whose books my grandfather gave me. Cook was a rhetorical American lecturer, with a marvellous facility for putting the new wine into old bottles. It was one of his lectures which long convinced me that trinitarianism was valid—model trinitarianism of course, for tritheism Cook had no place whatever.

One lecture was really outstanding. Solar energy was an ideal symbol of the Godhead : light was the Father creator ; colour (the rainbow) the Son incarnate, showing the essence of the Father ; warmth the Spirit : not three persons on any account whatever, but three aspects of the one indivisible Being of God.

For awhile this completely satisfied me. It was sometime after I had exchanged school for office that the fallacy in Cook's brilliant defence of the trinity (or rather of the Deity of Christ) suddenly occurred to me. The rainbow, he said symbolised the second mode of God and his incarnation in the flesh. For even as the bow revealed the colours in invisible light so Jesus revealed the qualities inherent in the Father. Still the same on person. Cook's view was akin to Swendenborg's, though maybe he was unaware of it.

Well, I was watching the " rainbow " in a small fountain in Waterlow park when it occurred to me that there was nothing

unique about it. It wasn't THE rainbow. We each one of us makes his own. All one needed was a prism to split the ray coming through the hole in the shutter into its several resplendent hues. So we could, each one in his own thoughts and feelings, words and deeds, make visible something of the virtues of the invisible God. Jesus was not unique. At most he did but realise potentialities enfolded within us all. He was not God anymore than we are God. He was not *the* son—only a son.

Besides, he never said he was God. He prayed to God like anybody else. Why had I not realised the significance of that before ? But my mind was clear now. So with some reluctance (I had enjoyed their services and their country rambles) I resigned my membership of " Gospel Oak " congregational, and sought a Unitarian church.

Now, I had read in an old edition of Pear's Cyclopaedia that there were two sorts of Unitarians ; those who based their beliefs on Biblical texts, and often regarded Jesus as superhuman ; and those who denied infallability to any external authority, and affirmed the pure humanity of Jesus. Imagine my disappointment when, arrived at the nearest Unitarian church (in Highgate) I found the board outside full of proof-texts : one attached to each article of a fairly long creed ! Glad I was, shortly afterwards, to find the board removed, and a new and simple statement of faith substituted—the five famous points now already regarded as old-fashioned : the Fatherhood of God ; the leadership of Jesus ; salvation by character ; the brotherhood of man, and onward and upward for ever. I entered the building, joined in the service, and soon became a warm follower of the new minister, the Rev. Adolphus Charlesworth, revelling especially in his sermons on Browning and Ibsen, though a trifle disconcerted by his affirmation of reincarnation.

I have already said that during the early years of adolescence I had been quite a sermon taster, attending some half dozen baptist and congregational chapels fairly frequently. There was one baptist minister who amused me by saying that God put the fossils into the rocks to test our faith in the Bible ; and there was the famous Dr. Horton, of Hampstead, who had baptised me, and whose sermon on " Why I am a trinitarian " would have made me a Unitarian on the spot but for Joseph Cook. But these meanderings became less frequent under the ministrations of le Pla, and, on joining Highgate, vanished altogether save for an occasional visit to the neighbouring Unitarian churches at Islington and Kentish town, in order to absorb something of the philosophy of Tudor Jones and the pacifism of Frank Hankinson.

Chapter 3

DISGRUNTLED CLERK

MEANWHILE I had become a clerk in the Railway Clearing House. My father had by this time left my mother to pursue or be pursued by (we never knew) a young woman whom I had never seen, and of whom I knew nothing. He had passed right out of my life before my boyhood ended. Were he engaged on a building project anywhere in the countryside (he was by trade a builder) he would take me out with him and bring me back to the end of our road, but would always refuse to come inside, saying "I must get back now; it's late." For my sake a fiction was maintained about being away on business, and it was not till I was "out at work" that I realised what had happened. I liked him, but felt no painful regrets. I had never loved or admired him as much as I did my Uncle Park.

As to my work in the world, I took my lot as a clerk for granted. I did not feel hurt to leave school at fifteen. My grandfather had been a clerk, and so were my two maternal uncles, so why should I object?

I was just an ordinary fellow, with no ambition, no grievance about having missed secondary education, no great idea of my own abilities. School hadn't meant much to me anyhow. Doubtless that was something to do with the type of school. I had an interest in zoology, presently also in listening to music and reading poetry, but my spare time would suffice.

It was not till I had been clerking for some time that I realised how drab a job it was, and then my hatred of the work suddenly grew to alarming proportions. I did not want to be a clerk any longer, but could not see any way of escape. I had bought a violin, and taught myself to play tunes on it. I got on quite easily to the third position, and did not realise at the time that that was the usual experience. My mother, who was not one to enthuse

over her son's abilities, thought I might really have uncovered an unexposed talent, and I had a momentary dream of becoming a "pro". How splendid if I could play in an orchestra.

But the dream soon vanished. I never got beyond that third position, and to play in a few hymns or marches in the congregational chapel orchestra was the limit of my achievements.

Then, along with a clerical friend, I joined some evening classes in physics. I already had a fair knowledge of theoretical geology and zoology, so I now had dreams of a science degree. But, to my horror, I soon found that some knowledge of French and German was necessary even to matriculate. So, being a complete duffer at languages, that was the end of another glorious pipe dream.

I also had dreams of becoming a preacher and writer. I recall the excitement with which I saw my first letter in print, and the depression when a ghastly error glared at me. The letter appeared in an animal magazine, and was in answer to a correspondent who wondered if there were more than the five generally recognised physical snses. I said that we all had at least a sixth, the sense of motion and direction, and suggested that all one need do to set doubts at rest was to close the eyes as the train in which one was travelling went round a curve, or to sit in a rowing boat and ask to be steered in a sequence of curves, each one of which could be sensed quite apart from sight, or from contact of the body with the boat, could be sensed so clearly that one could draw the curves and also estimate any change of speed. So far so good. I read my own article in print with ever growing Chestertonian delight. But this pride indeed heralded a fall. For, referring to the seat of this often unsuspected sense I said it was in the cochlea (that part of the ear used for detecting pitch) whereas I should have said and thought I had, the semicircular canals. How came I to make so silly a mistake and not spot it before posting the letter I shall never know. I used to walk to the office in those days, reading on the way; and at this moment could draw the very corner where my delight turned to shame. How seldom one sees anybody reading while walking today—is it due to the increase of traffic or to deterioration of eyesight?

It did not even occur to me at the moment to blame the editor of the paper for not spotting and correcting the obvious mistake. He must surely have known, and need only have changed one word. With a sense of utter humility I wrote the necessary correction as soon as I arrived at my desk, and posted it in the dinner hour. "I wrote cochlea. I should have written 'semicircular

canals'". Yes, they printed it in the next issue. But for years afterwards, though I wrote many essays and fairy stories, I did not send them to the editors. Instead I stored them in my bureau, sometimes reading them with no small satisfaction to myself, and, I dare hope, to friends, but not venturing to post them and suffer a rebuff. This may or may not have been cause and effect.

Thus throughout the nine years of my clerical life I was pretty ineffectual. Though I did come off a little better as a speaker. I was never in the least nervous on the platform, and always extemporised from a few notes. I joined the Progressive League and I often spoke at small meetings. I enjoyed it immensely, especially in the open air. I was ready at answering questions. I would say atrocious things in my not too loud voice in order to gather the crowd and challenge opposition, and so would provide myself with material for carrying on.

What a curious thing nervousness is! Even from the beginning no qualms ever assailed me on the platform. Yet about this time I taught myself to play the piano. Only a trifle, but enough to amuse myself with scores; mostly arrangements of early Italian overtures which I never hoped to hear, but of which I now have discs! Alone I could play some of them with fair competence, but the moment anyone else entered the room all the chords would turn discordant.

As to the speaking: once the possibility of an orchestral or scientific career vanished it never occurred to me during the rest of my clerical days to probe for an opening to another more congenial occupation. I now took it for granted that a clerk I would be for the rest of my working days. But how I loathed it! So much so, that I, still a teenager, calculated how long it would be before the age of retirement. Another forty years, and then life: No more office. No more figures. After sixty all spare time. All rambles and meetings; all books and music!

"Grow old along with me; the best is yet to be—
The last of life for which the first was made".

How right Browning was!

I hoped to live at least till eighty. Twenty years of glorious life. How long had seemed the sixteen years between that long ago fourth birthday and this, the twentieth. Forty more years to go. A weary way, but at the end the light. What optimism. And yet what morbid thoughts for one just emerging from the teens!

Meanwhile there was the clerking, now made more odious by the impending and menacing cloud of overtime. Work was

accumulating, the public were travelling more and more, and the holiday season was again upon us. People would be buying "through tickets" from the bottom of England to the top of Scotland; travelling maybe over half a dozen companies' property; and our job was to divide the proceeds of the total fare in proportion to the distance travelled over the various companies' lines. There were far more divisions than could be worked out in office hours; and so we were invited, often urged, to take home one or two hundred "divies" to do in our spare time. Most of the clerks, being married, and maybe having two or three children, and not too princely a stipend, were glad of this; incredible as it seemed to me at the time. I evaded and evaded. One day I plucked up enough courage to tell the head of the department that I would be most grateful if he could omit me from the queue.

"What", he said, incredulous, "you don't want to earn any extras? Very well, you needn't. You are quite sure though? Others will be only too glad to grab them." Almost I could have embraced him.

It was all so needless—*this* clerking at least. All due to the private ownership of railways, and the competition between them. Even the Liberals in those days thought the railway (and the land) should be nationalised! "So I am really only a drone, a parasite," I thought. If the clerking were useful, were needful, it would not be quite as bad. Yet scarcely less unendurable. All clerking was an unutterable bore.

Now in our department of some seven men there was a small minority of "intellectuals," one of whom was a messenger. (My mother was rather shaken when I named him among my special friends, "Only a messenger who can never become a clerk," she said!) Another, Fred Watkins, later became a member of parliament. Just at this time he was founding the "Railway Clerks Association", to the horror of most of his fellows. ("Trade Unions are surely not for collared workers," was the comment). Of course I joined eagerly. But in justice to the rest. I must admit that there was no snobbery the other way round; no sneering at the "highbrows." In fact once when a suggestion was avidly acted on that we should each one of us make a list of all the rest in order of intelligence it was the "intellectuals" who were always to be found at the top.

Another interesting questionnaire concerned religion. The majority believed in God (in some sort of vague prevading intelligence) but not in personal immortality. (And this was in the teens of the present century).

It was an interesting group. Most of them lived in the suburbs or even well into the country; using "privilege tickets" peculiar to railway employees. Most were keen gardeners. They had an annual outing in which a dinner played a large part. I was one of the few absentees, but we were not in any way reproached. A few of us held a ticket for the Queen's Hall promenade symphony concerts.

There was very little gambling, even among the lowbrows, and very little smut. I fear the tone of most similar offices today would be lower. We were not a bad company, and I have often thought since that it would be good to meet some of them again, good even to see them as they were, if only on could go back in time. I did pay them one visit after becoming a minister. But to go back now would be quite impossible, even were the railways still in private hands. For most of them are no longer in this world.

But to return. My late teens were a time of general awakening. I have already described my discovery of Unitarians. Soon afterwards I discovered three other causes which have ever since meant much to me. The reading of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (from life in a utopia to life in the present cruel capitalistic mess) made a socialist of me. I saw how inadequate was mere Liberalism, still floundering about in a social "order" dominated by banks and private companies. The socialist alternative seemed so obvious I could not understand any man or woman of godwill rejecting or questioning it.

From time to time I have associated certain chapters in certain books with the places where I first read them. A pond in Broomfield Park is always linked in my mind with a certain chapter in a book by one Lindsay which first gave me an insight into the wonderful process of evolution. An avenue of black poplars in Finsbury Park (denounced by Hudson and since destroyed) is linked with the last pages of *Looking Backward*, where the hero contrasts his dream with the ugly realities of the day. I read these pages walking along that avenue. Incidentally, I have since wondered if Hudson had ever noted the beauty of those same trees seen from afar as background to more umbrageous trees and bushes. My conversion to socialism was of course intensified by my dislike of the railway clearing house.

Then there was the discovery of vegetarianism. No credit to me—I have always disliked the mere smell of beer, bacon and beef; always disliked the flavour of all meats except the breast of chicken and kipper. So it was small sacrifice to turn "veg",

and a great joy to spend my dinner hours at the office rambling along the broad walk and through the south-east flower garden in Regent's Park (where in those days there was a pretty water-nymph pond, since inexplicably destroyed) eating nuts and fruit the while. It seemed to me the acid test. To become an ecclesiastical or political heretic called for no great change in the habits of life—you merely went to the Unitarian church instead of the Anglican or Methodist (and even in those days hardly anyone reproached you for that) or you merely voted Labour instead of Conservative or Liberal. But to be veg (as to be teetotal) you had to say "no" when it might sound ungrateful or cranky—and if you liked your meat (or tobacco or hard drinks) as I did kipper, well, you were giving up something.

The third new cause espoused was thanks to the Balkan wars. Despite the debunking of war and nationalism by the schoolmaster aforementioned I was not exactly a pacifist; and when the first Balkan war erupted I felt much sympathy for the allies, especially for the Greeks, and rejoiced to see (on a map at a local cinema) the green lines of the Christians squeezing the red of the Turks. I felt some disappointment when Constantinople stood firm.

But then came the second war, between the Greeks and the Bulgarians over the spoils: that sufficed. All war was wrong, stupid, cruel and futile. If you won, by the time victory was in your hands you were already corrupt as the beaten foe. The means were vile, and not justified by the goal, which was never reached—the evil having now moved over from the enemy into yourself and your own land.

Tolstoy, now read for the first time, confirmed my new found emancipation from any sort of political patriotism; and neither of the two world wars was able to shake my determination to be a war-resistar whenever the need should arise.

A few pictures of outstanding days may serve to place in clearer light the teenager whose intellectual awakening has been described, and may give some insight into his sentimental and emotional development.

There was an all night ramble in Surrey with a group of naturalists led by "E.K.R." (Kay Robinson) later on a famous B.B.C. personality, but then known to a small circle of intimate admirers as the editor of *The Countryside*, and the author of *The Religion of Nature* and *The Meaning of Life*; books designed to throw some light on animal mentality, and to reduce the impact of Darwinism on sensitive souls.

Not all his followers could go all the way with him; some were very sensitive souls who always went by appearances. There was the famous wasp teaparty—an unforgettable experience. There had been much argument about whether it was right or wrong to kill wasps. Kay Robinson himself was inclined to be pro-wasp, because, he said, they killed so many blowflies (really far more dangerous insects, spreading disease germs everyhere) that their balance sheet came out well on the right side. On the other hand it was not really cruel to kill them—only mistaken. They could not feel much.

This struck some if his hearers as preposterous. Why they were highly evolved insects, with acute sight, marvellous powers of flight, and endowed in their feelers with some sense unknown to us. A little man whom we will call Mr Logan was especially vocal in their favour.

On the other hand Miss Hunt had no word to say for them. They lacked the patience of bumble bees, who never stung unless really hurt; they were even more irritable than hive bees, stinging on the least provocation, or no provocation at all.

Tea proceeded, different sorts of jam were put on the table, and the wasps gathered around. Miss Hunt was soon busy with her knife. Before long a dozen wasps were embedded in jam, their waists severed by the agility of the lady. All the eloquence of Mr Logan could not save them. A young boy, the junior of our party, stared long and hard at the battlefield, and presently said, as if surprised, "Why, their tummies all cut off from their heads, and all the tummies are stinging the jam and all the heads are drinking it; and yes, its coming out of their necks!"

Mr Logan looked horrified, Miss Hunt perplexed. But it was Kay Robinson himself who pointed the moral. "The stings are working instinctively, automatically. So, I suggest, are the tongues. But if they are not, if those bodiless wasp heads are really conscious, they must be in ecstacy. To drink and drink without ever getting satiated—why they must think they've got to the vespian paradise".

Then the converse became serious, as he continued to include the reptiles, even the birds and the mammals, in his generalizations. We must not exaggerate the amount either of suffering or joy in the animals. They are not self-conscious and therefore their emotional capacity is as limited as their intellectual. Nevertheless they may have unsuspected potentialities, and where possible we should lift them out of the struggle that those potentialities may be realised. All blood sports should be prohibited.

E.K.R. himself suffered financial loss, refusing to print advertisements of traps and guns in *The Countryside*. The result of this was trouble with the proprietors, and the reissue of the paper under his own auspices.

Another favourite theme of his was the futility of Darwinian attempts to explain away all beauty in nature by means of colour protection, sexual selection, or advertisement (in the case of flowers and insects). There was, he maintained, a natural tendency towards beauty of form and colour, which went as far as circumstances permitted. Female birds, for example, were usually less adorned than their mates because when brooding on their eggs it would be dangerous to look too conspicuous, but in those species which nested in holes or built domed nests the hen was usually as pretty as the cock.

The "all night" which set this latter train of thought going ended in dawn at "Newlands Corner"—a summit of the North Downs. There had been much conversation en route on the topics mentioned above, and also on socialism, to which our leader was not averse, provided only that too much centralization were avoided. Much of this against a background of dawn chorus—the last nightingale, the first blackbird, and such like.

But in the days of the first world war, E.K.R. had a simple rather pathetic faith in the incorruptibility of the allied politicians: and he, who had printed my first article in his paper, could not forgive me for being a war-resister, ("Mere cogs in the wheels of progress and victory" he called us). But when the Versailles peace was signed no pacifist could have been more indignant. "The politicians have thrown away the victory won by the soldiers", he protested, and his anger with Lloyd George for supporting Clemenceau against Wilson was all the more bitter because of his previous confident trust in the sincerity of the allies.

I recall another ramble, daytime now, in Richmond Park, followed by a visit to the Victoria Embankment Gardens, to hear the London County orchestra. This was engaged by the Liberal council to play in certain parks. It was suspended during the war, and never reinstated by either Conservative or Labour councils: to their shame be it said.

I am listening, for the first time, to a tone poem by Smetana, the now popular *Vltava*. Again as so often before music challenges comparison with scenery; none the less because in this instance inspired by scenery. How wonderful as pure music, yet how good when even the mere title is enough to tell you what was in the composer's mind when he created it. The flow of the river,

now so gentle, now mighty, now little children sporting on its banks, now rugged cliffs looming over the rapids, now the splendid buildings of a great city looking down on its swift waters.

And like all the greatest music it is simple and universal in appeal, though consummate in artistry.

Discounting " pop " as intrinsically evil, there are three sorts of music: popular, which makes an immediate appeal but soon wears thin, either through the triviality or insipidity of the melody; highbrow, which demands familiarity that its complexity be appreciated (it may be interesting, it may or may not be great, but it will never be popular); and the greatest music, which may be simple as a Bellini aria or complex as a Bach chorus yet challenges attention at a first hearing, never palls, and sometimes grows with familiarity.

Looking back again through the mist of the years let me capture another day the details of which shine out as clearly as when actually present. It is an afternoon in early spring. My friend and I plan to spend the afternoon with nature, the evening with music. We apply for two hours 'leave' and take the tube to Hampstead. Clear before us is the country landscape to the north (the garden city not yet there). Immediately below the ridge on which we stand is the descent to the birch wood. The buds are breaking into leaf, small enough for the white clouds still to be seen through the tree outlines. Presently we reach the " leg of mutton " pond, named after its shape (though it is the shape of most ponds made in gently sloping country by a shallow embankment at the far end). We surprise a family of moor fowl, and are ourselves surprised by the glory of two yellow clouds, each touched into flame by the sun sinking between them. There is not a breath of wind, but the silence is broken by the song of a thrush.

We are loth to go, but we don't want to miss the music. So down into the earth again, this time to emerge at Piccadilly and enter St. James' church (since destroyed by a bomb). *The Last Judgment* is to be given; but first we have a sermon in which we are told that the heathen of time past, even the heathen of today who have never heard of Christ, will not be damned. This pleases my friend, who still obstinately clings to his Anglicanism, but amazes me. Presumably all the heathen who have heard of Christ, and not accepted him, to say nothing of the atheists and agnostics in our own society, will be damned!

But soon, under the baton of the yet undiscovered Stokovski, the orchestra plunges into that sublime overture the exclusion of

which from our concert platform has always surprised me. When so many operatic overtures have a life of their own why are the few good oratoric overtures left on the shelves? But most of this work is inspired, alike in the tender passages, and in the fury of such choruses as " Destroyed is Babylon the mighty ". It is strange that nowadays, when so much good music long unduly neglected has been rediscovered (music ranging from Monteverdi to Berwald) some of the gifted masters of the last century seem to be completely forgotten. I would refer specially to Spohr, and to Raff, whose symphonies disappeared along with the London County parks orchestra.

But in my memory, and I doubt not in my friend's, (he has long since left this earth, a victim of the ill-advised Gallipoli expedition in the first world war) that day still lives.

It is notable how inspiring music transcends the words—how the opera or oratorio surpasses the text or the libretto; how, in a setting of the Roman mass by Bach or Cherubini, it says what the words try to say. The halting dogmas, tied down to local or temporal prejudices, are wonderfully sublimated and universalised. That mixture of half truth and downright falsehood, the creed, is transmuted; the " only son " becomes a symbol of entire humanity regenerated, and it is the evil, not the evil doer, that is destroyed for ever.

The lurid romantic libretto is similarly changed by the music of a Donizetti or Verdi. The hope of the tortured or severed lovers to be reunited in Paradise seems no longer puerile but sublime—entirely convincing and natural. Innocence betrayed will win through, if not on earth then beyond. Melodramatic claptrap becomes real tragedy: the light from beyond changing the significance of all that has happened before. This is genuine melodrama.

My friend and I had three holidays together. (I was just beginning to realise how silly it was to confine myself to London County!) The first time we went in winter (junior clerks had no choice of date) to Torquay. Never before had I seen so much of scenic beauty. On holiday years before at Barmouth I had been too small to appreciate it properly, though I do remember remarking to my mother how small and flat our local " parliament hill " seemed after the Welsh mountains. The weather on this first Devon holiday (about which I wrote my first article for *The Countryside*) was ideal. Not once did we wear our topcoats. We combined our enjoyment of nature with some quite serious reading. We read some Martineau sermons in the dark before bed.

I still had vain hopes of making a Unitarian of my friend, if not a socialist; and he certainly did change from " high " to " broad ".

But what of affection? you will ask. Was there no young woman with appeal? Well my friend had a sister who seemed likeminded, and once we took her with us to the Queens Hall, and her eyes met mine several times during Tchaikovsky's fifth symphony. But she lived far away in the country and nothing came of it.

Then at a meeting of an East London branch of the Liberal Christian League there was a young girl who attracted me. It seemed mutual, and for some two years we were often together on those nature rambles, and often explored Epping Forest with only each other for company.

But it did not last. Her maternal impulse was too strong. She sensed that I had no real desire ever to become a father and wisely broke off our unofficial engagement. At the time I was broken-hearted and pleaded. She yielded, but not for long Soon she was firm, and soon I also realised that she had been wise to end it all. Later on she became a happy wife and mother.

Another friendship followed, though that belongs mostly to the next phase of my life, spent on the land; since we lived awhile under the same roof, in a farmhouse. She was of a less sentimental and more intellectual disposition, and to her I made no secret of my disinclination for children in a world where a family might so often imply compromise, and handicap one's devotion to one's ideals. Since she, too, has been happily married and has had children of her own, it may have been in some measure due to my lack of paternal impulse that she also parted from me, again to my great grief at the time, but again probably to the good of us both in the long run.

I might add that both husbands were friends of mine, and that we have all kept in touch since those days.

My office life was terminated by the war. Turned down at the local (Islington) tribunal, I was granted exemption at the appeal, on condition of remaining at work of national importance; railway clerking, to my surprise, being considered such. But the railways did not agree, and I was " sacked "; free to find my own employment on the land. My freedom surprised me. I had spent the morning of the day of my appeal strolling over Hampstead Heath, prepared for a long term of imprisonment, and I still wonder if I should ever have left the office for more congenial and useful employmnt had I not been shaken out of it by events.

A gloomy reflection, not conducive to self-esteem.

Chapter 4

FRESHMAN ON THE FARM

FROM office to farm, from city to remote countryside, distant even from the nearest country town: that was the change now confronting me. Also from the companionship of fellow clerks to that of the agricultural labourers. Undoubtedly an all round change.

I had spent nine years at the office desk: I was now to spend three years on the land. Yet in retrospect the three seem as long as the nine: partly no doubt that they were spent in three different districts; whereas, but for a final year at London Bridge, all my office life was spent at the Railway Clearing House in Camden Town. Partly also because I had no dislike of my new occupation as such, though it would never have occurred to me to choose it for a livelihood. It took up far too much of my time, but so had the clerking. I lived mostly in my spare time of an evening, but so also had I done as a clerk. But the new work was not actually disagreeable. It was very varied; it was nearly all in the open air, in field or farmyard. Plants were growing under my care, and there was almost constant contact with animals. In short, my only grievance was the length of the hours of labour, leaving little time for other interests. The nightmare of factory farming was undreamed of, and even mechanization was but halfway there.

My first taste of farm life took me to a house on a large farm surrounded by cow sheds, pig sties, barns and a duck pond. It was to be my home for six months. There I lived with the farmer and his wife and a servant girl; with four labourers, two with wife and family, in nearby cottages. These were my sole company save when, on Sundays, the household went to worship at the Sawbridgeworth congregational church, myself driving them there in a horse trap (believe it if you can). I quite enjoyed driving, for a car in the country roads in those days was a rare sight. We were almost back in the eighteenth century.

The farmer himself was a Cornishman: alone among his neighbours a Liberal and a Nonconformist. A large and rather silent man, tolerant enough to employ a war-resister, and very patient with his new and quite inexperienced assistant. On one occasion, given a hoe to destroy weeds with, I attacked a bed of flourishing weeds unknown to me, and naturally expected a word of praise when they lay all prone. "Ah! my celery all down" was the only comment.

But he was equally drab when I became the victim of misfortune. Once I left a mackintosh on the wall of the pigsty as I went to fetch the cows in for milking. On my return the pigs had torn it to shreds. "Ee shouldn't 'ev left it there", was the comment. "They pigs do love a bit o' queer stuff sometimes".

But if my employer was patient with me he was most impatient with the weather. He was naturally anxious to get the harvest in, and that autumn storm clouds looming overhead threatened to destroy it. In those days the corn sheaves were tossed into an open air machine which sorted the stalks from the seed. Power was provided by a horse walking round in circles. The horse went at a slow pace; much too slow for our farmer, who followed it with a stick, exclaiming the while, to horse and man, "Hurry up—make haste—look fast—be quick": sometimes ringing changes on the refrain: "Look fast—hurry up—be quick—make haste": chanted always with an eye on the dark distant clouds. At last the horse was persuaded to go so fast that something went wrong with the machinery, and a good hour was needed to put it right. By then the clouds had passed without a drop of rain falling.

"I towd 'im 'ee needn't 'av worried," said Dick Downham, one of the labourers. "It never rains when the wind's in the east and there's a new moon. But I suppose 'ee can't 'elp it, being' a furrinner from Cornwall".

"But he's English, isn't he?" I asked. (It was the first time I had heard Cornwallians called foreigners).

"'Ee says 'ee aint 'isself. Says Cornwall's another county beyond the Tamar whatever that is. No, not another county. Another country."

This same Dick Downham was a bit of a character. He was rather too fond of his beer, and he also had a vein of religion in him and was very conversant with the Bible. But he was shy about this, and it was only after partaking fairly freely that it appeared. You could guess the number of glasses he had

imbibed by the frequency with which texts ornamented his conversation.

It was a strange life at "Bursteads"; strained too in some ways, but entirely pleasant in recollection. My whims and practices were regarded with amused tolerance by my Cornish employer. He understood my pacifism, but was far more puzzled by my vegetarianism. He could not believe it possible to live healthily without meat; and this though he himself, alone among his male employees and neighbours, never touched either alcohol or tobacco.

As to my interest in zoology, that brought a few surprises. When I mentioned seeing some water spiders in the pond he thought I was joking, and I shall never forget the look of horror on his face when he saw me holding a dragon fly by the legs.

"Horse stingers they are," exclaimed Dick Downham, and "Devil's darning needles we call 'em in Cornwall," added the farmer; and I was assured that the long black line along the back was a sting; and that if I didn't let the insect go it would pierce right through into my flesh and even kill me. But the creature struggled helplessly, and the little crowd was apparently too aghast to rescue me by force, too afraid even to touch the thing, till at last Dick said, "Well, there must be summat funny abaht your skin!"; a theory readily accepted by all. So my attempt to destroy the superstition had failed.

Another queer thing about my Cornish friend was his attitude to the birds. He suspected all of them did more harm than good, and was far too ready with his gun. But there were two birds he never shot, the robin and the owl. He believed, or at least half believed, the old legend about the robin trying to pick the thorns out of the crown of the crucified Christ, and would never be other than kind to the bird. Dick said it was a silly story. "Even if one robin was splashed with Christ's blood that wouldn't give all the others a red breast, would it! A lot of Cornish nonsense."

But even Dick was afraid of the owl, and agreed with the master that it was the Devil's pet. No other bird could turn its head right round—looking at you with its back to you.

Did they really believe in the Devil? Probably Dick did. As for the master, all I know is that he never shot an owl. For once I made no onslaught on these superstitions. They were both doing good.

Incidentally the farmer had a daughter who occasionally visited us, and who had more than her father's share of superstitions. She was separated from her husband: I believe rightly

so. But a gipsy had told her that she would be reunited with him in three months' time. She did not want to go back to him, but go back she did on the very day mentioned. It was a sort of hypnotism, and it was evil. Even as I write this a fresh idea occurs to me. Had the gypsy been bribed by the husband ?

Strange how intelligent people can be swayed. It recalls Rossini's superstitions about Friday and the thirteenth. When Friday happened to be the thirteenth he died. He was old and ill it is true. But was it a mere coincidence ?

Life at " Bursteads " was hard but good. Hard on the body of the young clerk. Much as I liked walking I was often too jaded, after some ten hours of milking, hoeing, haymaking or harvesting, to enjoy more than a short stroll in the evening. Yet the need to stretch the legs was urgent. Muscles were cramped by the various forms of farm labour, none of which affords balanced exercise like walking or rowing.

But if the body was tired the mind was fresh ; and reading, thinking and writing came more easily. When clerking one's mind is ever on the triviality of figures. But when digging or raking one can think things out in leisurely fashion. For concentration in working out a lecture or sermon there is nothing else as good as a stroll.

In retrospect it seems a very long time I spent at " Bursteads ", though in memory it is always summer there ! Naturally enough, as the six months from April to September measures the length of my stay.

For there soon came a time when the old Cornish farmer retired, and handed the farm over to his son, a man of very different outlook and temperament. He wanted no shirkers on his land, so I had to go. For a while I found temporary employment in the huge garden of an Anglican vicar ; a gentle curious fellow who gave me a billhook and told me to clear a footpath through a maze of bramble, at the same time deploring the ravages thus made, " the tender young shoots cut off in their prime " ! Obviously this was no work of national importance, and before winter had set in I was living on another farm, the property of his sister. It was in the New Forest this time : " Ashlett House ", at Fawley ; then a pretty village set in firwoods ; now completely vanished—having been replaced by an oil depository.

Two farms and farm households more unlike than " Bursteads " and " Ashlett House " could scarcely be imagined. It was a small farm, comprising four milking cows, four goats, and a few acres of pasture and arable, worked entirely by the owner,

myself and another war resister ; we three, with his wife, comprising the entire household, except during the month around Christmas, when my fiancée of the time joined us.

As my memory of " Bursteads " is of a long summer, so that " Ashlett House " is of an enduring winter ; a typical winter too, with plenty of snow under bright cold sunshine—interspersed with long walks in the nearby woods and commons, with here and there distant glimpses of the Isle of Wight across the sea.

A very different life from that at " Bursteads ", in very different company. We were a little group of intellectuals, and rather strange ones at that. My colleague was an agnostic, his wife a fierce and bitter atheist, and our employer a theosophist, with peculiar views about both animals and the war. Though a pacifist she believed that the Germans were being aided by " dark forces " on the other side, though she differed from most of her cult in maintaining that we should resist them by non-violent means, lest we become possessed by the same dark powers. As for the animals, " they are exactly like us except that they cannot speak." On one occasion I was nearly gored by a cow who had just given birth to a calf ; and when I appeared at the house with shirt and vest ripped open her first thought was for " poor Nancy," the aforesaid cow. " You can't blame her. She no doubt thought you had come to rob her of her dear little one."

There were three Jersey cows, Nancy, Dulcie and Lucy, and one ordinary cow, Angela : a most extraordinary cow as a matter of fact, noted for going on long walks through the forest and always turning up again. And there were four goats, a donkey and a dog.

The goats formed an interesting group. Three were quite ordinary ; the fourth, Joan, was unusually handsome, more like a " billy " ; grey, with a long beard and well developed horns. Yet, to everybody's surprise, it was one of the mediocre ones, Shaggy, who bossed the other three, including Joan, obviously far the stronger. Was it merely a matter of temperament—was Shaggy naturally fierce and Joan gentle ? However that may have been, one day Shaggy pushed matters too far, and there was a real fight. It lasted about five seconds. Horns to horns Joan pushed Shaggy over with ease, much apparently to her own surprise. Soon Shag was in headlong flight. Henceforth Joan was queen. A mere nod from her was enough, and Shag did not even boss the other two again.

The donkey was also interesting. At first we used to feed the cows by scattering hay along a line. But we soon noticed that

the donkey deliberately marched to the middle, with a purpose in mind. As soon as a cow approached either end Neddy would thrust his hind quarters in that direction and lash out, turning round and repeating the gesture in the opposite direction as soon as another cow appeared there. So he got nearly all the hay. The cows were far too silly to imitate, and the only way to outwit the donkey was to put the hay in separate heaps.

The dog, an old black spaniel, was the boss of the house. He had his favourite chair, a rocker, and if he found anybody in it he would sit at the foot, gaze up at the merely human intruder, and start performing. At first a gentle whimper, then a soft but slowly swelling squeal, culminating in a series of piercing barks. The chair was usually his before the climax was reached. His name? Signor Crescendo (alias Rossini!)

At "Ashlett House" we were unpopular with some of our neighbours; and were certainly mistaken in our conviction that, once the war was over, whoever won on the field, and whichever party was governing in our own land, conscription would stay. It was part of our persuasion that war was so evil that the righteous victor would be as corrupt as the vanquished by the time the fighting was over. In the main I would still hold that we were not mistaken: witness the Versailles treaty. But we went too far in some respects. Our local schoolmaster once visited us and urged us to withdraw our opposition to the war, and to enlist, or at least to join the Royal Army Medical Corps. He was horrified when we suggested that now the military had the opportunity to impose conscription it would never go. "If it doesn't", he said, "you will be proved right, but of course it will". In that matter he was right. Go it did.

On another occasion we saw a group of four soldiers descending on us. We prepared ourselves mentally for an assault. (There had been hints of a mob in the offing from time to time). "This the farm where the conshies work?" one of them asked, smiling. Still doubtful of our reception at their hands we told him we were the culprits. "Then let's shake hands" was the reply. "You're the best blokes we've come across since they grabbed us." They were members of the Independent Labour Party, and had hesitated about their conduct when conscription was imposed. How they wished they were working alongside us! But they had dependents. A hard situation; harder than ours if refusal to join would have meant imprisonment or unemployment, with dire poverty threatening wife or children.

Though surely the hardest situation was that of the tender-hearted conscientious humanitarian soldier, who felt it his duty to kill his fellow men on behalf of the righteous cause; and who joined of his own free will, a volunteer.

As to our visitors—even had the authorities admitted the possibility of a soldier becoming a conshie they would not have agreed to change of occupation with the war still undetermined, and on so small a farm as ours.

In fact, our little community was presently declared uneconomical; and we, too, had to seek work elsewhere. There is some reason to believe that we were struck off the list because, foolishly perhaps, we refused to raise the price of our produce. Hence the dislike of our way of life on the part of farmers, and their fury when we advertised milk and eggs at prewar prices. It was probably unfair. Others may have been profiteers, but we were running at a loss. So my time at Fawley also lasted but six months, and lives in memory as a long and happy winter.

The next two years were spent in market gardens; allowing more time than farming but with less variety of occupation, and more monotonous work. For about a year I worked on a large market garden at Hounslow, the most abiding memories of which are about my companions. Half the labour was provided by a group of war resisters. We were seven, and we were certainly a very mixed and rather curious crowd. There was an agnostic writer with Romanist inclinations, James Eaton, author of *A Shuttlecock for Critics*. There were two Quakers, a Strict Baptist, a Christadelphian and a Plymouth Brother—the last three named fundamentalists. So we really fell into two distinct groups, for the fundamentalists not only had no political leanings, they held that since all political activities were wicked it was wrong even to vote for any party. "We must wait until the Lord comes to put things right!" The others among us, "the Four," were all socialists, and our pacifism was as much political as religious in origin. Therefore we had a great deal in common, more than our scriptural friends.

The Plymouth Brother and the Christadelphian got on very well together till one terrible morning when the former realised that the latter doubted the personality of the Devil.

"What. You don't think he's there? Only a bit of imagination? Then how do you know that God, too, isn't only a bit of fancy?"

Almost it seemed that Satan was a sort of appendix to the trinity—that belief in him, too, was necessary for salvation. And

when the Christadelphian even denied the Deity of Christ (not the superhumanity) disillusion was complete.

"Why you're only another Unitarian really, aren't you ? Your future state will be as hopeless as Viney's."

Whilst the final break came when the Christadelphian denied Hell. "You're a Universalist too ? "

"Well no. I believe all wrongdoers and atheists will simply die like animals, painlessly. How can you reconcile Hell with God's mercy ? "

"You should think less about his mercy than his justice," was the retort. Then, with typical Calvinistic logic. "You can't have God without Satan or Heaven without Hell ! "

Yet this same Plymouth Brother became very friendly towards me—possibly because of a strange and rather unexpected interest in Gosse the father, geology and zoology. For he accepted Gosse's fantastic mode of reconciling Genesis with paleontology. The entire process of creation existed eternally in the mind of God, but wasn't realised till about six thousand years ago. Then it was suddenly realised, complete to that date, with the fossils already entombed as they would have been had they previously existed outside, as well as within, the divine Mind. They always were in the *mind* of God ; then in a flash, there they are outside too, no longer merely ideal but real.

My Plymouth Brother had a genuine concern about me ; and on the last day we were working there he greeted me with a beaming face.

"Viney, old man, you'll be all right after all."

"All right . . . How ? "

"In the judgment. We'll meet up there, old man. I've been praying for you all night long, and at last the Lord impressed it on me that you'll be converted on your deathbed. So don't worry. Things will turn out A1 at the end ! "

And I haven't the least doubt that he had prayed for me, long and earnestly. He was so much better than his God.

Incidentally our employer at Hounslow was a Plymouth Brother. I should also add that at a much later date both the Strict Baptist and the Christadelphian had renounced their fundamentalism for a more liberal faith.

After leaving Hounslow I resided awhile in Enfield—then a country town separated from London by market gardens, and surrounded by its own belt of market gardens and parks. I lodged over a little shop kept by a tiny bent old dame, very proud of herself. Miss Burgess she was, but she assured me on many

occasions that she was Miss by choice. "I could have been Mrs more than once—aye, more than once," she would muse (more than once) finger on chin. Looking at the tiny shrivelled form and the plain face that gave no hint of faded prettiness it was hard to believe.

She was a religious soul, equally devoted to her clock ("it reminds us that we can never have time past over again, don't it ? ") and her Bible. The clock's tick was loud but erratic, and when placed upright it would soon stop. Even laid on its back it needed a prodding every three hours. But its owner, never far off, would hear the sudden silence and give it a good shake. "It's a good clock really," she would say, "but it's a bit like a naughty child that needs a caning now and then. . . . O yes, many years ago my little nephew and niece used to some and see me and I would give them sweets. Then their mother, my sister, would say 'Now don't you go and spoil them !' And I would point to the cane I kept in the corner. Yes, I gave them one or two slashes now and then. What's that it says in the good book ? 'Spare the rod and spoil the child.' But the clock's not really like the child. It can't help itself, can it ? "

Once I found her pondering sadly over her Bible. "It says here," she murmured, looking up at me, "'depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire'. It seems terrible but it was Jesus who said it, so I suppose it must be true ! "

Curious, but these were the very words once put to me by a young Dutchman at the congregational church of which I was then a member. My answer was the same in each case. "I doubt if Jesus ever said that. I guess the words were put into his lips by those who never understood him properly. But if he did say that then he was wrong, and was not the enlightened teacher the world has taken him to be. But how could he have believed in hell, he who gave us the parable of the Prodigal Son ? "

Now to the last change of locality on the land : this time a move to Watford ; in those days an attractive little town far enough from London to be its own cultural centre, and surrounded by gentle hilly country with much pleasant woodland diversifying the arable and pastoral tracts. For most of the year spent there I worked on the estate of a distinguished Quaker artist, Lionel Penrose, and often worshipped at the Quaker meeting house, there being no Unitarian meeting at the time.

Quaker worship has not the attraction for me that their doctrine and the practical application of their faith have. Their

almost unanimous loyalty to the pacifism of the sermon on the mount is beyond all praise, also their readiness to help those in any sort of distress; pleasant too their theological diversity, ranging from almost narrow Christocentricism to pure theism, yet in an atmosphere of more than mere tolerance, of real understanding between the "right" and "left" of this doctrinal divergence. But their silent worship is another matter. Silent lonely worship in the hills and valleys—that I understand, and find essential for the well being of the spiritual life. But silent public worship? Not a few pauses for silence, but a whole hour with maybe not a word spoken! I suppose it is primarily a matter of temperament, and that it is not for mine. Were there a leader to direct our thoughts and prayers now in this direction, now in that; now for world peace, now for an end to the torturing of animals by factory farming or by vivisection—that I could understand. But, when we are each praying for different ends, where the advantage of praying in a group? On the other hand I must admit some truly inspiring meetings, but they were not all silent. I refer to occasions when there were a goodly number of little speeches or prayers and readings.

Sometimes at Watford unconscious humour was provided by a well-meaning but rather crude working man, a socialist with a prejudice against our artistic patron because of his wealth. Almost always he would give a long prayer inspired by his prejudices. But he was not too fluent. There were often painful pauses between his sentences. These he would fill out not with the customary "er . . . er", but with a persistent murmur of "Lord God 'evenly Father . . . Lord God, 'evenly father". On one occasion this became unendurable to the good friend sitting immediately behind, who suddenly rose up, clapped his hands on the other's shoulders, and forced him down to his chair, exclaiming "for all oor sakes, and for the sake of the heavenly Father too, do shut up, mon".

Chapter 5

MY FIRST PASTORATE

NOW, at the age of twenty-seven, I find myself on the threshold of my lifework: one of the fortunate ones for whom lifework and livelihood are the same. For now, the war is over, and the need to engage in work considered of national importance past, I became a student minister, residing in a hostel, and preparing for the professional ministry of the Unitarian denomination.

It did not take me long to decide between this course and one other which opened for me at the end of the first world war—that of an organiser for the new and much needed agricultural labourers' trade union. Better far leave that work to a real "son of the soil." After a year at the hostel I had to choose again between spending three years at a theological college (with the option of another two at a university, in order to acquire a degree in science, art or philosophy) or three years more at the hostel in charge of a church, preparing myself, meanwhile, for the qualifying examinations. Rightly or wrongly I chose the latter.

There was both gain and loss either way. I flattered myself at the time that my nine years of office life and three on the land had been a better preparation for the ministry than college immediately following school would have been; even though in the latter event there would have been ample time to acquire not only my "reverend" but also a university degree by my early twenties, and still a good five years gained! Yet I am inclined still to hold that my rejection of the opportunity for a more academic education and my preference for the life of the "free lance" was not foolish.

Certainly I was influenced at the time by my inability to learn Latin and Greek, both at the time deemed necessary for a college course; but I held and still hold that a knowledge of dead tongues little serves the cause of theistic evidence when discussing matters

with atheist or agnostic. Better far to know something about rival theories of evolution.

Then why not try for a degree in natural science? Because again, in those days at least, that was impossible unless you knew something of French and German. Four languages then? No thank you; not if I could get through without it! Again—why four means of expressing the same facts and thoughts if there were a single branch of science or art about which you were ignorant?

So I reasoned then, and I still think not unwisely. Something lost certainly, but something gained too. My twelve years in the outside world between school and professional life I have never regretted; though limited to six, three in the office and three on the farm, they would have served as well.

" Livelihood and life-work the same "—not many can say that. Teachers, actors, musicians (if not condemned to play rubbish half their time), artists, clergymen, doctors, nurses, gardeners, explorers, writers, lawyers perhaps—that about exhausts the list.

Maybe one could extend the catalogue by adding those who engage in certain malevolent activities—military generals, croupiers and the like. And, of course, the professional players of games. But professional sport would appear to be increasingly malevolent in its influence on the gaping shrieking onlookers, and in any case belongs only to an adolescent civilisation.

There are other exceptions too. Referring to my office days, I recall a head of department who lived in his work; to whom the official railway map of Britain, compiled in the days when innumerable companies dotted the countryside (when every valley in South Wales had its own private line—now blotted out by order of Beeching) was to him more than Michael Angelo. A gentle, soul he was too. I recollect another, more eccentric and acquisitive, whose life passion was the collecting of time tables—the more out of date the better. He gathered them in with all the ardour with which others collect stamps or coins or first editions. For that matter, in what way is a rare stamp better than an out of date time table?

Once he was absent through illness, and his fellow clerks burned his collection. It was a cruel thing to do. He looked at his empty cupboards with so pitiful an expression that even the practical jokers felt crestfallen and ashamed.

A silly fellow? But not as silly as the fools who pay hundreds of pounds for new stamps with defects in the printing.

For years after leaving the office, well into my professional life, I would dream that I was back there: the nearest approach

I ever had to nightmare since childhood. Latterly it changed somewhat. I was still stopping on at the office though there was no longer any need to. I had forgotten all about my profession in this dream, but sometimes I had inherited some money, or maybe had passed retiring age, yet still went to the office like clockwork every day. A most curious twist: certainly the very last thing I should have done in real life. This dream came with decreasing frequency till I had passed my half century, but always the thrill of relief on waking was so pleasant that it more than compensated.

Much less frequently I would return in dream to one or other of my five little spells on the land, but these dreams were not unpleasant.

In real life I still retained my passion for holidays; and have, it must be confessed, always been sorry when one came to an end. But I had only to compare my mood on returning to the hostel, or, after marriage, to our home wherever it was, with my mood of old, on returning to the office, for the least suggestion of discontent to whither away.

It is curious that the term " new theology " has been used twice during this century to describe two similar but different movements separated by over fifty years. The first arose soon after the beginning of the century, under the leadership of the now almost forgotten congregational minister, Reginald Campbell. Yet in the eyes of thousands he was a spellbinder. With his great shock of hair, prematurely white, his steel blue eyes ,his soft, musical, persuasive voice, and above all his spontaneous eloquence he filled the City Temple, largest of congregational churches, week after week, year after year. A young man in his thirties, he broke loose from all church dogma—away with hell, away with the blood atonement, away with the deity of Christ—the divinity too? Well " Jesus Christ was divine, but so are we! " was his characteristic answer. To this simple theism, sometimes bordering on pantheism, he added a social gospel which implied both socialism and pacifism. Soon he had the left wing of nonconformity at his feet, whilst the milder and more cultured of the secular radical masses outside the churches began to wonder if they were missing something after all.

A new paper was floated, *The Christian Commonwealth*, devoted equally to the new theology and its practical applications; and it would be safe to say that most of those who read it were also readers of *The New Leader*, the revised and refined version of the old *Labour Leader*, organ of the Independent Labour Party

(a purely socialistic movement). Simultaneously with the appearance of *The Christian Commonwealth* the " Progressive League " was founded, and the personnel of this league of the I.L.P. were largely synonymous.

Campbell had three gifted followers among his fellow ministers, Rhondda Williams, Lewes and Orchard. He also gathered a band of " pioneer preachers "—young men prepared for a life of celibacy in devotion to the new theology.

It was good to be alive in those days. Utopia did not seem nearly as far off as it does now—as it does now even to the enlightened youngsters of today, with the vision of two nightmare world wars confronting them as they look back into the immediate past.

Of course there were threats then. There were the jingoes who yelled " we want eight and we won't wait " (" dreadnought " warships), but till it actually burst on us the first world war seemed less likely than the total destruction of the race in a third war does now.

But we had not then a welfare state: though the germ of it was present in some of the laws passed by the last Liberal government, thanks to Lloyd George. We still saw dirty, ragged children in the streets and drunks prone in the gutters on Saturday nights: but we faced the future boldly and hopefully. The best of the Liberal leaders, Outhwaite, Ponsonby and Wedgwood, soon declared themselves socialists, and joined the I.L.P.: there were apparently strong socialist movements in France, Germany and Italy. Maybe before we youngsters were elderly the social gospel would have realised its ideals, and the Kingdom of Heaven, the Commonwealth of Man, would be here on earth.

But then things went badly awry. Campbell, never a sound theist, his progressive league now renamed the " Liberal Christian League ", suddenly took fright and slowly reversed, though no one at the time would have foretold that he would die an undistinguished Anglican clergyman. Even more staggering, his colleague Orchard joined Rome, Lewes disappeared, and only Rhondda Williams remained faithful to the cause. Snowden and MacDonald, one time fellow stalwarts of the I.L.P. with Keir Hardie, participated in Coalition governments, and the I.L.P. cut its connection with the Labour party to the denigration of itself and the increasing domination of the larger movement by the Trade Unions. Whence the collapse, so sadly similar to that of so many radical movements on the continent some sixty or seventy years earlier! The sad truth would seem to be that the radicals had

vastly underestimated the power of the " establishment " in all western European countries—their power and their stupidity, stupidity that could allow the assassination of one mediocre prince to bring about the slaughter of millions of Christians on behalf of national prestige.

And even assuming that there was a great deal to choose between the rival camps, that the enemy were by far the more guilty, the chances of a settled peace won by the soldiers of the allied countries were destroyed by the contemptuous rejection of President Wilson's fourteen points, insisting on no annexations and no indemnities. The triumph of " Tiger " Clemenceau, supinely supported by Lloyd George, utterly fallen from his radical past; the attempt to keep Germany in a position of permanent economic subjection by the infliction of an indemnity which could never be paid off; the humiliation inflicted on her by the occupation of the Rhineland by black troops (rightly or wrongly interpreted by her as a deliberate insult: you could hardly expect her to shake off colour prejudice under such circumstances): these things alone explain the emergence of a neurotic fanatic like Hitler as a hero, though he was never the free choice of a majority of the German people.

So there burst on us like destiny (but it was our own doing) the second world war; which would probably have led to a third were it not for the invention of the nuclear bomb, which presented us with an uneasy peace maintained by the balance of fear. That of course is only one side of the matter. There is far more hope in the United Nations than there was in the old League of Nations now that America has outgrown her folly of ousting China. Communism has its evil side, but it is not all evil like competitive or monopolistic capitalism. Evil is its method, not its aim; and it is in some ways preferable to capitalism with the lid off. And the fearful optimism of today is preferable to the over confident optimism of the days of the " war to end war." But the shadow is far more obvious too; and surely explains the immorality of a decadent youth, with its lack of sexual restraint, its inability to distinguish between lust and affection, its reversion to drink and drugs and ts obsession for horrible " pop " music. It is in this atmosphere that fundamentalism gathers strength, that the Bible again becomes an infallible book, and that Mormonism (saddled with two infallible books) strides ahead: though it is but fair to note that the recently founded fundamentalist movements replace hell by annihilation. And it is against these new revivals that the second " new theology " of Robinson of Woolwich makes its pro-

test. It seems but a pale reflection of the first new theology; its theism vaguer; its Christ magnified and worshipped as the only prop against nescience. A satirical quip " there is no God and his name is Christ " compares unfavourably with " Jesus Christ was divine, but so are we."

But to return to the first half of the century. After Reginald Campbell reverted, his hostel and its protagonists were adopted by the Unitarian movement, (after all the Unitarians had anticipated the new theology by a good half century and more under the inspiration of Martineau and Theodore Parker) and it was that hostel, after its adoption, which became for some six years the abode of the present writer.

Life there was very good. After nine years of clerking and three of farming it often seemd too good to be true. One was planted in charge of a church (mine was at Islington, scarcely half a mile away) where one preached on Sundays: a frequent exchange of pulpits with the other pioneers being part of the plan. One also took the lead in weeknight socials and discussions. How well I remember our reading circle, where our first book was Holmes, *Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*; a wise choice, because provocative on so many themes, both in lighter and heavier vein. There was also, of course, the Sunday School; likewise pastoral work to be done: and in a mixed congregation, including a mingling of well-to-do cultural people and the more thoughtful type of working class folk, one had a fairly representative cross-section of the Unitarian denomination.

There was among our sixty or so members a sprinkling of the very poor and uncultured; and this involved a good deal of sick and invalid visiting. Sometimes one would be asked to offer a few words of prayer, which at first came with difficulty to a young man glib enough in the pulpit.

Life at the hostel was a great change from anything I had experienced before, from life at home, or in any of the farmhouses where I had rsided. There were usually some half dozen of us in residence. We were allowed considerable freedom, and many an hour was spent browsing in the library, reading books of every shade of theology and philosophy. Each morning we had a lecture on religious history, the higher criticism, or some relevant aspect of theology or psychology.

At the back of the house was a small garden which aroused a dormant interest in plants, and I became the unofficial gardener, and incidentally the defender of a beautiful beech tree which our " bishop " wanted to have cut down.

Into that garden, in the warm summer nights, we would sometimes take our mattresses and sleep under the stars, occasionally fascinated by the music of a couple of owls in the nearby park.

The lecturer most favoured by us was the Rev. Dr. Lionel Tayler, a remarkable man to whom nothing like justice has been done, either by the denomination or the outside world: maybe because though a qualified minister of religion and doctor of medicine he had no university degree.

His visits to us were like draughts of fresh water. He had an original outlook on most things well illustrated in his interesting books, *Social Evolution* and *The Phases of Human Life*. It is not easy to place him in the usual categories, orthodox or heterodox. Thus his book on social evolution is illustrated by ideal representations, almost caricatures, of the scum and dreg types, the useless aristocratic decadent and the hopeless working class nitwit; but his dislike of beaurocracy and his fear of centralisation warned him off socialism, and he even disapproved the nationalisation of hospitals. He was artistic to the fingertips, and a great lover of music; but he considered Wagner rather decadent, his infidelity to his first wife and his sexual and egotistic excesses hiving a detrimental effect on his later music. Debussy was dismissed as a " mere flash in the pan." Tayler was a great believer in old age, " The last of life for which the first was made," but scarcely reached beyond middle age himself. In science he was fairly orthodox, accepting the Darwinian interpretation of evolution in the main, but insisting on its consistency with a theistic theology. He was sure of personal immortality, and maybe this explains his indifference to psychical research. Nor did psycho-analysis intrigue him.

Largely self-educated, he had not great belief in academic institutions, and warned students about to enter college or university not to let themselves be spoiled or conventionalised. The real student is self-made, and examinations are a very fallible method of estimating excellence or ability.

In one respect he was thoroughly conservative. Stressing the danger of male overspecialisation, and agreeing with Chesterton that woman should be the " all-rounder ", she would be wise to keep clear of all specialisation. She was unfitted for politics, science, creative art, athletics, perhaps even for teaching. Her place was the home. The vote? Yes!—but not parliament. Was he judging all women by his wife? to whom he was most happily married. Be that as it may, the popularity of only one

of his books, *The Nature of Woman*, was most unfortunate. By that he was judged by the outside world, and most unfairly.

He disapproved alike of contraception and of easy divorce; held that it was good when first love became last love, and that those with no desire for children should remain celibate. The one sorrow in his own life was the lack of son or daughter.

In his very eccentricities, as well as in his solid theism, though not in his antifeminism, he was typcal of our movement.

It was at " Unity ", Islington, that I first met my wife; and this seems a fitting place to say something about her. She was one of three sisters, daughters of a cobbler; both father and mother simple working class folk. Two of the sisters, Louisa and Ethel (the first of whom I married) have something in common: intelligent, interested in most things worth while, critical rather than creative, somewhat excitable, and not the sort of women to worship the man in the house (for which much gratitude!). Ethel told me recently, and quite casually, surprised that I had not long been familiar wih the facts, why the family had to quit Camberwell in her teenage days, long before I met them all at Islington.

The man next door was the owner of the house of which they were tenants. Ethel disliked him. She was always subject to keen attractions and repulsions, and her intuitions about people were often, not always, accurate. The family had a cat. The cat naturally sometimes strolled into the next garden. The man was no animal lover. Ethel often preferred animals to people. She saw the man kick the cat. She thereupon, quite deliberately, threw a brick at him. She threw it hard. (She was as strong as small). But it did not hit him. It wasn't meant to. But it frightened him—as was intended. Next day the family got notice to move. A typical incident! The third sister, Lily, is of much quieter temperament. At one time a milliner, had circumstances permitted, my wife, though lacking the sturdy physique of her sister Ethel, would have trained as a professional gardener. In our early days she joined a group of lay preachers, but was too self-critical to do justice to herself. She has been the unbiassed and most helpful critic of all my lectures, sermons and books, and my debt to her is great. We neither have had nor desired children. Late in life, consequent on an operation for diverticulitis, we learned that she could not have become a mother had she desired. We have lived together now for some forty-five years, and (which counts for more) in six different places. It is as though we have lived six lives together, and the store of happy memories grows.

A great achievement at Islington was the forming of a church orchestra, and the rendering of several orchestral and choral works during the services—the former as well as the latter being regarded as part of the act of worship. Not that this can be put to my credit. All I did was to persuade a new young member, my good and dear friend Will Sahnow, later on the founder of the " Workers' Music Association," to bring together a few folk as keen as ourselves about the function of music in worship; among them a nucleus of string players, the organ usually filling in the wind parts.

Much credit should also go to the organist, and to the long established church choir, for their very willing co-operation; also, I would add, to the church committee: for not only were there no eyebrows raised at the unconventional innovation, but no protest was made when the two front pews were removed to make room for the orchestra.

Furthermore to my great joy Will Sahnow shared my enthusiasm for several unduly neglected composers (far more neglected then than now) and among the works we revived were Raff's Spring symphony and Cherubini's C minor Requiem. We were especially proud of this last mentioned work, and an advertisement was inserted in one of the Sunday papers. This brought an aged visitor from Birmingham to " Hear a work I have wanted to hear for decades." But by mistake he had brought with him a score of the D minor requiem. Fortunately we had an extra copy of the C minor for his use.

Partly stimulated by the young folk in the orchestra some of the other members, in a spirit of healthy competition, formed a Sullivan group, and side by side with the monthly musical services we now had weeknight performances of the Savoy operas, though unfortunately without the orchestra.

From time to time the hostel gave hospitality to interesting guests from abroad. There was a young Egyptian, Hassan. Liberal Moslem in faith, he went far beyond Lionel Tayler in his antifeminism. Once in a debate he defined woman as " an ovary with other organs around it "! Yet he was a most pleasant kindly fellow. There was a Jap who was fascinated by the London " pea soup fog ". (We still had them from time to time). An art student, once a mist appeared there was no keeping him in. Off he would go with easel, paints and canvas and return with another impressionistic picture of " trees looming feebly through the fog like twisting snakes " or " little hills grown to great mountains, or cows to elephants, by the magic of your mists."

Rare too were some of the people we students encountered in our pastoral visiting. A letter came one day criticising one of my Old Testament sermons. It was a penetrating criticism, and I felt I would like to meet the writer—perhaps more so as she was a woman. To my surprise I found myself walking along one of the poorest streets in Islington, and presently climbing the stairs in one of the dirtiest houses. To my still greater surprise on knocking at the door of the attic and being bid to enter I found a shabby fat old woman resting on a mattress raised above the floor by half a dozen soap boxes: other boxes lining the walls were filled with papers.

Apart from two ricketty cane chairs this was all the furniture in the room. She was a very eccentric old lady, soon pouring out the story of her life. Born into a wealthy French family, when a young girl she joined a convent and gave it a large donation, with a strange stipulation that if ever she changed her faith she must not only be permitted to leave, but to withdraw enough of her gift to live on.

Well, on her twenty-first birthday the angel Gabriel visited her and said that the Lord had a great task for her to do. The truth of Christianity lay between the two extremes of mighty Rome and the tiny Unitarian body. Rome had the right ideas about ecclesiastical organisation but we had the true theology. She must bring them together and make them one. The Pope must become a pure theist then all the other Christians must accept the authority of the Vatican, and the Roman ritual be modified to fit the theistic creed. Unmarried ministers must remain celibate, and those already married must refrain from having any more children.

She devoted her time to writing. The soap boxes were stuffed with manuscripts; others had been sent to high dignitaries of many churches and influential politicians of all parties, complaining that the Convent had refused to refund any of her gift.

"But how do you live?" I asked.

"Oh, I'm a good cook; I get a position with a wealthy family, and then when I've saved enough money I come back here and write more."

One day there came an urgent message from her.

"I'm very ill. I believe I'm dying. Do come and see me at once. There's something I want you to do for me."

Of course I went, wondering a little.

"I want you to find a priest for me. I want you to bring him to me. No, its not to confess, or to take the wafer, or to have

anything poured over me. I finished with all that nonsense when I came of age, and I'm not going back to it now. I'm not a dotard. You must tell the priest that, and you must come back with him. I want you both here together. And tell him I want him to come here as a man, not as a priest".

Now there was a hostel for Roman priests nearby. I knocked. The door was opened by a dignified old man, evidently the prior. He listened with interest till I came to the bit about not being wanted as a priest. Then "I come as priest or not at all", he said, and shut the door".

I walked round the block awhile and knocked again. This time a young Irish priest opened. Opened his eyes too, as I went on with my story—aye, and his mind! Then, with a twinkle and in a flash he decided.

"I'm in on this with you, brother. I don't care what my superiors think. Let's go now, at once. I can't wait".

And soon we were there, on either side of the soapbox bed: holding hands across the prone old lady.

"Now I leave it to you. I transmit to you two men the charge the angel gave me—to bring your two churches together that the truth may emerge. Simply promise me that you will do all you can (to the priest) to convert your church from the Athanasian creed to pure theism, and that you (facing me) will do all you can to persuade your church (and the others), once Rome has renounced Athanasius, to accept the rule of the Vatican."

We promised (how could we not?) and took our leave of her, and of each other, with a strange glance of understanding between us.

"We're youngsters now," said the Irishman, "but I doubt if we'll ever have another experience like that if we live to be a hundred. It was good, somehow."

But she did not die. She recovered, and without a doctor, and worshipped at the Islington Unitarian church as long as I was pastor there. But she never referred to the strange event again. She had passed on the responsibility to others, and was satisfied.

We did nothing. What could we have done? We never met again. Perhaps we have both been a little more tolerant than else we might have been.

I have often wondered since how much of her story was true. *Had* she joined that convent as a girl? *Did* she inherit great wealth? She told me that, among others, she had written to Estlin Carpenter and Austen Chamberlain about her rights—to Carpenter

also about the angelic visitation. I inquired of him if this were true. Yes, she had written him more than once, but he had been unable to discover if there was any such convent.

In the hostel days a Unitarian van was still moving around the country, drawn by a little horse. We had a gospel to proclaim, a positive gospel, the gospel of the larger affirmation: for we were then the people of the free faith, and we did not then mistake the means for the end or stress the freedom more than the faith. Nothing gave me greater delight than to find myself enclosed between a rank of fundamentalist Bibliolators on one side and a file of materialistic atheists on the other.

On one occasion the fundamentalists (I do not know of which sect) had been particularly pressing, and after the meeting was over many of the public were interested in the unofficial continuation of the debate, which concerned the fate of the good unbeliever after death. Glancing at my watch I saw that there was a risk of missing my train, so hurriedly held out my hand to my opponent. He did not take it but looked rather puzzled. Suddenly a younger and keener-witted member of the group grasped it firmly, looked me in the eyes, and said, slowly and deliberately "Good night brother in the flesh but not in the spirit." The other member, a smile of relief on his face, used the same formula, and all the rest followed suit. The crowd grinned, and I was a bit puzzled myself till I remembered the injunction "shake not hands with unbelievers."

In fairness I must add that once I was complimented by some fundamentalists, who came to one of our services out of curiosity, on a prayer I had extemporised. They thoroughly disapproved the sermon, but seemed strangely moved and somewhat disturbed by such a prayer from a heretic.

Unitarian churches have always attracted an eccentric fringe (theosophists, spiritualists, and the like)—maybe more so a generation or so ago than now, when the orthodox churches are so hesitant about their dogmas that it is possible for a famous nonconformist preacher to write a book defending reincarnation.

To some degree this may explain the current decline in Unitarianism. In the old days a Christian minister, straying off the tracks, would either be asked to go, or would of his own accord resign and join our movement. This rarely happens today.

In my first ministry at Islington we had a Swedenborgian fringe—devoted admirers of the Swedish scientist and mystic, but repelled by the almost fundamentalist reverence for his writings

found in the "New Church". Elsewhere we have welcomed into fellowship groups of spiritualists who, once convinced of survival, no longer craved "trance addresses", or who had become impatient with the constant search for phenomena (many of which have nothing to do with survival), or had wearied with endless messages from friends beyond, (which have really nothing to do with worship).

Unitarians, Spiritualists and Quakers have much in common, and also much to learn from one another, and in future years (now long past) I was to write a little book suggesting their union. But so different are their needs at worship that nothing more came of it than, one hopes ,an increase here and there in mutual understanding. The pure theist, with his simple hymns and prayers and his literary readings and sermons has little to attract the Quaker, with his love of silence, or the Spiritualist, craving for personal messages from the other side, and he in turn is soon bored by them.

Even queerer than any hitherto mentioned were some found among us now and then—folk who believed in astrology or palmistry, or found significance in the number on your tram ticket ("the smallest detail has its significance in this marvellous and purposeful universe," said one) or in the change of your surname (were you female) on marriage. Quite normal folk, till the one aberration was touched on.

Then there were the communists. Nothing delighted me more in those days than a public debate with Robert Colyer, a personal friend of mine, an ex-Unitarian lay preacher. We had been fellow-members of the Highgate Unitarian church, and many a time had addressed open air meetings outside, after evening service. But now Colyer, author of a book in which he predicted inevitable war between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., was an avowed atheist, and often we clashed on such themes as *is God reality of illusion* ? —*is theism inimical to socialism* ?—*is free faith a soporific or an inspiration* ?—*can a republican democrat admit a supreme being* ?

Of course we understood each other perfectly; of course neither of us made converts; each one of us did but confirm the convictions of those in the audience on his own side; and of course we were each of us convinced that all the truth was on one side. Though it is but fair to add that I had no quarrel with the aims of the communists, only with their violent methods. Had I then been forced to choose between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. I would have reluctantly chosen the latter. Now I do not know.

But there was one consideration which more than any other

troubled my opponent, and drove him from his former theistic conviction: and it had nothing to do with communism. It was this:—

If immortality is true, and if everybody survives death, and if universalism is true, so that ultimately everyone will get to heaven, then the sensual beast, who treats his wife as a mere chattel to gratify his lust, and who, by so doing, brings a dozen unwanted children into being, would do more good ultimately than the kind and considerate husband who limited his family to two or three. Because he would have generated some nine or ten more souls, each of whom would at last enter paradise; compared with which any hardships by the way would seem but a trivial price to pay.

I have never met this strange argument before or since. Only as hopelessly rationalistic a mind as Colyer's would engender it. I confess I had no answer but laughter for it. It troubled me not the slightest, but it disturbed him deeply.

The theosophists have an answer of course, and so have the believers in conditional immortality; but I could not then accept either position.

It was during residence at the hostel that I discovered a new and unexpected delight in rowing. I have already mentioned my total indifference to competitive sport and to all games, and I had always associated rowing with the Oxford and Cambridge boat race. But one afternoon, stimulated by an unusually interesting lecture from Lionel Tayler, two of us had a boat out on the Finsbury Park lake, and ever since then I have enjoyed rowing, feeling the oars as extensions of the arms, sensitive to the gentle lapping of the waters as one feathers, and to the pull of the oar against the water as one gathers speed.

Rowing is the healthiest of exercises, bringing all limb and body muscles into play. It was once when rowing that I suddenly realised how much cleverer the birds were than most mammals, turning their front limbs into wings! Yet what a price they paid, never to develop hands! You can't have it both ways, and difficult choices must sometimes be made.

Chapter 6

GOING NORTH EAST

IN the early thirties there was as marked a difference between North and South as in the days when Mrs Gaskell wrote her famous novel. At least as marked a difference as that between England and the lowlands of Scotland, or Wales. It may not be there to so great a degree now owing to the increasing interchange of population.

In no way was this difference shown more clearly to me than in the different treatment meted out to the parson when visiting parents of Sunday School scholars. Both in London and in South Shields (our first place of residence in the north) there were large Sunday Schools, but only a small proprotion of the children were those of our own members. (Even in those days Unitarians knew something about family planning, and usually had small families). Most of the pupils came from non-church-going parents who merely packed them off to the nearest church of any denomination to ensure a quiet Sunday afternoon.

But I made a point of calling on all the parents—one or other of them might be interested in an unusual sort of church.

Now in London I was usually kept by these good folk talking on the doorstep. Therefore it came as a pleasant surprise in Shields to be asked inside as soon as I introduced myself as a parson: whatever the time of day or whatever was going on in the house. It did not matter in the least if the baby was being bathed. The strange minister was welcome.

Another difference, and this time between Unitarians, was that whereas in the south some of the members were loth to talk about their occupation, in the north everybody knew what everybody else did.

Again in the north the classes were well mixed—there was scarcely a trace of the graded districts one took for granted in

the south: in one terraces of gardenless houses, in another semi-detached with small gardens, in another detached with grounds. There would, of course be poorer and more prosperous roads; but you could not guess so accurately the income of the inhabitant by the type of his house. A well-to-do business man might never move from the unpretentious house of his boyhood—he might spend his money otherwise; holidays abroad perhaps, instead of an ostentatious house or furniture. Well I remember my surprise on finding schoolteachers next door to miners in the same terrace. Another surprise was the way in which quite affluent clerks would wear caps, the hallmark of the manual worker in the south.

In some ways the journey northwards brought more change than that from clerking to farming in earlier years. No change of occupation, and only a move from town to town, not from town to country; but almost like a move to another country in those days, so many differences there were between south and north: little differences maybe, but the cumulative effect not so small.

South Shields was for the most part a town of two-storied terrace houses, in one of which we lived while the manse was being built. Each had a tiny front garden, and a small back yard opening on to a back lane. These lanes were characteristic of Northumbria, and new to us, though later on we were to find them in some London suburbs also.

Between town and sea were three parks; one of them, the South Marine, a little triumph of the landscape gardener's art. It had a large islanded lake, and several coppices of white beam trees sturdy enough to stand up to the persistent gales on the north-east coast. On the neighbouring Bents park was the finest and most varied collection of rhyzomatous irises we have ever seen, and surely the iris has the most beautiful shape of all flowers.

The neighbouring countryside was not inspiring—flat and treeless and dotted with coalmines; but further inland, beyond Newcastle, there were some attractive little riverside towns, usually built at the junction of a tributary with the Tyne, and often each with its own little glen.

Most attractive to us however were Newcastle itself, with its long and varied Jesmond Dean, and Durham city, with its Norman cathedral almost encircled by its deep set tree-fringed river—an oasis in a desert.

I was minister also of the Sunderland church. Shields was too near Newcastle to have much cultural life of its own, but

Sunderland was a centre in itself, with a fine museum in the central park, bordered by an attractive lake.

Holidays have always meant much to me. Never could I understand those who get bored on vacation. In my office days a holiday was an entry into Paradise: and when the time for return arrived how much I could sympathise with Adam and Eve on their expulsion from Eden! In the ministry matters changed somewhat. Livelihood and lifework being one, there was no desire to escape. Yet the holiday was still welcome—the nomad always likes a breakaway—and when the last day came there was a certain flavour of melancholy, a reverberation of the oppression that clouded the end of a holiday in the bad old days, suddenly dispersed by the blissful realisation that this was no return to the office, but to the hostel or the manse.

We married just before we moved northward, and we had a brief but memorable honeymoon on the banks of Ullswater en route for the North East coast. It was winter, and we lodged awhile in a house in the centre of Shields whilst awaiting the completion of the manse at Harton, a rather nondescript village between Shields and Sunderland.

This manse was built by a man and a boy, who did well enough inside, but outside. . . The semi-detached was surrounded on three sides by a large garden, and we two often spent an hour or two getting the beds ready for planting while the house was still under construction. Once whilst digging by the path from gate to door my spade struck something hard and long. A stone? No. It was a gaspipe covered by exactly two inches of soil.

"Oh . . . We didn't think you'd be digging just about there", said the lad.

In both the Northumbrian churches there were Sunday Schools—in Shields quite a large one—and we took our work very seriously. Because most of the children came from non-Unitarian homes it seemed all the more necessary to give them a good grounding in theism. In those days the famous five points were adopted by almost all our churches.

Poor old five points. We don't hear much of them now. Only a few of our churches still use them.

It is easy to be critical of all of them except the second. And even that is not sacrosanct. A famous medical man in our denomination once thought it too utopian, and also too indifferent to racial and cultural variety, and wanted to replace it by the

cousinship of man. The Fatherhood seemed too sexual a symbol to Theodore Parker, the leadership of Jesus was too exclusive, and Ramsay Macdonald disqualified the last point with his " on and on and on and up and up and up "! It was too vague anyhow, and might not have referred to immortality, but merely to endless progress on earth.

Yet it still seems a pity that the points have been outmoded. Despite their faults they formed a simple creed that anyone could grasp, and such a creed is still our greatest need when facing the world with our gospel. Never shall we all agree on one statement of faith as the best, but none other has ever won so general an approval as this one, and there is no present day substitute. Therefore its disappearance is deplorable.

But even in those long-gone days there was one clause I felt bound to change—salvation by character. Originally it was doubtless a needed protest against salvation by the blood, or by any creed. But it savoured too much of self satisfaction, and seemed especially perilous where children were concerned, quite possibly turning some of a certain temperament into nasty little spiritual prigs. So after much discussion with the teachers we changed it to " Salvation by earnest endeavour and the grace of God working in the soul."

Clumsy perhaps, but it did seem to be healthier doctrine.

I wonder how many Sunday schools still recite a simple creed. Many today would be shocked to hear some sixty or a hundred children say together " I believe in God, revealed to us in the order and beauty of the world, and urging us to self-control and kindliness . . . I believe that God loves all his children equally, and that at last, sin and error outgrown, all will attain eternal life " (to quote another statement of faith used in another church of which I was minister).

Where's the harm ? Especially if the children and adolescents are encouraged to ask questions, and to express any doubts that may arise through orthodox worship or materialistic scientific teaching in day school ? Surely in a world where crude dogmas of either extreme are bound to be encountered by teenagers at work it is only fair that theistic doctrine should also be met. This is not brain washing but protection against it !

Not that in any circumstances theism alone should be taught. John Stuart Mill rightly said that you cannot properly appreciate any truth except it be set against its contradiction. But where the negations are sure to be encountered, there all the greater is the need to affirm.

Th great public event of our time in Northumbria was the general strike of 1926, for us the culmination of a period of depression following the first world war. So different was even the physical atmosphere to that normal in the district that we were told we had never seen the place in its typical garb of smoke and soot.

My sympathies were entirely with the strikers ; and many were the meetings I addressed, mostly in the open, up and down the country. My subject was usually socialism ; for I soon discovered how narrow in outlook were most trade unionists, how hard it was for them to see beyond the borders of their own union even on this outstanding occasion when they had drawn together. Even so the unity did not endure. One day, at a huge meeting, we were told by the railwaymens' representative that " Jimmy Thomas won't let us down this time. We are solid behind the miners, and we won't go back till we all win." That very week Jimmy did let them down and the strike collapsed. The great opportunity had been lost.

In our denomination the " dog collar " is optional. I have worn one on but a single occasion, when playing the part of one of the parsons in Sutton Vane's drama *Outward Bound*. But there are arguments for and against. On one occasion, during the strike, the meeting over, I had just left the platform when one of the listeners remarked to me : " So that blasted parson hadn't the guts to turn up after all. Suppose his feet froze when his deacons disapproved."

" You're wrong this time," I retorted. " I am that blasted parson."

" Oy you're 'im. Beg pardon for blowin' off me top, but you really orter wear a dog collar. Lots 'er blokes 'oo came after you were announced will go away thinking as you wern't 'ere."

The two churches often joined forces for Saturday rambles. I have always advocated these functions, and it is a grief to me that in our smaller churches in the south there are seldom enough folk to have them. But the ramble gives better opportunity than the social to get to know each other intimately, to discuss all sorts of problems and share all manner of interests. And often the most successful are the smallest, say anything from a dozen to a score of folk ; grouping and re-grouping ; talking about art or religion, music or politics ; with the beauty of the scenery or the fascination of wild life to give relief from time to time, or to prevent undue concentration on depressing topics.

Some of our happiest memories are of rambles in various parts of the country, in Herts or Surrey, Northumbria or Westmoreland, Glamorgan or Gower—rambles rich with observation of flowers and trees, birds and little mammals; of keen arguments on subjects ranging from the problem of evil or the efficacy or futility of violence to the rival merits of Italian melody and German polyphony. Then comes the break for tea in some pleasant cottage garden; enlivened maybe by a game of "How, when, where and why?" or Conversations (two of you discuss something under the wrong name, and the rest of you have to discover what it is). After that more rambling and talking in the gathering twilight.

Yes, I heartily recommend the ramble to all groups, to all parsons. A discussion or reading circle is second only to a rambling club; is perhaps in some ways even more effective. And I doubt if any books are more suitable for reading circles than the breakfast table series of the American Unitarian who was at once doctor, theologian and poet.

At Shields a series of lectures on the great poets from Spencer to the Brownings (extended later to Masefield) was very enjoyable, at least to the lecturer. One occasion stands out in recollection. The poet was Wordsworth, and a large number of teen-aged girls were brought along by their teacher. But her appreciation was tinged by regret that almost all the time was devoted to reflective passages from the Excursion, leaving little time for the shorter lyrical poems. I could not agree; nor is Wordsworth the only poet whose reputation would have endured had his longer works not been overlooked. Longfellow is an even more striking example. Contrast his usually mediocre little lyrics with the pathos and scenic beauty of *Evangeline*, the satire of *Olaf* or even the humour of *Hiawatha*. One trouble with so many contemporary poets is surely the lack of staying power, the frequent inability to sustain inspiration for longer than a few verses, leading, perhaps, to undue idiosyncrasy and obscurity. Small wonder poetry has yielded in popularity to music.

We had among our members at Shields an elderly nurse who regularly came to the poetry lectures, missing only the one on Robert Browning, from which a deed of charity to a sick neighbour prevented her. She was so sad about this that for the first and last time in my life I gave a lecture to an audience of one, in her poor little bed-sitting room.

A real character she was in many ways; strong as steel even in her retirement. In her professional life she worked long hours

for a small pittance without even a hint of asking for a rise. Radical in politics, she yet had not the slightest sympathy for nurses who clomoured for better conditions and larger stipends. They ought to be above that sort of thing, for theirs was a vocation, and what she had done they could do.

Her Unitarianism was a trifle off centre. Keenly interested in spiritualism, she claimed psychic powers herself, and was also a convinced believer in reincarnation; and this gave her great relief when contemplating the unhappy lot of so many poor and sick folk; for she was sure they were but reaping their *karma* for ill deeds done in previous lives. When I insisted that it was these very doctrines of reincarnation and *karma* that produced the cruel caste system in India she did not deny it. No one could have condemned caste more than she did. But that they had brought it on themselves should but the more deepen our pity for them, and so speed our help and their redemption.

Strong as steel she was, but soft as wool, save for that one streak of coolness towards nurses who babbled of the need for a trade union.

It is a rare and happy experience to be taken back to an earlier phase in one's life by a visit of friends from the byegone time and place. One such occasion came when Will Sahnow, his wife Ethel and their little weanling Leonora spent a holiday with us at Shields. One day especially stands out in memory. We were caught by the incoming tide in a cave pentrating a tiny islet off the coats. We were sitting there some four hours. We spent the time between preventing Leonora from swallowing handfuls of sand, and compiling lists of the twelve greatest overtures. I well remember Will's amusement when I refused to take Balfe's *Behemian Girl* out of my list.

After a few months in Shields one becomes slowly aware of Northumbria—for even today the shadow still persists of the old independent kingdom, boasting itself the province where first it became safe for a woman to walk alone and unmolested by night.

But this ancient Northumbria stretched from the Humber to the Forth, no small country for those days, and about equally divided between what are now England and Scotland; all of it then, as now, Anglo-Saxon, and making the claim of the Scottish home-rulers for a united and separated Scotland an absurd one.

The folk of Newcastle and western Tynside share with the Glaswegians the atrocious glottal stop, speaking of bu . . er and wa . . er (eliminating the t) but I do not remember noting this defect of speech in Shields. Whilst all along Tyneside there is

(or was) the local interjection of surprise: not the broad owe of the south, or its cockney verient of oo'er, not the true o vowel of the Scot, but simple eeee. Far more natural an expression of amazed delight, it seemed immediately to me. It was the first sound that greeted us on emerging from the train at Newcastle, and we hope it still persists. With aspirations for a less ugly accent, I flattered myself that after two years in Northumbria the slightest traces of Cockney had vanished. Imagine the shock when, bidding us goodbye after showing us the wonders of the Marsden lighthouse, the keeper added " by the way, what part of London do you hail from ? "

Chapter 7

INTO THE MOUNTAINS

SHORTLY after we had moved from Shields to Kendal I wrote to a friend saying that the journey from the Tyne to the lakes was not unlike a telescoped tour from North Kent to South Cornwall. But the contrast was even more striking. On either side of the Tyne is a low plateau broken by numerous twisting steep-sided valleys called deans. Here alone trees abound, and only here will you find shelter from the dominating wind: not the nor' east even here, but the sou'wester, too persistent even for one to whom a strong breeze is an invitation to a walk. By contrast Cumbria is in some ways the finest mountain country I know. It has the largest proportion of peaks independent of chains, each one yielding views in all directions of the many valleys and curling lakes below.

Kendal is only on the fringe of the lake district, but is yet a typical Cumbrian town, and the largest. It is a happy little place, and presents a striking contrast to either Shields or Sunderland. It is situated where three valleys merge into one, and is surrounded by hills, some of them well wooded. From the Serpentine woods you look down through the beech trees to the grey roofs clustering on the fellside, and to the Castle hill beyond, its tree-fringed ruin on the summit, with the Pennine chain in the background.

Small enough to be regarded as a big village by those used to larger towns, yet it is almost a metropolis to those living further inside Cumbria, I once heard a woman comment to her neighbour " Kendal's big enough for me—I get lost in Lancaster." On which the neighbour commented " But Lancaster's quite a small town really. You should see Chester ? " " I don't want to ", was the retort. " I can't imagine a larger town than Lancaster."

Which leads me to comment on the interesting things the Gallop polls don't investigate. How many people in these days of travel don't travel at all? How many people in the Isle of Man, or the Isle of Wight, have never been to the mainland? Or again, considering the stupid things some people do, like rowing across the Atlantic alone, or breaking the record for nonstop piano-playing, why does nobody attempt a few things not quite so silly—like walking all round the coast of Britain (some forty-two thousand miles if you follow all the curves and inlets).

But to return from this absurd digression. Kendal is varied enough to offer many different sorts of occupation, from paper making to shoe making; and therefore remains almost free from the depression of unemployment so rife in the Northeast at this period.

Very different also were the Northumbrian and Cumbrian climates—the former at once the coldest, windiest and driest in Britain: the latter warmer in winter than London, but with the highest rainfall—higher even than the northwest of Scotland—difficult to understand in view of the Irish screen to the southwest, whence most of the rain comes. A curious effect of this distinction was that whereas in Shields a mere smatter of rain meant a half empty church a downpour in Kendal made little difference. Cold was the enemy there.

One fine winter Sunday, however, the church was three parts empty. The reason? The rumour had spread around the town the previous evening that Windermere was frozen. It happened, on average, about once in a generation, and therefore was not to be missed. Frozen it was, too, from end to end. But they need not have rushed from town to see it. For three weeks that frost lasted, and some of the hotels normally closed in winter opened for a special season. On the firm ice prams were pushed around and chestnuts baked and sold. And the ferry worked night after night to keep the passage across the water open.

In Cumbria I soon found myself an ardent local patriot. I never understood this sentiment till I stood on the downs behind Newport (Wight), and saw the little island stretched out around me in all directions, fringed by the sea. There is something peculiarly insular about an island (Tautology unintentional but significant). But any lakeland summit engendered similar sentiments. My wife suggested that this might be due to my maternal grandmother hailing from Cumbria; but this may be discounted. She showed not the slightest nostalgia for her native district, and my other grandparents came from Devon, East Anglia and London respectively.

Curious, how most of us know so little about even our more recent ancestors, unless we happen to be aristocrats. Curious, too, how small a number of ancestors take us right back through the centuries. My maternal grandfather was born in 1828, only thirteen years after Waterloo, the year when Beethoven died. He lived to 82, and we knew each other well. Should I live to his age, discounting his infancy, we shall between us span a hundred and sixty years. It would only need a dozen people similarly related to reach back nearly two millenia. Multiply by four, and you can imagine them joining hands, forty-eight of them, and the earliest of them would not be so far from the beginning of civilisation! Thinking thus, history seems almost as short as the world seems small to the intrepid traveller. So we cheat both time and space.

Moving from Northumbria to Cumbria is moving from scarcity to abundance, from flatland to the fells and dales. To me it was a wonderful thrill: scarcely could I believe it true that we were really there.

From sea to inland would be a great loss to some, to most it would seem, but I could never understand the passion for the seaside as such. For me, trees and woods come first, hills, preferably mountains, a close second; than a lake or curving river, and last a cliff bound, curving coast. So the loss of a straight and fairly flat coast was as nothing to balance against the woods and mountains and glens.

The congregtion was one of the two largest, most representative and most memorable I have ministered to. It was a healthy countersection of the more liberal elements in the town, and there were as many men as women, as many young as elderly.

Politically they would have been about equally divided between Liberal and Labour. They had a very democratic system of committee representation. Each year a third of the committee resigned; a device approved and recommended by headquarters, but usually ignored. Thus it was possible each year to get a third of new faces on the committee. But still there were snags. At our arrival there were no young people in management at all. So I persuaded some of the elders to propose two in their twenties, a lad and a lass, for election at the next general meeting, and I urged all the members to give each of them a vote, at the same time appealing to whoever found himself or herself excluded as a result of this manoeuvre to take it in the right spirit. Well, it worked. My youngsters were elected, and two old ladies each of whom had been on committee for several years, barring the

odd year out, found themselves at the bottom of the poll. They both took it in the wrong way. One was so bitter that we saw no more of her. The other also resigned, but returned repentant to the fold.

This reminds me of a somewhat similar incident in Shields, though the cause of the trouble this time was nothing to do with church government. It was during the civil war in China. During the course of a sermon in which I criticised our conservative government for backing the reactionary side two men walked out. They were two loyal members of the church, and sound Unitarians; so I felt rather shaken, but did not regret what I had said. But I need not have been downcast. After the service there they were walking up and down the street outside. They came to me and said they were sorry for what they had done. They disagreed with me—one had a son on active service out there—but they respected me for saying what I thought should be said.

In Kendal the congregation was behind me in all my political activities, which now involved much speaking up and down the province in support of the Labour candidates, who were incidentally two Unitarian ministers, Page Smith and Walter Bone. Two meetings stand out conspicuously in memory after the lapse of some forty years. In Kendal town hall a group of young men tried to shout me down, but responded in a most welcome manner to my appeal for fair play, and listened carefully to all of us till the end of the meeting. In Watermellock, a tiny village on the shores of Ullswater, two aristocratic ladies, unutterably shocked at the appearance of three reverend gentlemen on a socialist platform, stormed noisily out of the hall, no appeal to fair play having the slighest effect this time.

That was the first election won by Labour (not locally of of course) and well we remember listening at our manse to the results, till well after midnight; and the increasing delight of another parson, the local Primitive Methodist, as one Labour victory after another was announced.

There was small need for any ecumenical movement in Kendal even in those far off days. There was a joint ministers' fraternal comprising all in the town except the Roman priest. On behalf of the rest of us the Anglican Archdeacon took a cordial invitation to him, only to be repulsed with the acid comment that he (the priest) was the only truly Christian minister in the town.

Quakers too were represented, and incidentally the headmaster of the Quaker school often brought his class of senior boys to our morning service.

Coincidences can be curious. One fine day I set out to climb Skiddaw. There was another pilgrim ascending from the opposite end. We were the only two to reach the summit that morning, and we met with amazement. He was a member of the Sunderland church. I had no idea that he was on holiday, nor he that I would climb Skiddaw that day.

Which reminds me of a later and even stranger coincidence. I had married a couple at our Finchley church, of which I was minister at the time. They told us they were honeymooning on the continent, but that did not diminish our mutual surprise on meeting the following week on the summit of Monte Salvadore in Italian Switzerland.

When we were residing in Shields my wife said that it was better not to dwell everyday in exceptionally beautiful places—better reserve them for holy-days, or holidays, and I agreed. But here we were actually dwelling in what I believed to be the most beautiful district in Britain, and which I still hold to be one of the loveliest in the world. It is true, we told ourselves, Kendal is but on the fringe of the lakes—a good eight miles from the nearest of them—it is true every mile from Kendal to Keswick adds somewhat to the splendour of the scene (even as it adds an inch to the annual rainfall) so that the holy of holys is at a distance. But how short a distance; possible any day to reach it by two hours' bus ride. But in that magical district even the fringes are full of beauty. Were it lifted out of Cumbria and placed in the heart of East Anglia even the Kent valley alone would be a famous resort. What joy it was every morning to look out of the window and see the river and the mountain background: what joy to go to sleep lapped in in the friendly little valley, the protective mountains all around. Still one could scarcely believe one resided there. No fleeting holiday, but every season through the years.

All this, and a good live representative congregation too. One Sunday evening, soon after our arrival, we were sitting in the Serpentine woods after service, looking down on the little grey town nestling in its green valley. And then and there my wife suggested that here I should be more assiduous in my pastoral work than I had sometimes been hitherto: less selective in my friendships; more careful to visit not only those who shared one's interests (that had never been hard) but also mediocre folk whose interests might be more mundane, more trivial; with whom, therefore, conversation might well be more difficult, and sometimes inevitably rather boring. Sound advice, and I dare to

hope that subsequently I have not been too unsuccessful a pastor as well as preacher.

In Cumbria, as in Northumbria, we had many a happy ramble, often so planned that the vigorous and the sedentary could find equal enjoyment. We would walk or take a bus to some chosen spot where those who desired could rest, whilst others of us would climb through woodland or gorse to ridge or summit; all joining later for picnic or tea in some nearby cafe, after which another walk or climb.

Incidentally has it ever occurred to you how it is that in mountaineering one does the hard work first and reaps the reward after the labour is over? It is true that ascending, one pauses often, and turns round to see the widening view; but for the most part one looks ahead, wondering whether the apparent summit really is the top, or only another shoulder, with a further incline ahead, whereas in descending all is sheer enjoyment. Even though the prospect gradually closes in, there is ample compensation in the increasing intimacy, to say nothing of the delightful change from naked rock or bare grass to heathland or woodland, with glimpses through the trees of a nearby waterfall, or of the village still some distance below.

It was in Kendal that I had my second chance to enter the political field, other than as a mere occasional speaker. I was asked to let my name go forward as that of a Labour candidate for parliament. Without any hesitation, without any thought maybe, I declined the invitation. Was it a selfish decision? I was happy in my work, happy in my daily life, happy in my surroundings; then what need to change? It has since occurred to me that it might have been my duty to say "Yes." I wonder. It would probably have changed the whole tenor of my life. But now I shall never know.

It was also from Kendal that I had my first sight of the continent, my first holiday in Switzerland. I was asked to go as a representative of the Kendal branch of the League of Nations Union. My wife did not accompany me, but there were other union members from the district. Those were the days when, despite the betrayal of the soldiers by the politicians, despite the defeat of Wilson by Clemeanceau at Versailles, there was still a shred of hope left—the days of Stresemann and Briand. It was good to be there; in the little republic where Germans, Frenchmen and Italians had lived as humans when beyond her borders they had been mass-murdering each other. It was good also to see Geneva, with its placid lake and rushing river; to ascend the

St. Bernard pass: to wander along the streets of Chamonix, with the snows of Mt. Blanc towering above.

But all the glory of Switzerland detracted nothing from the lure of Cumbria. Yet so impressive was Alpine scenery, so inspiring the knowledge that in that corner of the continent French, Germans and Italians had lived as civilized people througout the war, that on returning home the sanity of Switzerland in the Nationalistic madhouse of Europe became a favourite theme from the pulpit. How regrettable that in the days when the Swiss federation was growing it did not expand to include all the French, German and Italian territories! How different then would have been the course of history! Yet, incredibly, Switzerland lagged behind in the emancipation of women and the tolerance of war-resisters. Not all sane even there!

One happy reward reaped by the parson is a large circle of friends: all the larger and more varied if he move from place to place. At each church he will find a few with whom he has so much in common that they will remain in his "inner circle" throughout life. One such at Kendal was Tom Smith, splendid example of a type rarer now than once—the self-educated working man. A worker in a tobacco factory; the keenest of field naturalists; admirer of every variety of good music except the ultra modern; well acquainted with English literature of all periods, but with a flair for the eccentric; an amateur theologian who found his own way from Rome to Unitarianism; a radical politician and pacifist; and with all this a devoted church secretary; a man whom it was a sheer joy to know, and withal so human, and so gifted with a welcome sense of humour, that all his acquaintances were his friends.

Looking back I find myself to have been a late developer as regards travel. One rare advantage enjoyed by the railway clerk is the privilege of travelling, during vacation, to anywhere in Britain free of charge. Yet I had been working at the Railway Clearing House for some years before I ventured even so far afield from the metropolis as Devon or Wales. At the outset I was ensnared by the absurd ideas that even in the London parks, in Epping Forest or on Hampstead Heath, one had all one needed, and had never thought of trespassing beyond the home counties. This seems incredible to me now. Was it due to reading somewhere, in Thoreau I believe, that one who saw one's own district intimately discerned more than one who compasses the world with the eyes of the mind shut.

Be that as it may, not till my thirty-eighth year, did I venture abroad, and then it was not a holiday deliberately chosen, but that visit to Geneva on behalf of the League of Nations union. Once seen, there was no holding me from further visits to Switzerland; but I sometimes wonder if I should ever have left the shores of Britain had it not been for that local branch—even if I should have left the home counties had I been a bank clerk! What a hideous thought. One of my uncles boasted that he had only once ventured beyond Herefordshire or Kent. Once he had gone to Cumbria because his mother had been born there; but the weather was wet (as usual, they told him) so he came back home before his week was out. And I knew a man who had never gone more than half a day's journey from his home, because he never wanted to sleep away from the house where he was born!

Nowadays we go to the other extreme. We send children abroad when they are too young properly to appreciate the experience, and so doing we probably blunt the edge of their appreciation in later years: even as we may very likely spoil poetry and drama for them by forcing a too early acquaintance with Shakespeare instead of beginning with Longfellow or Scott.

But don't go to the other extreme as I did. And don't spend your holidays year after year in the same place. Wait some five or ten years before you return to any district and you will earn more than its first appeal. Whilst everyone should see Switzerland and Scotland at least once, and if only once, preferably in youth.

Despite my indifference to competitive sport, it is also to my regret that I had so little interest in bodily enjoyment. I have no reason to believe that I would ever, on my own initiative, have taken up rowing; and I have long regretted that I never learned to ride a cycle (a push bike of course, not the other monstrosity). I did try to swim, but I was over forty, and it was too late. I went to a professional trainer, but showed myself a helpless hopeless coward, lacking the courage to dispense with the belt and trust to the rope. Had I tried the cycle at the same age I doubt if the result would have been any better. As a little boy my sense of balance was defective. I did not like swings or roundabouts and screamed with terror on a switchback. In later life I was hopeless fruitpicking, on a ladder once the wind swung the branch it was resting on. Yet I could master any mountain ridge, a deep precipice either side, without a tremor. With firm rock under my feet I had no fear, even in a high wind.

But I would have all children taught to ride the cycle and to swim—all, that is, except those overcome with sheer terror at the prospect.

With regard to swimming, I am inclined to believe that any small child thrown into calm water unexpectedly, would swim rather than drown—would perform the right movements instinctively, and so overcome fear; but can one be sure of this? A group of monkeys on a Pacific Island, habitually living half way up a mountain, were enticed by some Japanese naturalists to come down to the shore to be fed. In a few days, for the first time in their lives, they were swimming in the sea. On the other hand some dogs have to be thrown into the water time after time before they will take to it readily. True enough, they always swim back, but they don't like it, and the practice of forcing them seems a cruel one; though presuming that at last another pleasure is added to their lives it may be a kindness in the end.

Yet some mammals, at some time in the distant past, turned their legs back into paddles, and so simulated their fishy ancestors (though they could never exchange their lungs back for gills). Even as others envied their avian cousins, and turned their limbs into wings. No wonder we sometimes envy the fishes, and even more the birds. To be able to fly (to be lifted into the air by a machine is not flying) almost at times it would seem to be worth that sacrifice of hands!

Chapter 8

CUMBRIAN FOLK

NOW let me give you an idea of some of the Cumbrian folk encountered—characteristically eccentric if you will. All the incidents are literally true with one exception. Mrs Dalton in the first narrative is fictitious, or rather is Nurse Anderson of Shields, transferred to Kendal for dramatic effect.

I. Potato Pie

When Mrs Dalton came to Kendal she tried all the churches in turn, but they all fell far short of her ideal. Ours gave the best teaching, she said; but somehow the aura was wrong. For some time she could not understand why. Then one evening she came to a social and found out. Among the other articles to eat was a huge potato pie, of which black puddings were the chief ingredient.

" No, not for me, not on any account ", she shouted. " It's rank poison. Meat's bad enough, but pig's blood . . . it's positively barbaric." Her stentorian voice filled the hall, so that half a dozen little conversation circles were shattered! Against a background of utter silence Mrs Tice, a stout jolly woman, expostulated, " Barbaric or not, it's very tasty."

" It's only tasty to those whose taste has been thoroughly corrupted ", responded Mrs Dalton, still shouting, though not in any personal manner, for she was merely out to teach, and so assumed her lecture voice.

" It's more harmful than wine or beer by far, and yet you're a teetotaller, Mrs Tice. I simply can't understand it."

" You want to be married to my old man, or you wouldn't blab such nonsense " chipped in Mrs Heft, a wizened old woman by her side. " More harm than beer is it? Ah shan't stagger up fellside, trippin' at every step. Answer me that! "

" It is more harmful all the same, because it's more deceptive; it takes in more people, that's the difference. The poison is slower and subtler, but it harms your muscles. Didn't I hear you complaining about rheumatic pains yesterday? And it also hurts your soul."

" Oh, it's my soul is it? My husband's a better person than me, is he? I suppose it's only his body that's wrong. But wait till you've spent a chill winter here and I guess you'll take a little black pudding yourself to warm the cockles of your heart."

Mrs Dalton told me herself afterwards that now she knew what was wrong with the spiritual atmosphere of the church and the auras of most of the people. It was the evil vibrations set up in the chapel by the pig's blood. " People can't worship wholeheartedly," she said, " with that stuff inside them. It poisons their auras."

" It's atrocious stuff ", I agreed, " but isn't it rather materialistic to invest it with all that power? "

" Nonsense ", was the reply " No more than to admit that drink make a man drunk."

I might add that at the next social, and all subsequent ones, we had a table where no black puddings were served. But it was mostly frequented only by a few of the younger folk.

II. Three Thousand Feet

If you go to the very end of the Langdale valley you come to a steep little pass, mounting which you are but half an hour from Esk House, an elevated ridge from which the Scafell range may be easily ascended. We reached this ledge one doubtful day, only to find that Scafell Pike was wrapped in dense cloud, though Great End (the innermost peak of the range) was clear.

Sitting down awhile, we heard hasty footsteps, as one running up the slope. Presently a lean little red-haired man came in view—we knew him well, one of the pillars of the Unitarian church. He saw the cloud on the summit before he saw us, and frowned slightly.

Then, " Hallo Tom: Hallow Bas. You'll join me for the Pike?"

" But is there the least chance of that cloud lifting? There'll be no view from the Pike, and it's quite clear on the End. A better view to the north from there too."

" Yes, I suppose that's true. Great End rather blots out Borrowdale from the Pike. But I don't fancy having come all this way without getting to the real summit."

" Oh, it's the climb rather than the scenery you're always out for, Vin Brady."

" That's so I fear. Though I prefer it clear. Shouldn't have come had I been a better weather prophet. But it's good to know that you're more than three-thousand feet up. Great End's only two thousand nine hundred. If it wasn't for that missing hundred I'd come with you like a shot."

" Now really," remarked Tom, when he had disappeared, " is that the mentality of the true mountain lover or only of the tight-rope-walker or the channel swimmer ? "

We trudged on, and from Great End the whole of Borrowdale opened out below us, with Derwentwater in the middle distance; every little wooded islet clearly visible, with Skiddaw beyond, rising into its own dim cloudland.

Down in the little farmhouse in the vale we had tea, and there Vin Brady joined us again.

" No. No view at all ", he said. " But I've now bagged my tenth three thousand footer this year ! " He beamed his satisfaction.

" But what about the Scotch peaks ? " said Tom, maliciously. " Over four thousand some of them ! "

Vin was nonplussed awhile. Then, " Oh, one might have to revise one's standards there I suppose ".

" Don't you think it's a pity," I commented, changing the subject, " that there are no railways up our mountains, like there are in Switzerland. It seems a shame that so many who come here never reach the ridges and peaks."

He fired up instantly, as I guessed he would, almost glaring.

" The view should only be the reward of a hard climb. And they could get up easily enough if only they would eat simple food, wear fresh clothing, and have plenty of fresh air and exercise. All but a few invalids. Yes, its hard on the invalids. Perhaps a camouflaged chair lift, but only for them."

III. The Local Patriot

In the hills between Hawkshead and Coniston is the highest and one of the least frequented of our lakes. It goes by the curious and inappropriate name of Tarn Hause. It once consisted of three seperate tarns. Some six hundred feet above sea level the beautiful lake surrounded by fir-lined mountains and dotted with fir clad islands. A primitive road winds up from near Hawkeshead, and then down again to join the Coniston road.

It was here I once found one of the most stalwart of local patriots. He was trimming the hedgerow, and I lingered to pass the time of day with him. We chatted awhile; one topic led to another, and presently I told him I came from Kendal.

" Oh . . . aye . . . a girt place, Kendal. Too big for me . . . and I miss the mountains."

" But ", I said, somewhat taken aback, " we've fine hills at Kendal, and one mountain too."

" O . . . aye . . . Benson Knott. But that's only a little 'ill really. Slopes too gradual . . . too smooth . . . no naked rock at all ".

" And Kendal's not a big town. You should see London," I continued.

" Ah . . . A've seen it. But yunce though. That's mair than enough for me. Liverpool too. They're turrible places. Ye canna see t'end o' them. Ye canna see any yills from them. An' when ye do get oot into the country it's a' flat. A t'same everywhere. No shape to tell it by. Ye get me ? Like a face wi'oot features. It a' seems so friendless, so Godless, Sire. Aye, Kendal's a much better place than they. Ye can see oot o'it fr'anywhere in t'middle of it. An there is a bit o' shape to the yills, though they're low."

" But you prefer a little village to even a small town ? " I said.

For the first time he took his pipe out of his mouth as he looked at me.

" Village sire ? Coniston's not a village. It's a town, the sweetest little town God ever made; wi' it's own bonny shops and the loveliest lake in front of it and the grandest mountain gently folding it round. It talks in the Book about God's holy hill. That's how I feel about t' Old Man. It's as though t' Lord himself is above that yill. It's like his protecting hand guarding us. A'd feel lost like wi'out it."

IV. The Strange Shepherd

If you go to the end of Kentmere, climb the Nan Bield pass and mount a few hundred feet to the summit of High Street, you find yourself on a ridge smooth as the Sussex Downs, but four times the height. You may continue on the almost level stretch for some five miles. Then begins a gentle but very gradual descent, though it is as well not to keep to the highest contour. Drop a little on the western flank, and there opens before you a series of mountain glens, all winding down towards Patterdale or Ullswater, whilst before long Ullswater itself comes into view, curling away to the northern lowlands.

It was on High Street that I met the strange shepherd. He was stooping over a dead hare, carefully examining it, his dog looking on with a rather puzzled expression. Why was his master interested in so dull an object ?

" Poor doggie . . . thou dost not understand ", said the man. Then, throwing me a friendly nod, he passed on. He was a tall angular fellow, with a large mop of frizzly hair, keen piercing eyes, an aquiline nose, thin lips and high cheek bones. His arms were long and his hands bony, and he walked jerkily, with immense strides.

Going in the same direction, we struck up an animated conversation. His speech was not as broad as usual in the dales, and on occasion he would break out into standard English.

" There don't seem to be many trampers this way ", I said. " Not a soul since I left Kentmere."

" Nay. And when you think of the millions of folk doon there in Lancashire, not many find their way up here at all. It's at their varry door, and they dee wi'oot seein' it."

" Yes. I suppose you're right. Most of them prefer Blackpool."

" Aye. An' it's yon big toons do a' t' mischief. Folks get so used to being hoarded up like ants in a nest that they can't abide the loneliness of the hills and the moors. They're afeard o' theirselves, they're afeard o' nature, they're afeard o' God. Why half the folk that do come here darena leave t' road. They just race round in their motors, or if they can't afford that in coaches. That isna seein' lakeland. No mair than lookin' at it in a view book, it isna. What do they knaw of the spirit of the place ? They've never been on the top of a scar. They never walk over a pass from vale to vale : except the Kirkstone, which don't count, as there's a road all the way. They never rejoice in a mountain storm, like Wordsworth did ".

" You read Wordsworth then ? " said I.

" Aye, Wordsworth and the Bible. And there's nowt much else worth reading, I'd say. Talk of education—what's the education they give you in the schools worth anyhow ? A smatter o' all sorts of subjects, but nowt larned properly. I paid for my son to have a real good education. What's the result ? A smatterin' o' Latin, a smatterin' o' French, even a smatterin' o' German. But can he read a Latin poet in the original ? Not without a dictionary by his side. Can he talk to a Frenchman or a German ? No mair that I can. They gave him a smatter o' geometry and a smatter o' algebra. But can he understand the way by which

the astronomers find out how far off the stars are ? Not a bit of it. He just had to cram a lot o' stuff into his yed and to spill it out again from time to time at the examination desk. With what result ? Now he hates learning an' has done wi' education for life. Why if I'd sent him to the village school till he'd learned his letters and his figures and then kept him at home and given him the taste to read half a dozen really good books like Wordsworth and Wells's history his intellects would have been much saner and riper. Most o' t' townsfolk only learn to get on. That's not really learning at all to my mind. Much better be content with a humble country life ".

We were now skirting the edge of a peat bog. My friend refilled his pipe, struck a match and resumed.

" You know, sir, we are now treading on natural fuel. There are deep beds of it not far off. Yet how many folk burn peat now ? Even here ? "

" You don't fancy coal then ? "

He stopped, and his sharp eyes glared into mine.

" I fancy a simple life, sir. That and nowt else is the cure for all our troubles. No—I don't mean vegetarianism and all that sort of thing. That's rubbish. Though I do think they ought to make the humane killer compulsory. The way they kill those poor pigs. But I mean living in the country instead of the town, an' growin' mair of oor own food instead o' gettin' so much from abroad. And shutting up most of these factories, and burning peat instead of coal. Now really, sir, can you believe God meant many men to spend most of their time digging in the bowels of the earth, in narrow dark tunnels ? If he had, he'd have made a special kind of man for the job ; a man with no eyes, and digging claws instead of hands—a sort of human mole. No, it's not a joke, I'm dead serious sir, I means it ! "

Gradually he got more excited, and as he did so he lapsed further from standard English into dialect. It was also evident, despite what he had said, that he had read widely, and in unexpected places.

" But would there be enough peat ? " I asked.

" Nay. Mebby not, but why not bring the miners over here, and make foresters of them ? Think what a good thing that would be all round. Healthy work for them, and plenty of wood for every one to burn. And a lakeland even more beautiful than noo, with pines and larches growing on all but the very highest scars ".

" But we shouldn't be able to support anything like so large a population as now if we eat only food grown here ? "

" And a good thing too. We don't breed animals anyhow, do we ? It's time we stopped breeding boys and girls anyhow too, to my mind ".

" I'm with you there, right enough ".

Then came the surprise.

" You know sir, I'd hoped gert things from the Labour Party. Ah thought they would at least put t' unemployed on a forest station and agriculture. Ah thought they would gradually depopulate t' gert toons and revive t' countryside. But there's nowt dooin' that way. There's only yan way Ah can see, and it's not a pleasant yan."

" Oh ? And what is it ? "

" Another world war. It sounds horrid, but God's ways are sometimes quaint to oor eyes ".

" Oh don't misunderstand me sir. Ah've no quarrel wi' any foreigner. T' real issue is not between British and German any mair than 'tween English and Scotch. Nor so much between class an' class, but 'tween toon an' country. It's t' big toons that are a' t' trouble. Noo t' next war will be in t' air, , and they say t' toons will be a' wiped oot in yan neet. So there won't be much suffering will there ? 'Twill all be over in a flash as it were. Then we can a' start over again as after t' flood . . . "

" But really " . . . I began, and then saw that he was taking not the slighest notice of me. He was looking into space, gesticulating.

" Think on it. No mair factories, no mair mines, no mair o' they commercial schools. Only farms and villages, and tiny clean little towns. God brings good oot o' evil in strange ways sometimes. What does Cowper say ? . . . God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform."

Then his features relaxed, and the kindly human expression returned.

" See how beautiful ", he said, pointing to where the sunset glow was reflected in the lake below. " Well, good evening, friend. My way lies yonder. Glad o' meetin' ye."

I wound down through heather and bracken to the little village of Pooley, pondering on the strange old man ; big and vigorous, gentle and human, who had yet wrought out so queer a creed for himself, with so forbidding an aspect.

V. Magic Glasses

He was a very simple fellow. He owned a tiny farm down in the valley at the far end—all the work achieved by himself and his partner : they had no children.

I was on the summit above, looking down through my field glasses now along the curves of one, now of another of the three dales below, when I was somewhat startled by his voice.

" If Ah do not make too bold sir, but Ah've never looked through t'glasses. Is it true that they mak things look much bigger than spectacles do ?—that they mak things quite a long way off seem near ? "

" Try them for yourself, my friend," I said, handing them to him.

He took them from me, and, under my guidance, twisting them till he got the right focus ; he looked long and silently, first towards the sea, then down towards his own little farmhouse.

So enraptured he was that for long he said not a word. Then.

" Am almost afeared, sir. It doant seem right. They'm magic glasses without a doubt—but is it black magic Ah wonder ? Why Ah can see every slate in t'ouse. Ah can see t'goat as though 'e were an ox. An' Ah can see my old woman comin' oot o' t'door into the yard. Now what's she gettin' oop ter ? If she isn't pickin' them raspberries Ah told 'er not ter touch till next week—they aren't properly ripe for pickin' yet. Taking advantage cos A'm out. Let 'er wait till Ah get's back . . . "

Then, after a long pause " Ah wonder if its right to look an' see what 'er's doin' when she thinks she's out of my sight ? It's almost as though you's God ter be able ter see all this way off. It almost seems like cheating—like cheating God. Nay—Ah don't thing Ah'd better say anything about they raspberries."

" But you'll see she's picked them when you get down—and she won't know you saw her from up here. It doesn't make any difference really, not this time, does it ? " I argued.

" Well no—not this time. Still Ah don't think Ah likes them glasses. They mak' me afeared."

VI. The Rustic Conservative

It was a mild day in February—so mild that even the most timid of the townsfolk ventured out of doors without their topcoats.

Returning in the evening, by a footpath across the fields to the little town set in a hollow of the hills, I met an old man trudging home to his cottage from some neighbouring farm.

Now just then I was in the mood for chat. The sheer beauty of the world had made me communicative. So after the usual greetings we plodded on side by side.

"A wonderful day for the time of year," I said.

He was silent for a long time. Then he said: "Yes. 'Tis wonnerful—but it's evil. Surely the day of judgment's not far off when even the weather turns soft in winter!"

I was rather surprised at this unexpected retort. "Really," I said, "I don't quite follow you."

"No, I don't suppose so, sir. But it's like this. I've lived and worked on a farm close by 'ere this seventy year—started when I was a boy of ten, I did, and I'm nigh on eighty now. An' it's only in the last twenty year I've known these mild like winters—an' this be the first winter I've ever known with no snow at all. Surely it means God's angry like with childer for living such un-natural lives. The world's been getting a worse place to live ever since I were a child. People leaving the countryside, an' all the beautiful fields and woods, to live in ugly great cities."

"Certainly there is a lot in what you say," I said. "We have made mistakes sometimes—but don't you think we're getting better on the whole?"

"No, sir, I don't. It was ever since the railways came to these parts the dry rot set in. People left the country and went to live in London, and kept travelling about. But a man was meant to live in one place like a tree; not to go about all over the country like a strawberry plant. An' God meant him to grow food in the fields, not to make a lot of useless things in factories."

"Yes," said I, "to a large extent I agree with you. But then do you think town life is the really bad thing—or the conditions. If the workers owned the factories, now?"

The old man stopped, rapped his stick on the ground twice and looked at me. "Be you one of them Labour chaps?" he said, "'Cause if so be, I'm glad I met ye—to put ye on the right track. It's not the conditions—it's the work. It doesn't matter how long a man works a day, nor don't it whether 'e works for himself or a master—it only matters what kind of work 'e's a doin'. Is it useful work, like growin' spuds, or silly, like makin' books, or sinful, like makin' guns. An' the trouble all came with the steam engin', which breaks up the family, and takes a man away from 'is 'ome."

"But," said I, moving on again, "isn't it good for a man to travel, and see the world God put him in. Isn't it good to get

the hard work done by machines—so that man can enjoy the good things of life. It's a mistake when only a few people profit by the machines, and the many are even worse off than before. It's certainly better to work ten hours in the fields than ten hours in the factory—but why work ten hours anywhere? If everyone did their share, and no useless work was done, none of us would have to work more than six hours a day. We should have all the rest of the time to admire God's world in."

He looked at me hard. "Ah, so you *be* one of them socialist chaps," he said. "Yet you named the Almighty as tho' you believed in him. That's something queer. But *should* we spend the rest of the time admiring the world? Do the rich folk who don't have to work? No—they waste it at the theatre, or the races. No, sir, I'm glad I 'ave to work ten hours. I can read the Bible and look at the sunset another three or four, but I shouldn't like to 'av more spare time, or I might waste it."

"Then," said I, "it's rather hard for the poor man to steal the work from the rich, isn't it? If work's so good for us, surely we should all have an equal share?"

"An' so we should, sir. But if we lived as God meant us to, we'd have plenty for us all. God didn't mean us to burn coal, else would 'e have hid it under the earth? He meant us to burn wood, which goes quicker and takes time to grow. An' 'e didn't mean us to put wheat in threshing machines—but to thresh it out with flails, proper like. No sir—there'd be plenty of work for us all if we went the right way about it."

"But," said I, "though you are hard on machines, you use them yourself. What about ploughs, and cutting and binding machines."

"Really, sir, you must be very ignorant of farming to ask such a question."

"On the contrary," said I, "I once worked for three years on a farm myself."

"Well then, you must know, sir, that a thing bean't a machine lest it goes by itself. Ploughs don't. Mowing machines don't. But an engin' du. A motor car du. What makes them go? Not life. Not 'orses. Not the breath of God. No. The evil one. So that men don't have enough work to do. They get so much spare time they can't use it proper and Satan finds mischief for them instead."

"Mind you," he said, after a long pause, "I doan't say as that more time isn't gude for some folk, like clergymen, or teachers. But for ordinary men and women it's bad. The ordinary man

wants plenty of work, and the ordinary woman a lot of children, to fill up their time well, and occupy them."

By this time we reached a bridge over the railway, leading into the little town. A train was passing beneath. "Young man," said the yokel, taking hold of my arm and shaking it with remarkable energy, "that's the devil's smoke a coming out of that there funnel. I've never gone by one myself. Never shall. Nor a motor car. Always used my legs, or a horse and cart. The world's getting worse every year. And now God's shown his anger by keeping his purifying snow away. It's plain to all as 'ave eyes to see that unless men amend their ways the judgment will come soon."

"You are very pesimistic," I said.

"No sir, I believe in God. I'm not a pessimist," he replied—and then, in answer to my glance of surprise, "Yes, I know what a pessimist is. Though you wouldn't think it, I've read a bit in my time. An' I believe in having my own philosophy of life. An' that's why I doan't read too much. Readin's a lazy 'abit. It's easier than thinkin', and not so gude. But I live 'ere. You might like to give me a call one day. Me and the missis. She's eighty. Same age as me. Good bye. God bless ye."

As I trudged on into the town the sun was sinking, and outlined against his sultry disc was the delicate tracery of a distant elm tree. But I scarcely noticed it. I was thinking pretty severely.

VII. Ullswater Inscription

Huge snowflakes were falling as I crossed the pass, and it turned to rain as I wound down into the valley. A friendly little barn offered shelter, and the farmer proudly showed his pigs and poultry.

As the rain abated, he offered to walk with me down the dale.

"There's a churchyard," he said. "An' Mrs Able. She'd be glad t' gi'e us tea."

Soon the rain fell furiously again; but my friend insisted on showing me all the graves. He read the inscriptions, and after the manner of Wordsworth's clergyman he enlarged at great length on the departed worthies.

Just as I thought we had done (there was a small "force" running down my neck) he discovered another grave, somewhat apart.

"Ah've been yere a yundred times, sir, and mair, and nivver seen this yan before."

"Oh?" I answered, making as though to move on. "Sha'n't we be late at Mrs Able's?"

He did not hear me. He was scratching away at the tombstone.

"T' inscription's all grown ower wi' moss and lichen", he said, "but Ah mind we'll scrat' it clear".

The situation seemed hopeless; so I bent down with him, and together we scratched away at the ancient lettering. Gradually the words showed themselves—"Here lies the body of Andrew Wilson."

That was the first line.

"Nay. A've nivver knawn o' him. Ah canna mak' it oot at a'. Let's go on and see what it says aboot 'im".

It still rained torrents, but we persevered. Soon I shared his interest. For these were the next words—"Traveller, Orientalist and Man of Letters. Author of *The Abode of Snow*. Born at Bombay, 11th April, 1830. Died at Bank House, Howtown, 8th June, 1881."

"Well sire, that beats a'. I'se nowt o' a reader, but Mrs Abel will be interested. A real writer in t'churchyard. An Ah nivver heard o' him."

But Mrs Abel was rather a disappointment. She may have been upset by the tardy arrival of the wayfarers; or by the cataracts that streamed from their clothes. She was hospitality itself; and soon we were sitting by a blazing fire, divested of our outer garments, drinking tea and munching toast. But then, as the farmer unfolded his tale about the tombstone, she busied herself with ironing, and gave him but a desultory hearing.

"Andrew Wilson?" she commented. "He wasn't a native o' these parts."

"Nay. Ah told ye. He was born at Bombay".

"Oh. That's ower in Ireland, isna it? Now do have another cup o' tea. It'll keep t'wet out o' ye."

"But he wrote a book, woman?"

"Oh?"

When we came out of the cottage the sun was shining brilliantly, illuminating all the more intimate beauties of the hillside—its larch coppices and its heather.

We returned by the lake. His mind was still full of his great discovery.

"May I ask ye a girt favour?" he said. "If ye ivver see a copy o' yon book in a shop would ye send it along t'farm? Ah'd dearly love a peep at it!"

I promised.

" Born in Bombay ", he mused. " Wrote on t'abode o'snow. There's snow mountains in India, isna there sir ? But 'e came yere, settled yere . . . died yere, hoping in the Lord t'rise again on the gert daay yere, Ah doubtna. Then he thowt this th' bonniest plaace o' a', didna he ? T' bonniest place in all t'world sir ! So tis. Aye. So tis."

I looked towards the head of the lake, and saw the shifting sunbeams playing on the great mountains, now painting the fir trees on the lower slopes, now glistening on the midway torrents, now shimmering on the upper snows, turning them rosy. And I agreed with him.

VIII. Fairplay in the Graveyard

He did not look like the typical Cumbrian. His figure was stumpy, his face round and plump, his expression very jovial. I passed the time of day with him ,and as we were both bound for the little village between the lakes we went over the pass together. Presently I mentioned my object in visiting Thwaiton, which was to address a meeting of the newly formed Labour Party there, wondering how he would take it. He wasn't a bit shocked. Mine was the surprise, to hear that he had decided to vote Labour himself this time.

" Afore noo," he said, " A've always voted for Liberal and Conservative turn and turn aboot. That's my idea o' British fair play, that is. Noo A'h's goin' t' give yon new party a chance. See t' point ? "

" I think so. You'll vote for the new party at every third election now, I suppose ? "

He stopped, scratched his large round head, and looked keenly at me in a puzzled sort of fashion.

" Noo that's what Ah'm not quite sure on. Ye see Ah'v never voted for 'em at all afore. They've only put up in these parts this yance. So praps to square things oot like, Ah'll vote for them two or three times running. What dost tha think, sir ? "

All of which was surprising enough, but more was coming. " So thou's a Parson ? " he said. " A chapel parson Ah hope ? "

" Yes. But why do you hope so ? "

" Weel, ye see, Ah've takken a liking to thee, lad ; and Ah dawn't like them church parsons."

" Oh come now. Some of them are very good fellows. Besides, if you want fair play all round you ought to go to church and chapel turn and turn about, and give them both a chance, like the political parties ".

Again he stopped and scratched his head.

" It do seem like that way dawn't it sir ? " he said, staring at me with a queer puzzled grin. " But ye see Ah like all they party men. They're all jolly and friendly. And Ah like all t' chapel parsons we've had yere. But Ah dawn't like t' church parson yere, nor many o' the church folk neidder. They're big and rich, and look down theur nowzes at us smarl farmers and chapel folk."

" But you mustn't judge a whole class by one or two, you know ! "

Presently the lakes opened out below us, the village in between them, the steep mountain rearing its naked crags far above the warm fir woods beyond. Right in the foreground was the little churchyard.

My friend did not notice the lakes or the mountain. He had trudged along all the while with his eyes on the ground, save when he stopped and lifted them to look at me. But at the churchyard he paused.

" Ah'm goin' in yere to see t' graves," he said. " Ah always do when Ah come yere. M' Fadder came from these parts, and Ah knaw some of t' folk that's buried yere ".

" But won't they mostly be church folks ? " I asked, maliciously.

" Why yes, but they'm dead, ye see," he replied, looking at me in honest surprise. Then, seeing that I was now the puzzled one—" It's a' different when they'm dead. Ah feels kindly to everyun when they'm dead ".

" Wouldn't it be better to feel like that when they're still alive ?"

" Well, now thou's said so, Ah suppose it might ".

And again he stopped, looked at me and scratched his head.

" But it 'ud be hard. Varra hard. Ah dawn't knaw as Ah could do it. It comes easy like if ye wait till they'm dead ! "

IX. Upland Toads

There are nature lovers for whom mountain scenery has no great attraction. Constable was one, and there are others who scarcely suspected the lure of nature till they set foot in some highland district.

Climbing Loughrigg on one occasion we had two visitors in our party mountaineering for the first time. Some of us knew

both of them intimately, and were interested to see how they would respectively react to the new experience.

Mr X was a keen naturalist. His delight was evident. At every turn he found some fresh plant or insect which hitherto he had seen only in museums. During the entire ascent he was eagerly contrasting the fauna and flora of Westmoreland with that of Sussex.

On the other hand Mr Z, a man without the slightest appreciation of lowland scenery, was increasingly thrilled by the billowy gorse clad uplands, and the glimpses of far off loftier crags.

Arrived at the summit, fine views stretched around on every hand. To the south the broad expanse of Windermere, flanked on the east by grassy hills and on the west by firclad Claif heights: to the west the pretty little lake of Elterwater fringed by larch and fir woods, with Langdale beyond, wandering into the very heart of barren, steep mountains: to the north, beyond Grassmere lake, the lovely little village, bosomed in its trees.

Mr Z gazed long and spellbound, south, west and north. Then he said: "If I wanted to convert an atheist I wouldn't argue with him. I'd just bring him up here."

We were surprised. Till then we had suspected neither nature lore no religious sentiment in our friend.

"But you might not convince him all the same" said another of the party. "Look at Mr X."

We turned round. Mr X was quite indifferent to the view. He had found a little pond, and was prodding about in it with a stick. Presently he came running to us, wildly excited.

"Look, at this altitude, a natterjack toad. I can hardly believe it."

His delight was so wholehearted and childlike that I did not disillusion him.

Those natterjacks had been placed there some few days before by another naturalist of my acquaintance, in the hope that they would acclimatise themselves.

X. *Resurrection in Ennerdale*

The forester was a dreamy looking fellow, tall and slender, slightly stooping, with refined features and deep blue eyes. He had the nature of a gentle gardener. He loved every one of his fresh little larch trees individually; were he to live till they were grown timber he would hurt himself every time he had to fell one. The wrench to his sentiment would be as painful as the strain on his muscles.

Yet this man had lived in Ennerdale some fifty years. During the greater part of that time he had been a small farmer, but of late the forestation scheme had given him new occupation, I met him on the summit of Red Crag. Together we admired the more distant views of Crummock and Loweswater.

"But yon's the sweetest of all," he said, pointing down to his own Ennerdale water. Look at the graceful shape of it; see how grandly t' pillar stands out at the head of it; hoo gently t' hills curve round it."

"It's very lovely", I agreed, "too lovely to miss. But I'm not ready of any of these Cumbrian lakes or glens to say it's the best."

"Ah! mebby ye're reet. Yet meybbe it's good for us a' to mek oor own oot t' best. Oh'm ready to admit there's other women as bonny and good as my oon dear wife, but it's only reet that she's head and shoulders over a' the rest to me. And so 'tis with my native dell."

"Yes. That seems to me wise and good" I agreed.

"Noo Ah don't know what ye'll think about it sir. Ah knows ye're a parson, and parsons have new fangled notions nowadays. Not that Ah hold wi' a' t' old fashioned ideas myself. Nor never did. Hoo a merciful God can keep a hell goin' fair beats me. But there's yan old fashioned notion Ah do hold wi'. And that's t' resurrection o' t' body."

He looked at me with a queer mixture of question and challenge in his eyes.

"But," I replied, "don't you think it would be better to go straight on to the next world than to sleep here for thousands, perhaps millions, of years?"

"Now that's where Ah don't hold wi' ye sir. Ah don't want another world. It could na be better. It wouldna be as hamely. Ah want this world. Ah want this dell just as Ah want my oon dear woman. And Ah don't mind hoo lang Ah wait. If Ah'm asleep in be twixt it will seen nobbut a moment to me. A whole neet seems nobbut a second when ye sleep sound doesn't it? Then why not a thousand year? It's everlasting life here Ah want. Do ye see my point sir?"

"My friend", I said, "I do see your point, and you have reasoned better than I have. Deep down in me I fancy you may be right. Though I don't know that the resurrection of the body is necessary even then. Perhaps the next world exactly fits this one, place to place, glen to glen. Perhaps this is only an imperfect reflection of it, like the reflection of the hills in that water. Hast ever thought on it that way?" "Nay. Ah can't say as Ah have. But Ah don't care which way 'tis, so long as 'tis."

Chapter 9

MEGALOPOLIS AGAIN AND BEYOND . . .

IT is a moot point how often a minister should change his church. On the one hand there are those, like my friend Will Sahnow, who hold that once he is happily settled he should stop in the same pastorate for life. At the other extreme are the Primitive Methodists, who maintained that every third year a move should be made. There is the satirical jest, not of course to be taken seriously, of "first year—appreciation: second year—criticism: third year—condemnation)". At first I was inclined to the Methodist system, with the power, admitted by them in certain circumstances, of extending the three years to six or even nine. But it is not wise to lay down a rigid rule: it is surely largely a matter of temperament.

For myself I had had six years at Islington, (including four as a student pastor) just under three in Northumbria, just over three in Cumbria. Why did we leave that idyllic district? Chiefly due to my wife's health. Cumbrian winters were too moist for her, and a return to the south seemed indicated. The large streak of the nomad in me made the change more endurable; though I must admit that to exchange the lake district for the north circular road on the outskirts of London was rather hard going! I had sometimes to think of office days to restore content!

Wood Green was the new church, to which Finchley was soon added—our second dual pastorate. We chose a house actually on that circular road, fortunately almost midway between the two churches. (We knew nothing of the "dual" till the opportunity suddenly appeared).

In a curious way a new interest opened out at Wood Green. Quite a few of the congregation were more than sceptical about the bare possibility of life after death; so I preached more often than hitherto about Swedenborg and Myers, but to no effect.

How true it is that if you have read extensively about the U.S.S.R. and have made an impartial study thereof nobody takes any notice of what you say, whereas if you spend a weekend there you suddenly become an authority!

So it is with spiritualism. For the first time in our lives, and very much against our own inclination, we went to seances; some of them of a rather unusual description. We became members of a rescue circle.

Be it confessed at the outset that I am anything but psychic. Apart from a few trivial experiences, which might have been telepathic, but more than likely were mere coincidence, I have never shown a trace of paranormal gifts. But I did gather a few incidents to relate. Thus there seemed good reason to believe that one of the discarnate entities who took possession of the medium at the rescue circle was a doctor who had repeatedly abused his practice, and had on one occasion overturned a lamp in his study and been burned to death in the flames. He enacted the last evening of his life many times over in that circle, and our task was to convince him that he had died, and was now an earthbound entity. To convince him of this would be the first step in his deliverance.

But it was a hard job. He had been a lifelong disbeliever, a dogmatic materialist, and therefore convinced that he was still alive in his ruined study: that, though decades had passed since his accident, it was still the same evening.

When he first came through we could make no contact, because he spoke in a language none of us knew. The second time a new member of the circle recognised it as German. During the course of conversation the earthbound doctor laughed at the idea that there had been war between Britain and Germany ("our Kaiser is your Queen's nephew"). Evidently the accident happened in Victorian times! When told he was at a spiritualistic seance he exclaimed "My God—anything but that."

At a subsequent sitting, when we had almost despaired of ever convincing him, the leader had an inspiration. "Tell him", he said to the German speaker, "that he is not in his own body—that he is using somebody else's body—the medium's. Ask him to feel his face."

The hand went up to the chin.

"But this isn't mine. It's not my shape at all. The chin's so small, and where's the beard? It's years since I used a razor. And this large nose. O God where am I?"

It had begun to work. It was the first step.

Later on he gave his name and address. A small town in Bavaria. We began to make enquiries, hopeful at first of collecting valuable evidence. Then the second world war erupted, and our enquiries were arrested.

But I had now witnessed something worth talking about, and the sceptics in the congregation were impressed. There might be something in it after all . . .

It was good work done to shake their doubts. It was perhaps even better work to let a shaft of light into a tortured sinner's purgatory.

It was at Wood Green that my first little book appeared, *The Revelation of God in Nature and Humanity*, an enlargement of a pamphlet I had written as a valedictory on leaving Kendal. A few years afterwards I wrote, *God, Commonwealth and Afterlife*; the title suggested by the youth group at Finchley. In this book I maintained that Unitarians, Quakers and Spiritualists had so much to offer each other, so great an unrealised need of each other, that their literal union would be a good thing. This I still believe, but see small hope of achievement. Despite close theological affinity (all spiritualists are pure theists and Quakers who accept Jesus as God are not dogmatic about it) there are vast temperamental diversities between the average members of each group, exemplified by the very different and distinctive modes of public worship.

Both the books mentioned above are now out of print. Towards the end of the Wood Green and Finchley days I wrote *God and Beauty* and *From Monteverdi to Sibelius*. The last was primarily an endeavour to call attention to many unduly neglected composers. I would hardly withdraw a word of it, but would make a few additions. There is no mention of Cavalli or the early Charpontier, anad the operas of Alessandro Scarlatti and Handel are undervalued. But the need for such a book is no longer there. Almost all the works I underlined have since been restored by the B.B.C. "third", or are available in L.P. discs. Monteverdi, Vivaldi, Cherubini, Boccherini, the serious Rossini and Auber, Bellini and Berwald have come back, and will stay. So the need for the book is over. Sometimes I dare to hope that in a very small way it may have helped to bring about the change. Anyhow the change has come, which is all that matters. Though the current repertory in this country is still absurdly limited.

There is much in a title, and I have regretted those of the first

and second of my books. The first is too long, and the second rather cumbrous. My good friend Will Hayes, of the free religious movement, said that had he written it he would have called it *I am Sure*, and would so have quadrupled the sales. How I agree with him! But *From Monteverdi to Sibelius* was a title well chosen. One of my friends who has a whimsical sense of humour ordered a copy from a local bookseller. *Monteverdi to Sibelius*, asked the assistant. "What's it all about?" "It's a history of all the horses that ever won the Derby," replied my friend. "O my," retorted the girl. "That ought to be very interesting. But they do give them 'orses funny names, don't they".

At Wood Green we repeated our musical experiments. Again we gathered some string players, a few wood winds too. Again Will Sahnow (now living in a remote suburb) helped us until Len Maynard, one of our new members, took the lead. We revived Carissimi's *Jephthah*, an even rarer treasure than the Cherubini. Again we used symphonic movements to enrich our worship. In this connection it is interesting to note how the least musical people may sometimes learn appreciation from experience quite unwittingly. After a spring service in which the centrepiece was the first movement from Raff's Spring symphony—"Now that piece you played this evening was much better than the stuff you gave us last year, I couldn't make anything out of that at all, but this one really had a scent of spring about it."

"But it was the same piece," I answered.

No. I cannot pretend it was memory which helped him over the lapse of a year; but simply the unwitting grasp of sonata form, acquired by the hearing of other works in the meantime.

It is pleasing to relate that again we had no opposition to these experiments. For they were something of an innovation. Again the two front pews had to be removed. Again the co-operation of the choir and organist was essential. And it is not conventional to import romantic orchestral music into an act of worship. But why not? What more fitting at a spring service or a harvest festival than an appropriate movement from the *Pastoral* or from Mendelssohn or Gade?

Nor should we forget that in the old days, before the organ had become viable economically for the small church or chapel, the orchestra was not quite the unusual feature that it is now. I question whether the change from an inadequate orchestra to an organ was all gain. Especially when the music is mediocre (no Bach fugues). And now, when the church organ is increasingly displaced by the horrid electrical instrument (surely the last

word in displeasing tone colour) better a good harmonium, or better still a piano. Why assume that even proper organ tone is peculiarly religious ?—or that a Bach fugue (than which there may be nothing better) is essentially more spiritual than a sonata movement. Mere tradition and association, I suggest.

Of course you can err by going to the other extreme. A typical Offenbach or Suppé overture would be a case in point. Not all overtures, nor all ballet music even. But shall there be no dancing in paradise ? Did not Haydn say that his heart danced within him when he thought of the good God ?

I mentioned Offenbach. Today some church authorities are prepared to go far beyond him. Of his sort he is good. Today, in some quarters, in order to attract a certain type of modern youth, even jazz and beat, to the accompaniment of saxophones or electric guitars, are permissible.

Now if you make a tavern of a church it is no longer a church that draws but the mud and the filth. For make no mistake about it. Much of modern "pop", perhaps even some modern highbrow music, is evil. Evil in much the same way as a bad smell, if unresisted, is evil. To play such music in church is sacrilege. To play it anywhere is an offence. The difference between such stuff and such light hearted music as Sullivan's "Di Ballo" (good enough for any flower service) is as wide as that between a troop of daffodils dancing in the breeze and a group of stinkhorns.

It is curious how good music exalts the power of words (always inadequate in worship). We altered some of the words in the requiem. How could we sing of eternal damnation when we know there is no such thing ? So too with some of the words in the orthodox mass. Yet the music makes it easier to read a symbolic meaning in other passages. Whilst singing, playing or listening the incarnation becomes that of all sweet and sound humanity : the crucifixion that of all the good martyred by the bad, whom yet they would redeem ; the resurrection that of the astral body only.

Even as in a Donizetti or Verdi opera mere melodrama (in the English sense of the word) becomes sublime tragedy, with light shining beyond the gloom, so in a Bach or Cherubini mass mere trinitarianism becomes trancendentalism.

But in passing may I add a protest against background music in drama, now almost universally employed in cinema and television plays. Almost always swamping the dialogue it also divides interest. If good music (and sometimes there is even

symphonic development) it diverts attention from the unfolding drama ; if bad (which it usually is) it merely irritates. There is a natural combination of music and drama in opera. But the play with continuous musical background is a hybrid form and like most hybrids unnatural and unsatisfactory. I believe this is a very generally held opinion, but the practice goes on. Of course this is no condemnation of incidental music such as an occasional song, march or dance.

Chapter 10

ANIMALS WE HAVE KNOWN

AT Southgate we had the most attractive garden to date. We planted a red hawthorn and a pear tree in the back, and two willows in the front, and we made a little oval pond just outside the kitchen door, with a rockery round it. In the pond we put two cat fish (good scavengers, eating all the gnat larvae, but spending their time at the bottom, so that they are not even seen coming up to take the air), six goldfish of various colours, and two terrapins.

The terrapins spent half their time on land, walking round the garden, but always fed in the water. Even if they found food on the land, slug or worm, they scuttled back to the pool to eat it there. They soon became so tame that you needed but appear by the side of the pool to see two eager little faces, mouths wide open, swimming to the edge to be fed.

Now we had never made any attempt to tame the goldfish, but the terrapins did that for us. The fish gathered round the terrapins for any titbits that fell from their mouths, and soon became as tame as the reptiles. They too appeared whenever we did and waited, expectant, at the edge.

Now we had in those days a little black and white cat, Snooks, whom we had brought with us from Kendal, and afterwards took with us to Swansea. She had, curiously enough, a little pink nose, and she often drank from the pool before the goldfish became tame. But now, whenever her pink nose appeared at the surface of the water, the silly goldfish mistook it for a tasty morsel of meat and nibbled it. The terrapins were too cute to make so stupid a mistake. Snooks was either scared, or disliked being tickled, and soon gave the pool a wide berth. She was an intelligent cat, capable of learning long after her middle age. Thus it was during our last year at Wood Green that she discovered the art of standing on her hind legs and rattling the handle of the kitchen door in order to be let in. And though affectionate and sociable, and fond of being ruffled and pretending to be fierce, she could also play alone. She invented a grand game of pushing coins under

the carpet, pretending to forget all about them, taking a turn or two round the room and then returning to paw them out into the open again. In Kendal she would come for little walks with us, taking advantage of low stone walls lining nearby greens and commons when dogs loomed in the distance. In Southgate she sadly realised that walks were over, and explored neighbours' gardens instead, till she was imprisoned a whole night under a henhouse by an unfriendly dog.

After eight years we felt our duty to London done; the longing to escape from the North Circular road grew on us, and the South West called.

We took the terrapins with us. In winter they hibernate in the mud, under the water. We moved in autumn. We put the torpid reptiles in a bucket—mud at the bottom, perforated zinc at the top. They were asleep when we arrived in Wales, and in Swansea, where we had a larger and more interesting garden than at Southgate, we made a bigger pool, further from the house, set in a lawn, but immediately surrounded by a rockery. Then came the spring, and we went to let the terrapins out . . . But they had already got out. The perforated lid was wrenched askew and the bucket was empty.

They had an instinct to go downhill wherever they find themselves, till they hit upon the nearest stream or pool. Not far from us a stream emptied into a little pond in a park, at that time private. And for all I know they are there to this day. It was the last we saw of them.

For Snooks Swansea was a pleasant exchange for Southgate. Then Scruffs appeared and complicated things sadly. Scruffs was a Scotch terrier, bought at a dogs' home. Her people had evidently been killed in the blitz. She was a little lady from the beginning. She seemed to sense at once that Snooks was an elder member of the family where she now found a welcome second home. So though all other cats were anathema, to be hounded out of the garden on sight, Snooks was to be respected —even made friends with.

But it takes two to make friends, and Snooks wasn't having any. At first she would walk out of the room as soon as Scruffs appeared, hissing loudly the while. She overcame her aversion in a few weeks however—surely no small achievement in a cat of thirteen—but though you might find them sitting on either side of the fire she never really made friends; even though the dog, in great politeness, always waited till the cat had quite finished eating before she approached the same plate.

Yet perhaps Snooks would have made friends but for one very strange circumstance. Now and then, after all had been quiet and settled, and for no apparent reason, Scruffs would fiercely and swiftly dash after Snooks in the garden, barking the while, and amazing and terrifying her beyond all reason. We too were puzzled till we discovered that this only happened when the cat passed over a spot where the dog had buried a bone! But how was a poor cat to know? It only proved to her how mad even quiet dogs were.

Scruffs was an affectionate little animal, but maybe not particularly intelligent, though certainly on occasion distinctly artful. We had just taken a short cut across the sands from Mumbles to West Cross. Now the dog had an intense dislike of sand; what on earth these humans saw in it to attract them she could not make out. Therefore on the uphill lane from Westcross to Mayals she kept putting on all her four little brakes. Was she really so tired? Of course she must be—it was all that loose and shifting sand. So in pity we carried her all the way uphill—her weight increasing every minute. (True, she was a small dog, but firm and fairly plump). Arrived at the common on top of the hill we put her down. Suddenly she disappeared. A greyhound could scarcely have done better. She had spotted a hare, and nearly caught it.

But now we must add a few more words about Snooks. It was not till she was well over sixteen that she began to age. She grew incrasingly deaf. Simultaneously she found her voice. She who had been so silent except in rough play now screamed for food, screamed to be let out or in . . . The reason was obvious. She could not hear her own miews unless she shouted. No doubt she thought they were still quite soft, and wondered why they took so much more effort than hitherto. But there was no other sign of age. Less energetic of course, but still at all her old games.

Then one evening as she got up to walk across the room all her legs wobbled. It seemed she could not control them properly. The following morning she tried to drink from the pool, but half fell in. She had difficulty in controlling her hind quarters. Indoors she made a sudden dash for the saucer, but missed it, wetting her head. This seemed to surprise and distress her. Then she crept into her basket, curled up, her head against the side, and purred whenever we stroked her. She could scarcely hold her head up, but once made a futile effort to wash herself. Then we went to bed, and my wife took her in her arms. The

little thing went to sleep, but presently there came six convulsive sneezes, then scarcely perceptible breathing till the end.

There was no illness—just two days feebleness and death. Surely the way we should all pass. We were glad we did not have to put her out.

We missed her more, I suppose, than one ought to miss an animal. Partly because she was a link with three distinct spells of our life, Kendal, London and Swansea. We had had her for nineteen years, and because of these changes it seemed so much longer.

Now what happens to animals, at least to the higher animals we have tamed, when they die? Something is certainly in the live cat or dog, or monkey, or thrush or canary, that is not in the corpse—and that something is the animal itself. It is much too glib to say that the mind of the animal is merely there to serve its body, whereas the mind of the human is served by the body. The distinction may hold as between man and the lower animals, all or almost all compounded of instinct; but hardly where the higher animals are concerned, with their individual traits, for they are their bodies' masters, as we are of ours. Then what happens to them? Why are they here? Who are they, anyway? They are surely little minds, souls if you will, and not mere steps in the evolution of humanity. If that were so why do they continue to appear now humanity has arrived? And what of those not in the direct line of human ascent—the birds, the cats and dogs? And if they exist in their own right dare we say that death must be the end of them? May they not continue in realms beyond? Heaven will lack something precious to some of us if there are no animals there.

So the little mind that was Snooks may still exist—may have been ready to take a more responsive body than a cat body—may possibly be a lemur now! Or may be living, a cat still, in some realm beyond. Certainly the little animal that knew us went out of the cat body, leaving it a corpse. And certainly that little animal was other than its body, the irresponsiveness of which troubled it in those last two days. We do not know—but there is no evidence that it disintegrated, as its body did.

After the death of Snooks we had three cats in six years, each one dying or disappearing after the lapse of only two years. Sad enough, yet enabling us to see how unlike one cat can be to another. The first was our grey cat, the most intelligent and the boldest of all. She not only watched the water coming out of the tap, and wondered that you could not lift with your paw

something that looked like a solid glass tube; but on one occasion, when the water was coming out of the garden hose, she lifted the hose with one paw and tried to stop the flow of water with the other! And she was quite unafraid of dogs. She would go up to any dog and offer to play with it. And the dog would be so amazed it would just look and go away.

She was quite unafraid of water, and would go out in the rain, often bringing back a vole she had caught in a nearby stream. We fear that was the end of her. One stormy night she went out and never returned.

Then there was a dear little Siamese. We think she was stolen. We advertised for her extensively, but all to no purpose. For some time we dared hope for her return—once before she had absented herself for a whole week, and then came running up to us in a neighbouring wood. But to this second absence there was no return.

So one day Louie brought back from a shop in town a little very ordinary tabby, the most affectionate of all our cats. We shall have her as long as we had Snooks, we said: She's not adventurous like Grey and not rare like Siamese. But one evening, returning late from a committee meeting, I saw a little dead body on the curb. Not till I had picked it up did I realise it had been Tabbs. There was not a drop of blood on her, but her neck was broken. The mudguard of a passing car, we supposed.

We were almost as sad at her loss as we had been at Snooks', and decided we would have no more cats. Then Bryn adopted us. She was an apparently black cat who haunted our now else catless garden, miewing for food, but ready to rush for the open field at the bottom of the garden as soon as the door opened. Well I remember how proud I felt the first time she hesitantly let me pat her head, the first time she jumped into my lap. She was of course a stray, and had already had a load of kittens when we took her to be neutered. She was not all black, and as the years went by the hinder parts of her body became increasingly brown! We wondered if she was a quarter Siamese, for she was now jet black where the Siamese is brown and dark brown where the Siamese is greyish white. She outlived our time in Swansea, and we took her to Sussex with us. She had fifteen years of happy life till trouble in one ear plagued her; slightly at first, then so painfully we had to help her out. She was seventeen.

And now we have a pretty little tortoiseshell: gentle, serious and omnivorous. So gentle you never feel her claws; so serious she never plays with balls until they bounce; so omnivorous she enjoys cocoanut cake, uncooked seedcake and jam rolls.

Chapter 11

BEYOND THE CELTIC CURTAIN

OUR move was under the shadow of the second world war, which had broken out near the end of our time at Wood Green, just after we accepted the call to Swansea, but did not spread to the West till after we had moved. What a tragic, sinful and needless business it all was. Needless, that is, had not so many false steps been frequently taken. How different would have been the story of the twenties, thirties, and forties had Wilson triumphed over Clemenceau, had Lloyd George backed the American instead of the Frenchman. Or, if we must hover on the edge, had Simon called for an economic blockade on Japan when she invaded China, had a warship been sunk in the Suez Canal when Italy invaded Abyssinia, or even had Nazi Germany been boycotted when she annexed Austria. On any one of these occasions, even on the last of them, the overthrow of the reactionary governments might have been accomplished without the loss of a single life on the battlefield. But they were all lost. Was it because the capitalist countries disliked communist Russia more than Nazi Germany, fascist Italy and totalitarian Japan? Or was it the tremulous hope that the danger might be removed by war between the communist and fascist countries, ending in the destruction of them all? There will never now be an answer to these might have beens. Yet it is as well to remember and to explore all these possibilities. Also to remember that fear of capitalist aggression drove Russia foolishly to make a pact with Hitler, a pact which Hitler had no intention of keeping. We must not too readily accept easy explanations of disastrous events and pass unreliable judgments.

One has constantly to remind oneself, on passing the age of eighty, that the vast majority of one's congregation are now some three or four decades one's juniors, that even the middle aged are too young to remember the beginnings, let alone the origins, of

the first world war, so that they too readily assume that all the right was on our side, that all our motives were good and all the guilt the enemy's . . . One recalls with something of a shock that those under twenty-five are often shaky about the origins of the second world war—that they assume that the simple explanation, the all sufficient explanation, is found in the assumption of power by three evil men, an Italian, a German and a Jap; thus quite evading the real problem, which is not to account for the appearance of a Hitler (such men are always there in every country) but to account for the rise to power of so evil a personality.

It should be taught in every school (in how many is it?) that the renunciation of the fourteen points and the defeat of President Wilson made resurgence of German militarism inevitable. And it should also be popular knowledge that Hitler did not win majority by democratic vote, but again that when he had seized power as the leader of the largest single party the majority (still opposed to him, but made up of several parties) could hardly be expected to overthrow him by demonstration when a machine gun threatened at the street corner.

It should be taught that some form of proportional representation, backed by readiness for passive resistence, is the only safeguard against the seizure of power by a reactionary party once it has polled the largest number of votes, yet is still in a minority, that under a two party system without proportional representation ward boundaries can be so drawn that the party with less votes may yet win more members. But for this mishap Irish home rule would have satisfied. How much bitterness and bloodshed would have thus been avoided!—to say nothing of the sad event of the severence of Ireland from Britain and Ulster from Ireland. Federation would then have prevailed.

It should also be common knowledge that Mussolini was not always an evil influence; that as a young man he was imprisoned for opposing the conquest of Tripoli—so that his career is perhaps the most terrifying warning of the corrupting influence of unbridled power.

And now we are confronted not only with the Irish problem (more involved than ever) but with separatist movements in Scotland, Wales, Cornwall and Mona (Man). Cornish died a natural death in the mid-eighteenth century; but on our first Cornish holiday in 1935 English-Cornish dictionaries and grammars were being sold in Penzance! Of course the second world war put an end to all this nonsense, and during our residence in Wales the home-rulers were an insignificant minority, and the

separatists scarcely discernable. But now these extremists are a noisy and dangerous group; consecrated to the destruction of reservoirs that English people may not drink Welsh water!

Now I am all for decentralisation wherever economically feasible. On the one hand I would like to see the irregular, artificial and confined county boundaries eliminated—on the other Britain divided into a few large provinces along the lines of the old heptarchy. The names are already there—Wessex, Mercia, East Anglia, Northumbria, Cumbria (Wanted—a name for the South-East). Added to these, as further Home rule provinces, Cambria (Wales) and Caledonia (Scottish highlands). The Scottish lowlands should be divided, as of old, between Cumbria and Northumbria. The Scottish home-rulers would merge them with Caledonia, but on what grounds? The lowlanders, as in Scott's poems, are mere Sassanachs, as Anglo-Saxon as any below the border. Clearly the Scottish nationalists cannot be as fanatical about race as some other of the Celtic groups, who clamour for a united Celtic domain, including even Brittany, free from all links with either Britain or France.

Of course the disease is world wide. It is there between the Czechs and the Slovacs; only submerged by their common dislike of Russia; between the Hindus and the Pakistanis; between the Jews and the Arabs (who got on very well together before the most unfortunate emergence of Zionism); between the Italians and Sicilians; between the emergent African nations. It is one of the three great threats imperiling the future of humanity, all of them equally silly, dangerous and unnecessary—nationalism, the population explosion and armaments. Each one, I verily believe, more threatening than either violent communism or capitalism.

What is the cause of all this deplorable folly? Clearly the moribund mood of Christendom has a good deal to do with it. "The church is dead," said Edward Carpentor a good many years ago. And universal theism has no grip on the folk, still less a non-theistic humanism. Yet some religion they must have, or some substitute thereof. Unfortunately nationalism seems to be the only remaining candidate. But if only apparently sane people were not ready to be killed and to kill for it . . .

But enough of all this. We were little troubled by it in Wales—Welsh Unitarianism not at all. Our Swansea congregation was about equally divided between English, non-Welsh-speaking Welsh, and bilinguals, who spoke Welsh in their homes. We had no nationalists except maybe one or two who doffed their nationalism along with their orthodox theology.

Well I remember how, when we first had occasion to use the bus station, we felt as though we had indeed strayed into a foreign country. So strange, not merely unfamiliar, were the names on the buses: Llangeneth, Fforestfach, Cwmbwrla. But to come to Wales, to escape from London and the North Circular Road, was grand. The scenery was almost equal to Kendal. Not far inland were the Black Mountains (as a matter of fact they are red, and as bady named as the black poplar). And on our doorstep was the picturesque, curving coast of Gower; with its placid bays, craggy cliffs, sea fringed hills and shady little " slades " or valleys.

The congregation was as representative as that of Kendal—democratic (no one to serve on committee more than three years continuously), and not merely tolerant, but understanding. We arrived in wartime, and had not been resident long before the fighting broke out along the western front, and soon the air raids ravaged beyond the " Celtic fringe ". On three successive nights Swansea was extensively bombed, and the centre destroyed. Feeling in the town was high, but our congregation was about equally divided between pacifist and pro-war. Some who had been pacifist in the first world war now renounced their pacifism, feeling (rightly enough) that Hitler and the Nazis were much more evil than the Kaiser and the old military caste.

So among the young folk some volunteered for the forces, some for the non violent corps: some lost their occupation by refusing to " join up "; some went to prison, refusing to accept any sort of alternative service which might release others for the front line. But—a really fine achievement—everybody understood everybody else's viewpoint.

Great indignation was felt when two pacifist school teachers (one of them at the time our organist) having been granted exemption from military service by the Tribunal and the borough council, were afterwards dismissed by the same council in response to a demonstration against their continual employment by a group of pro-war women. Later on the council, ashamed of their action, and prodded by one of our own members, Councillor Vaughan, again changed their minds, and invited the teachers back, but they had already found other employment.

Only one member left the congregation as a protest against the minister's pacifism, expressing her disapproval in a friendly letter; but almost immediately afterwards resuming her membership as though she had never left.

I too tried to be fair to all viewpoints, judging deeds by motives rather than by effects. In one sermon I likened the volunteers and the war-resisters to the arms of God—the one animated by the desire to keep out the enemy from abroad; the other preventing the upthrust of the enemy of intolerance, of nationalism, from within.

Was this a betrayal of my pacifism? I believed that a nation trained in the methods of passive resistance would be a better reply to fascism than one relying on mass violence, but like Gandhi, I held ,and still hold, that violent resistance is neither as inept nor as evil as meek acceptance and obedience.

As the war intensified our morning services became only monthly, and I frequently attended worship at the Friends' meeting house. Good friends they were to us too, when, part of the roof ripped off our church, they offered us evening hospitality.

After the third and severest bombing of the town many of the streets were roped off, undiscovered bombs being suspected. I made a point of visiting all the members living in these streets. Foolhardy? They were frightened old folk; they were not being moved to safer places, and were so glad to have someone to talk to.

In those days the British Quisling, and I believe Hitler himself, commiserated the brave Welsh and Scottish people suffering under the English yoke, and yet threatened the speedy destruction of cathedrals and castles within the Celtic fringe. The effect was the exact opposite of the intent. Not a word was heard about Welsh nationalism in those days.

The war over, most of the absentees returned, and congregational activities enlarged. But we also suffered some loss.

Though none too safe, as our blitz showed, Swansea had a large refugee population, and some of the schoolmasters, evacuated with their pupils, had been Unitarians, and had increased our congregation in the last years. We missed them.

But we now had lively discussion circles. We first thrashed out war aims; then English literature had its turn under the auspices of the Workers' Educational Association. Then evolution. And then we compiled a Unitarian statement of faith, and of the application of that faith to life. There was no doubt about our theism, nor about our confidence in immortality. We insisted on racial equality and on the need for World Federation. We held divorce to be sometimes necessary, but would prefer to see marriage made more difficult and divorce easier. These were

the things generally agreed among us. Incidentally it was here that I wrote, *God and You, God and Beauty* and *Immortality and You.*

As in Cumbria, here in Cambria we also rambled; sometimes far off on the mountains; somtimes near home, in the Gower bays and cliffs.

It should be noted that there was a more tolerant religious atmosphere in Wales than in England. It had long been the custom for the Swansea congregational ministers to welcome the Unitarian minister into their fraternal, and many a happy hour I enjoyed there. Near the end of my time at Swansea they invited my wife and myself to join them at a summer school in Aberystwith, a pleasant experience and for me unique. But it was curious and significant that the eldest ministers (with the exception of their leader, Dr. Hughes, ex-principal of a theological college at Edinburgh, and author of some good books) were theologically orthodox: Dr. Hughes and the middle aged ministers distinctly liberal, and the younger generation, under the influence of Karl Barth, orthodox again, though tolerant of heresy.

The ministers of the Welsh speaking congregational churches had their own fraternal, but there were also joint fraternals, to which also I was invited.

Sometimes I wished I could understand and speak Welsh, as did also a few of our non-Welsh speaking Welsh friends, in order to oppose the move to make the teaching of Welsh compulsory in the schools, sometimes even for English children—a move unfortunately successful today. Often it seemed to me that this bilingualism was a bar to wider culture. I would not do anything to stifle a native tongue, but neither would I do anything to stimulate revival. Is it healthy for Welsh towns to have two dramatic societies, two choirs, two operatic groups, two churches of each denomination—One Welsh and one English? It seems to me the loss outweighs the gain. "But must our glorious Welsh literature perish?" say the nationalists. But is it really comparable to Italian, French, German or Scandinavian? Has it produced writers comparable to Manzoni, Hugo, Goethe, Ibsen? Would it benefit the Welsh child more to read Welsh poetry in the original than so to read Dante or Schiller? Obviously he can't have them all in the original unless he is a linguistic genius. Something must go. Then why not have the best English translations of the best Welsh literature we can get, and leave it at that?

Incidentally it is curious, and surely significant, that so many

talented Welsh and Irish writers seem to prefer to express themselves in English than in their Celtic tongues. To command a wider circle of readers? Maybe, but I wonder.

If a few individuals really think it worth while to keep Welsh, Gaelic, Erse, Cornish and Man alive in order to read their writers in the original let them have their way, but let them not inflict their views on indifferent populations, even on the children.

Our life in Swansea was enriched from time to time by visits of friends from other "lives"—Tom Smith from Kendal, Len and May Maynard from Wood Green.

Life at Swansea was very good, else it would not have been so prolonged. For many years the nomadic impulse was quiescent. When we first settled we wondered if it would mark the end of our wanderings. For one thing the garden soil was so good that Louie might never be inclined to leave. The climate too behaved very well that first year—a wonderfully mild winter and a splendid summer. It seemed that the south-west was a welcome compromise between the north-west and the south-east giving the best of each.

We removed the house name, (that sure sign of suburban snobbery) and jocularly toyed with the temptation, becoming snobbish ourselves, to join the company of the "Dunroamers". How often had we read "Dunroamin'" on a new garden gate, shortly to be replaced by a very different sign "to be sold."

It is true that we also said "five years at least, or till the end of the war." But the five years passed, the war was over, and still we had no thought of moving. Suddenly, almost without warning, that nomadic impulse stirred. We thought of Southampton, spending a winter holiday there. Then it happened that the Glasgow opera society revived MacCunn's *Jeannie Deans*, the neglect of which in Scotland is a national disgrace. So off to Glasgow also to Aberdeen, where the pulpit would shortly be vacant; hence disquiet. Hence also my first and last visit to Deeside. I was not tempted. Unlike the western side of Caledonia this was no second Cumbria.

But the waters, once disturbed, did not soon settle down. Calls came from Liverpool and Torquay, and an invitation from Brighton. For the first time since my office days I was really unhappy. We were both torn between the homeland of Swansea and the lure of Sussex. Our minds changed and changed. I accepted the offer and then went back on it. The nomadic fever died down. After five years of intermittent turmoil there followed

another seven happy years at Swansea, broken only by a summer-time exchange of pulpits with a colleague in the U.S.A.

So Swansea won the first battle, and some of our congregation, sometimes including ourselves, took it for granted that we were now there "for keeps".

Yet after I had posted the letter to Brighton, saying that after all we had decided not to come, an instant pang of regret shot through my mind. I had now shut the door. I could not change again. Yet believe it or not I did try—unsuccessfully. Had I succeeded I should, of course, have felt another pang, probably even sharper. For it was good again to be settled in Swansea.

What a morbid mood all this reveals. Yet it is as well to confess—now that it is all over so long ago. I must agree that the measure of freewill I had so long proclaimed the first article of my creed had dwindled to nothing. I was the mere plaything of homing and nomadic desires. I can only plead that at no time was there any sense of guilt. Duty did not enter into the matter at all. Does that make it sound worse? I would not say that I never thought of duty. But her voice seemed as hesitant as the lure of happiness. There was no clear call, either to remain or to move on. I dare to hope that had there been it would have solved the problem for us. But with no such call one was left to reason it out. And the reasons on either side were as evenly balanced (or as wobbly) as the self-centered desires.

Is this an argument for bishops, with power to move their priests about as pawns on a chessboard?

Perhaps it is natural that after the storm had abated, though the last years at Swansea were as happy as the first, there was a stronger desire than usual to see new places on holiday—a compensation for not having moved? I have never been able to understand the people who go year after year to the same place, be it ever so beautiful—which it often isn't. Had I been born in a small island, like Vectis or Mona, I might have been quite happy never to have left its shores (witness those early years spent as a voluntary prisoner in the home counties). But once having tasted the joys of travel there was no holding back.

Yet once again the rival claims of familiarity and strange exert themselves. I would not find an unexplored district for each and every holiday. Nor would I spend any holiday roaming away from the centre each day. On any single holiday I would spend some days at home, some abroad, still enjoying the return to the familiar as evening closes in. And once having made a

single town or village "home" for a single holiday the thought of never seeing it again would be unwelcome. So I would revisit it, make it home again, after a lapse of some five or ten years. The longer the lapse the greater the joy of the second or seventh approach. And I know not which the greater thrill—to meet again the once so familiar after the lapse of a lustrum, or to visit the entirely unknown, wondering what lies behind the hills of the hinterland.

Incidentally there is a close parallel between one's reaction to the strange and the familiar in scenery and that in music. How delightful to hear again some symphony or opera after some years have passed. Little details, forgotten in recall but recognised on rehearing (as also with the scenery) how welcome they are! And how delightful the discovery of the new (which may, of course, be very old)—of another Mozart in Cimarosa, another Haydn in Boccherini.

One can make a lifelong friend in a year, in a day, but it needs more than a three year pastorate to watch the members of the congregation passing through the phases of life. Move on after three years, and twenty years hence those who were teenagers will still live in your memory as teenagers—only by an effort (unless you have seen them in the meantime) will you picture their faces in the forties! But stay in one place for the best of twenty years and you will see five become twenty-five, and twenty-five forty-five.

And therefore I am glad that at least one of my pastorates endured awhile—that I welcomed Raymond Henson back from the warfront, saw him married, baptised his little son Tudor, and witnessed that same Tudor discover a musical talent in his teens: that our loyal and loveable Treasurer, Hilda Davies, had her little daughter, and that we saw that daughter well on the way to her science degree in her teens: that we were with our devoted Secretary, Edna Dando, from youth to middle age, and that in the same period we saw Deakin wrestling with his doubts (rooted in his sensitive humanism) and perhaps slowly winning his way from an almost atheistic to an almost theistic agnosticism. (These but a few examples, chosen almost at random, from a multitude living in memory).

Chapter 12

AMERICAN JOURNEY

BEARING all this in mind it is but natural that after settling down in Swansea for another spell I should eagerly seize Louie's suggestion that we try an American exchange. Switzerland was also calling, but we had already had three holidays together there since my first visit (one each in German, French and Italian cantons). The " States " might not be foreign, but were further away and quite new. So U.S.A. it must be. And for a longer spell. No mere month, but a whole season.

Probably because our residence in the U.S.A. was so much longer than the usual holiday, and afforded so thorough a "break", it was almost as though life were beginning all over again. We felt as if we were natives of " New England " before we left it for California, and in California found ourselves looking back at Salem almost as though it were our birthplace. When we left America from New York, without so much as giving Boston a passing glance, we felt quite nostalgic about it.

The difference between clock time and personal time is as interesting as remarkable. Clock time always passes at the same rate. Twelve hours are twelve hours in any season or country, whatever your mood. But personal time varies enormously. If you are bored it drags interminably; one hour stretches out into twelve, though recalled afterwards it will seem scarcely as many minutes. On the other hand if you are interested or enthralled you are quite unaware of its passing; yet on looking back that single, crowded, glorious hour will seem more like a day.

Now change always adds an interest to life, and pleasant change enthralls. Therefore holidays are long in retrospect. The first day in a new resort, or in an old one long unvisited, often seems a week. Most people say that the older you get the quicker the days and the years pass. But I suggest that the

reason why a year in the sixties often seems shorter than one in the twenties is that for most of us there is so much less variety as year is added unto year. If you follow only one occupation between leaving school and retiring, if you live in the same town all your life, time will continually increase its speed. But if you add to your interests, if you move from town to town, if you endure a few big uprootings, you will cheat time very successfully.

Therefore it is not surprising that our three months in the New World seemed more like three years.

At the consulate in Cardiff we signed that we had never been members of the communist party. It seemed sinister that we had to make no such declaration regarding the fascists.

On board the *Queen Elizabeth* we attended, for the first time in our lives, a Jewish service. We were surprised to find that a beautiful little synagogue had been built into the boat. It was so sparsely attended that the leader, a dear old layman, had first to send some of his flock on deck to persuade more men to come down. We were amazed to learn that without a minimum of ten males it would be a misdemeanour to worship Yahweh in public. Clearly the woman does not count for as much as the man in his estimate. The service consisted in long readings and chantings in Hebrew, but also included an invocation in English on behalf of Queen Elizabeth, about to be crowned.

Our Jewish friends were very courteous and kindly to the unexpected Gentile visitors in their midst (without whose presence it seems the service would have been omitted owing to those recalcitrant males). At the close the leader invited me to say a few words in my capacity as a Unitarian minister. Then he sang a song of his own composition about human brotherhood.

There were also some Mormons on board, and they too, advertised a service. It was held in a small non-smoking writing room; about a dozen of the " latter day saints " present, and half a dozen strangers. The faithful comprised an elderly man acting as leader, and a dozen young folk of both sexes, each of whom had paid all expenses for a year's proselytising in Europe, in reward for which he or she would enter the " inner sanctuary " of believers. For the benefit of the visitors the leader explained that Mormons believd in baptism by immersion, and that they considered the *Book of Mormon* to rank with the Bible as the " Word of the Lord."

Willing sacrifice of time and money surely betokens excess of zeal; yet there seemed a strange contrast between the extravagant creed and the quiet manner of the young missioners when

describing their experiences. Perhaps this was because they did not seem to have been particularly successful in making converts. Midway through the proceedings a tall, thin, pale young man sang the Lord's prayer in a soft sweet voice to a monotonous, inexpressive, unrhythmical tune—the only act of worship during the service.

One evening, sitting writing in that same room, I heard an intense discussion going on. The young Mormons were tackling a large youthful Negro wearing a clerical collar. With deadly earnestness they were discussing the minutiae of theology. Did the second person equal the first in power or only in goodness? Did the Word exist through eternity with the Father, or was he emanated just before the creation, which both admitted was made through him. It seemed that the Negro was a member of some sect that flirted with strictly scriptural Unitarianism, and this roused all the Trinitarian dogmatism of the Mormons. Both were obviously Fundamentalists, accepting without question the infallibility of all the Bible, and the argument consisted almost entirely, as usual in such circumstances, of pitting text against text, though some slight rationalistic bias inclined the Negro to the Arian side. This was my first glimpse of the welter of queer sects flourishing in the States.

Arrived in New York, on the first bus we boarded I gave the conductor-driver too much for the fare and asked for change. "What part of the old country do you come from?" he asked "Swansea" I replied. "Gee—but you don't talk like a Welshman! You will know Singleton Park then? I was stationed there during the war. Gee—but it's a small world."

The view from the summit of the Empire State Building, some twelve hundred feet high, was unique for us. You can scarcely compare it with that from an old world cathedral tower, for being about three times as high it is so much more extensive. And being in the heart of one of the largest cities on earth it is so much more urban. Nor is it comparable with the view from a mountain, for though the mountain may well be higher the steepest mountain is not so narrow or precipitous that you look down a perpendicular face towards all points of the compass.

For full three hours we remained on the roof of this building; now looking across the lower part of the huge town to the meeting of the waters towards the sea; now inland, along the park, between its rows of domestic skyscrapers, to the silvery streak where those same waters divided, thus making an island of Manhattan.

Gradually twilight fell on the scene, softening the outline of the neighbouring skyscrapers, merging the more distant parts of the town with the surrounding marshes, till the first faint low lights grew brilliant against the darkening background, yet still seeming almost as remote as the stars in the sky.

Another day we took a steamer round Manhattan, intrigued by the guide, who talked to us through a loud speaker from start to finish of the journey. Every detail he pointed out, and when there was nothing particular to mention he lectured us on the immense superiority of the States to every other land, especially to the U.S.S.R. This was the land of freedom, where even the poorest workers were richer than the bosses anywhere else, where anybody could say what he liked, where even the poorest black man could argue as an equal with the wealthiest white, where anybody with anything in him at all could go on and on and on and up and up and up. The fellow seemed never to have heard of McCarthy, or of racial discrimination in states not so far from New York.

New Yorkers have every right to be proud of their Central Park, with its many acres of unspoiled nature—woods, curving lakes, pleasing glens—to say nothing of the Zoo, free to all, where incidentally we found our only English style tea garden.

In this park we met our first grakles (long tailed starlings) and our first robins (red breasted thrushes). Here too we were delighted to find the grey squirrels unmolested. This was the time when they were being persecuted officially in Britain as "foreign tree rats"—a mean trick, appealing to the lowest form of patriotism to undermine their popularity. They are, of course, as mischieveous in market gardens as their red cousins in coniferous plantations. But it was a head gardener of a London surburban park who assured me that though an occasional "rogue" squirrel might dig up a bulb or eat a bird's egg the damage was inconsiderable, and who heartily agreed that the joy they gave the children far outweighed any damage they might do.

It was dusk when we emerged from the "automobile" in Chestnut Street, Salem, though not too dark to see the huge trees looming overhead above the roadway.

Inside there was a surprise for us. A huge log fire was blazing, though we were in the middle of a hot summer. Round the fire were half a dozen members of our new congregation. All reserve melted away, and our new friends soon had us as much at home as ever in England or Wales.

But when the goodnights had been said, and they were gone, it was lonely to wander through the twenty and more rooms in that great house; some of them unfurnished—only the kitchen, one bedroom, one lounge, and a large unfenced garden tenanted by us during our stay.

The following morning our first walk in the town yielded some surprises. Nearly all the houses built of wood; all the roads except the shopping streets lined with fine large trees; a level crossing in a land where such devices were almost unknown; with lame men waving flags to warn us of oncoming trains! It was almost like stepping back into the England of a hundred years ago. And yet cars parked anywhere in the uncultivated but interesting parks, and large serve-yourself shops (new to us then) were everywhere: a weird blending of past and future.

They were proud of the level crossing, though it has since disappeared.

It was strange, too, to see so many large Catholic churches —French, Italian and Greek as well as English speaking. Strange to realise that here, in the heart of New England, there were now more Catholics than Protestants—possibly even more people of Latin and Slav than of Anglo-Saxon descent. And these groups were largely self-segregated; each in its own district, round its own church; each speaking its own tongue at home; yet all familiar with English, and all loyal citizens of the States.

The congregation of the First Unitarian Church was for the most part a cross section of the real old aristocracy of Salem: rather conservative in matters political; surprised that we thought so highly of Franklin Rooseveldt ("he took too much from the rich and gave too much to the poor" was a characteristic comment). There was a radical element there, but this was mostly working class and partly "foreign" (European). Let me hasten to add that there was no friction or coldness between the two groups.

Here I must carefully guard against letting my impressions of Unitarians and Quakers colour my impressions of Americans in general.

Seen from afar the mountain peaks of a distant continent loom above the horizon. But as you near the shore you discover that those highlands cover but a small portion of the land. In between and all around are the flats.

So it is with one's book impression of another nation and the actual acquaintance therewith. America always meant for me the New England of the mid-nineteenth century. And that

seemed the high water mark of benign civilisation—the place and the time where the common man was lifted beyond vulgarity by a rich share in a genial culture common to all, liberal in the true sense of that word, its puritanism turned sweet and tolerant without losing its grasp of God; and poised happily between not enough and too much; approximately sufficiently and naturally to genuine equality.

Of course one knew there were other aspects. Far below New England, both geographically and ethically, were the ex-slave states of the South east. One had read *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. And one knew that Theodore Parker had his pistol by his side as he wrote his sermons, lest any slave-owner should track his human possession to the refuge in the parson's study.

And one knew that in recent years the Ku Klux Klan burned negroes alive; and that in one State the fundamentalists had made the teaching of evolution illegal. But that was not the real America. It was certainly not New England. And it was that mid-nineteenth century New England, the land of Whittier, Longfellow and Lowell, of Holmes and Emerson (all of them, even the Quaker, Unitarian) that lingered in the mind.

And now New England is part of the melting pot—the Anglo-Saxons in a minority—and even in Boston a perpetual struggle for power betwen British Protestants and Irish Romanists. Of course the Anglo-Saxon culture is still there, on the bookshelves, and in the minds of many of the best New Englanders. It is still the high-water-mark by which to test other cultures, including the puritan culture that preceded it, out of which in large measure it grew, yet against which it reacted. And now it is in striking contrast to the almost surrealist American pseudo-culture by which it seems to be in real danger of being swamped. Those peaks are, after all, as sparse in this country as in any other; and the flats as extensive, dreary and depressing.

In a short walk in Salem one can pass from one quarter to another in a few minutes, each with its own characteristic churches and people. There is at once a potential danger and a great hope in so intense a confrontation of sects and "nations" inside a larger and almost supernational entity. One may well lament the decreasing power and influence of the mid-nineteenth century Anglo-Saxon culture till one realises that, its influence still leavening there, something even greater may ultimately emerge.

Unitarians have always, of course, been a small minority, even in New England. But without any doubt, from 1820 to 1890 they

were the leaders not only in theology, but also in literature (especially in poetry) and in social reform

There was great variety in the Unitarian movement in those days. William Channing, our first great preacher, was always very Christocentric, looking to Jesus as to an almost superhuman authority. His protest against the doctrine of the trinity as irrational, and against vicarious atonement and everlasting punishment as immoral, was emphatic; but he was far from the pure theism of Parker, with its utter rejection of the miraculous element and its sole reliance on intuitive morals.

A similar distinction is implicit in the poetry of Longfellow and Lowell. Longfellow, in his disappointingly prosaic version of the gospel in blank verse, (what a masterpiece one might have expected) actually closes with the disciples reciting the apostles' creed! Only the Athanasian, with its anathemas, is anathema to him. Whereas Lowell in *The Cathedral,* a late work, and strangely little known, elects for pure theism as the one sure way between a blank agnisticism and a bigoted traditionalism.

> Nor know I which to hold worst enemy
> Him who on speculation's windy waste
> Would turn me loose, stript of the raiment worn
> By faith contrived against out nakedness;
> Or him who, cruel kind, would fain obscure
> With painted saint and paraphrase of God
> The soul's east window of divine surprise.

Myself a pure theist, I was surprised to find that in the devotional services in Salem, and elsewhere in New England, the emphasis was still christocentric—the atmosphere being such as would have pleased Channing and Longfellow rather than Parker and Lowell. Responsive readings, minister and congregation declaiming alternate verses, were entirely Biblical. My non-scriptural readings were novelties! Communion services were still held in most churches, and in one there was a large cross above the altar. There was also a practice, held in common with the trinitarian churches, of tolling a bell at one part of the service; surely reminiscent of the changing of the wine into the blood at the Roman mass. The architecture of the Salem church was a sturdy modified gothic, with much pictorial stained glass.

Most of the New England churches close for July and August; but at least one protestant church is open each Sunday, and invites members of the others to join in. Furthermore Unitarians are welcomed into this co-operative scheme, and so it happened

that on two occasions my congregation in the First Unitarian Church was enlarged by trinitarians, French as well as Anglo-Saxon. All this is good, but one could not help wondering if the Unitarians would have been so welcome had they inclined to Parker instead of Channing.

In August came our "vacation", and we "went west" to California. Flying over the flatlands between coast and mountains we were impressed by the multitudinous forests, inlets and pools. Curious country; innumerable rocky knolls, often tree-clad, but scarcely any hills. Then over the dark green Appalachians, their valleys dwarfted to furrows of lighter pastoral green; and so along the treeless fringe of lake Erie to Chicago. Here we emerged from the plane for a breath of fresh air, but immediately re-embarked, for the heat outside surpassed anything we had known in New England. So aloft again, and over the immense "middle west", consisting of farmlands, each enclosed by its square border of roads and divided into smaller square fields unseparated by hedges: the whole looking quite pretty from the air, and much more like an infinite series of chessboards in inlaid wood than does any English landscape. Seen from below the monotony would surely be oppressive.

Gradually however, after we pass the Missisipi (here quite a small river), a change comes over the scene. Here and there is a blob of sand, confusing the outline of the fields: then suddenly comes a terrifying deterioration. Half farms, whole farms, sometimes even several contiguous farms blotted right out—even the buildings covered, or maybe merely the top of a chimney stack emerging.

This is the converse side of soil erosion. Here the soil, precious some hundred miles further west, whence it has been blown from the hedgeless fields, has indeed turned to bane. Mixed with sand from the deforested mountains still further west it has risen into inland dunes, some high enough already to have been scarred into runnels by rare rainstorms.

Here is a ghastly example of an unnatural catastrophe caused by human thoughtlessness and greed. Cut down the forests on the Rockies—don't thin out the mature trees but off with the lot and the profits will soar. Drag out the hedges. Does not every hedge reduce the value of this year's harvest by a few dollars?

"But the whole climate of the continent may be changed for the worse. You will have floods on the mountains and drought in the plains, and the top soil will be blown from your fields."

" When will this happen ? "

" Who knows ? In five years. Perhaps in ten. Maybe in fifty."

" But who cares a damn what's going to happen fifty years hence ? "

Alfred Russell Wallace warned the States fifty years ago, when she was the most forbidding example in the world of Capitalism with the lid off. But she scorned him, and now she suffers. Franklin Rooseveldt came too late with his new deal to prevent this disaster.

Presently we came to a less ravaged countryside, with the craggy " Rockies " beyond, and in the middle distance, shrouded by ominous clouds, pierced by flashes of lightning, a large town, Denver. Here we broke our journey awhile, and were refreshed by the interesting park. There was a large lake, surrounding a small island, on the trees of which some gibbons disported themselves, merrily howling the while. Then on through the various gorges piercing the mighty range ; travelling now by observation railcoach the more to enjoy the ever changing rock formations. At last we reach the coast, and cross the straits to San Francisco, on its own peninsula of many hills.

The views from the hill tops are very pleasing—the white houses covering all the lower undulations and all the valleys except the large green strip of the Golden Gate Park—the whole framed first by the sea and its inlets, and also, to the east, by the distant white suburbs on the mainland.

The park is a wonderland in which you could wander for hours without retracting your steps. It is six miles long by one in width, but seems much larger, so favoured it is by nature. It is undulating, and boasts one rocky hill of some five hundred feet. All its natural features marvellously yet unostentationusly improved by the gentle Scot who moulded it a hundred years ago. What material he had to work with, and how inspired his work !—surely the finest example of landscape gardening anywhere. The hill is now clad with a blend of conifers and deciduous trees, whilst curling round its foot, and making an island of it, is the prettiest of ornamental waters, spanned by two bridges, and fed by a cataract rushing so naturally down the hillside that you scarcely believe it to be an artifice.

Here too is a deep pool fringed by rocks and giant tree ferns, telling how near the tropics are, and here you can watch the tiny humming birds sipping the nectar from the flowers they hover amongst. What a thrill to see them free of cage, fierce in the sunshine, and not the least shy of humans.

In the heart of the city is Chinatown ; with Chinese buildings as well as faces. You can easily imagine yourself in the far east.

Now I am very wary of generalisations about nations. Frenchmen are sensuous, Italians passionate, Russians morose, Germans sentimental when we are friends with them, brutal when we are at war—what arrant nonsense it all is ! Dangerous nonsense too, since there is a tiny grain of truth in it. There are all sorts everywhere, but a few more of this sort, a few less of that here or there. So much for nations.

But there does seem to be rather more than a mere grain of truth in generalisations about races, and therefore even more danger in such generalisations. No one can move about in any Californian city without noticing how cheerful the average Negro is. A smile seems to be for ever lurking not far below the surface, and the least little incident or comment will bring it bubbling up, maybe to explode in hearty laughter. Whereas in the average Oriental that smile is so deeply hidden that seldom does the slightest ripple reach the surface. And it seems more deeply hidden in the Chinaman than the Jap. This holds also for the Red Indian, probably of Mongol origin.

Incidentally this racial mixture adds considerable to the delight of a walk in California. We missed the variety of faces on our return to Britain before the rush of immigrants (so unwelcome to the curious mind of Enoch Powell) reached our shores.

We found interesting differences between the Unitarians in New England and those in California. These find expression even in the church architecture. Simplified Gothic is exchanged for simplified Renaissance, with sometimes more than a touch of Mexican—that is of Spanish, or again of Moorish. Pictorial stained glass is often replaced by geometrical patterns in glass (a distant unrecognised bequest from Islam !) All this may signify differences in theological emphasis. For here Unitarians do not usually trouble overmuch to claim the Christian name—do not show concern when it is denied them. They no longer hark back to Christ but press on to the World religion. Their very theism is often vague : but they are keener about applying their faith to selving human problems, social and international. No longer is Franklin Rooseveldt dismissed as too radical but rather criticised for not being nearly radical enough.

In the Californian churches I was regarded as a conservative for taking one of my lessons from the Bible, and for reintroducing the Lord's prayer. Though I suspect that the dislike of that prayer

may be due merely to its unfortunate title. I share the Californian dislike of referring to Jesus as the Lord.

But dare I say in all friendliness, and bearing always in mind the obvious sincerity and wholehearted kindliness and splendid tolerance of all the Unitarian friends we made in the States, that the North East could do with more of the political radicalism we found in the South West, and the latter with more of the theological conviction of the former. I write rather as a theist than a "Unitarian Christian", but chiefly as one more convinced than ever that what the world most lacks is the marriage of the unembittered and non violent left wing of politics with assurance of the real being of God—of intimate vital contact between God and man. I see no salvation for the world save in a God-inspired socialism.

During our visit an interesting controversy was going on in one Californian church regarding three arches around the pulpit. They were going to be replaced by a single arch of wider span suggesting the undivided being of God. It was further proposed to place under this arch a statue of Christ with arms outstretched in appeal. The latter suggestion was criticised owing to its formal similarity to a crucifix. My judgment? Leave well alone. The three arches were beautiful, and after all don't we all proclaim the trinity of truth, love and beauty?

On Sunday I addressed a gathering of four of the smaller groups: branches of the church in Los Angeles. In the discussion that followed I was taken to task for suggesting that we might learn something from spiritualism. One young girl told me, with a disarming smile, that if you were interested in psychical research you really ought to be psychoanalysed!

But what a thrill it was to preach in the larger Californian churches—to have congregations running into two or three hundred worshippers—yet to be told that the "small number" of those present is due to so many being away "on vacation".

Before leaving California we had a few days on the volcanic island of Catalina. About the size of the Isle of Wight, it rises some two thousand feet above the Pacific Ocean, the airport reached by narrow zigzag roads where slender eucalyptus trees are the only protecting props against landslides. There is a wide valley where the little town is built around the harbour, which faces the mainland some thirty miles away. All other valleys are narrow anc steep. Around the rocky coast flying fish abound, and there are glass bottomed boats, and better still a lift descending from the pier and to the sea bottom, where you can

watch the creatures of the deep! And cars are almost non-existent, for their excursions are limited to the one square mile of the "town".

It was on the uplands that we met the German. He was a refugee from the Nazi terror, a Quaker by persuasion, a keen naturalist and an authority on the fauna and flora of the island. But we met him again in the little town, picking up the litter to deposit in the wste paper baskers. That was his profession, the best he could find. But he was quite happy. He had escaped the terror, he had no dependents, and much leisure.

On our homeward journey we deflected to see the Grand Canyon. Suddenly you come upon this gorge, and the size is staggering. It looks every bit its mile deep. The peaks, rising from the bottom to lip level, look every one of them their full height, that of Ben Nevis from its fiord, or Righi from its lake. And when the sun plays on those sunken conical or pyramidal mountains of rock and brings out those amazingly vivid colour chords of pinks and yellows, blues and browns, the beauty is breathtaking. Even lovelier it is when twilight mellows the hues and blends their tints, or when seen by moonlight through a faint evening mist. It is akin to the beauty of smokey quartz—if so gigantic a panorama can be compared to something so small and intimate.

But there is a lack. I would not care to live with it. Save for the small fir on the fringe and the little lizards that live there it seems quite lifeless—the beauty of the inorganic. It shows what God can do with nothing but rock and stone. It is like the beauty of the moon might be.

It was after leaving the canyon that we met the young opera singer in the Denver train. She gave us a sweet smile as we sat down at the dining table, and started talking in the ready way most Americans will. We told her who and what we were, where we had been, what we had seen.

"Have you heard any music since being here? Are you interested in opera?" she asked

"You are a singer" guessed my wife, in reply.

She was, and she had just been singing in *The Secret Marriage*. She was full of it. Quite sure that Mozart had learned much from Cimarosa before he composed *Figaro*. Did I agree?

I did, and I do still, though on comparing notes I find that *Figaro* preceeds the *Marriage* by four years. But Cimarosa wrote other operas before *Figaro* and was the older man, and the earlier to mature.

Conversation flowed freely for the next few hours, and it was not limited to music. She came off a Romanist family, but was interested in other faiths and investigating them before she made up her mind. So we saw to it that Unitarianism would be one of them.

As you enter the Hudson River, the New York skyscrapers silhouetted against the clouds, you pass the famous statue of liberty, with its invitation to the poor or persecuted of every land to enter into freedom. That invitation sprang out of the very heart of the New England culture, and it was accepted for so many years that the foster parent has long been in danger of being smothered by her own adopted children. It is easy to wax satirical about the many restrictions now barring the way to more immigrants, but one cannot reside in the States for even a short time without realising that there is a real difficulty. Nor is the problem alleviated by the fact that internal restrictions on freedom of thought and expression are being imposed by one of the unassimilable foster children. One is forced to question the potency of the essential American culture, liberal alike in religion and politics, when measured against the greater potency of Rome on the one hand and protestant fundamentalism on the other. How far is the continuance of American freedom due to the tense and uneasy balance of these other forces?

For tense and uneasy it is. American citizens all giving first allegiance to "the stars and stripes"? I wonder. Were the Christian denominations really following in the footsteps of their master, were they all taking the Sermon on the Mount to heart America might succeed where even India, since Gandhi's death, is failing. She might disarm, and so break the mesh in which all the nations are floundering. But most of the sects are not really Christian in any depth. The Sermon on the Mount is buried underneath the Athanasian creed, with its anathemas, and the even more benighted institutes of Calvin. They have strayed so far from the spirit of the master that it is probably better that the average American give his first loyalty to the flag rather than to his particular sect, be it that of Rome or the Plymouth brethren.

At present the Fundamentalists are in a majority. But they consist of innumerable sects with small love fo reach other, and little in common except their hatred for Rome. The bigotry strikes more in the States than in Britain—perhaps partly because most people still go to some church or other. And some sects flourish there which would scarcely find foothold here. Consider, for example, the Church of the Living God, which asserts that the

Negroes are the ten lost tribes of Israel, and that Jesus was a black. The psychologists assure us that this is because of the inferiority complex impressed on the Negroes of the South east by their enslavement, and it is certainly easier to understand than the emergence of a similar phenomenon in England under the name of the British-Israelite movement.

Or consider the cosmology of the Church Triumphant, according to which the world is a hollow globe, on the inside of which we live; the sun, moon and stars being in the centre (I don't know if the moon trip has made an end of this cause). Though seriously, when you try to figure it out, do you find this cosmology ties you up into any more inextricable a knot than Einstein's "spacetime?"

Then we have the "Two Seed Baptists", the seeds being planted by God and Satan respectively. They teach that since everyone is either damned or saved before birth all Sunday school or missionary work is a waste of time. This abstention from all proselytising is of course entirely logical if you are a Calvinist, but are any other followers of the great fanatic quite so consistent?

More serious, because larger, are the Seventh day Adventists, to whom God is so humourless that he seriously discounts the value of such of his worshippers as go to church on Sunday instead of Saturday; and the Mormons, who believe that the Red Indians are the lost tribes, and who practised polygamy till forbidden by the State. Each of these sects have more followers than ourselves or the Quakers. Collectively, along with the narrower elements in the traditional protestant bodies, they could easily become a very grave danger. Romanists say that fundamentalism was behind the infamous Huey Long, and his second Ku Klux Klan in its unscrupulous smear campaign against Rome in general and Al Smith in particular during his presidential campaign. And Rome, almost as black herself, was undoubtedly behind the equally shameless smear campaign of Senator McCarthy during our visit.

Incidentally during our visit the Romanists carried out a gallop poll on doctrine which seems to have been open and candid. They found that more of their own number would vote for a protestant candidate than protestants would for one of theirs. They found that their church was the one most disliked by the others. And they found that 99% of the citizens of the states believed in God, 99% in the Trinity; 80% in the Deity of Christ (surely a curious discrepancy here); 77% in individual immortality; 58%

in hell, but only 12% in the likelihood of themselves being damned. The last two figures will raise a smile, but the situation is too serious to take lightly. Of course there are broader elements in the larger protestant sects (how else account for the united vacation services between Unitarians and trinitarians in New England) and of course there is the leaven of liberal movements among the Buddhists, Moslems and Jews, to say nothing of a tiny spiritualist cause and some of the faith healing cults.

Yet it is only a small corner of the New World that these liberal cults reach. Considering the religious field as a whole one realises what an adventure Americanism is, how great its dangers, how great its potentialities for good. These Poles and Latins, Irish and British, Chinese and Negroes, Protestants and Catholics, Jews and Buddhists are all American citizens, and one hopes (even in the face of "black power") that they will never fight again. They all speak English in the market place, whatever their tongue at home. What will emerge from the melting pot?

One can but hope that whilst the majority oscillates between dogmatic ritual and dogmatic Bibliolatry the forces of religious liberalism will grow till the New England culture of the mid-nineteenth century wins the allegiance of the Latins and Slavs, Blacks and Reds in all the States, itself growing in the process, and this gigantic and perilous experiment in internationalism and intersectariansm proves an enduring success.

Everyone knows that the United States gained their independence from Britain in 1783, and that George Washington became the first president. And everyone knows about the civil war that raged from 1861 to 1865, when the Northern states prevented the southern break-away, and during the course of which, under the guidance of Abraham Lincoln, the freedom of black slaves was proclaimed.

On the other hand most British people have probably never heard of Jefferson, the third president, or of the Louisiana purchase, as great an event as either of those referred to above. Is this because the transaction was accomplished without bloodshed? Vast zones of what is now called the "middle west" were thus acquired from Napoleon. Jefferson was a good and great statesman, radically democratic in outlook, and incidentally Unitarian in religion.

Between 1812 and 1824 an inconclusive war was fought with Britain, and in 1848 the states were at war with Mexico. Prior to that date California was part of Mexico. Incidentally Lincoln protested against this conflict as an "act of wanton aggression",

and Lowell blamed the influence of the Southern states in Congress, making his Br Biglow say:

"they just want this Californy
So's ter lug new slave states in."

It is a curious reflection for pacifists and non-pacifists to ponder that today it would be generally admitted that the fruits of the unrighteous war have proved more wholesome than those of the righteous one. Everybody would concede that California is far happier and more prosperous as one of the United States than she would have been if still a part of Mexico (for all the recent emergence of a socialist government there). Whereas the legacy of bitterness in the South east is still rife, the Negroes are still humiliated there as an inferior breed, and the victorious republican party of the north has long been dominated by reactionary capitalistic politicians. Despite its original dependence on the south the greatest presidents since Lincoln have been thrown up by the Democratic party—Wilson, whose wisdom, had it been heeded, would have prevented the second world war, and Franklin Roosevelt, who in instituting the "New Deal" quite possibly saved the States from the Communist revolution which J. B. Priestley thought not unlikely in the slump of the forties.

Wilson was probably the biggest man of them all. But his 14 points (no annexation and no indemnities the most important of them) were merely used as a bait to induce revolt in Germany, and then cast aside contemptuously by Clemenceau and Lloyd George, whilst even the unfortunate "League of Nations" (still-born in an atmosphere of vengeance) was awhile rejected by his own folk. Had Europe and America risen to the occasion Wilson might well have gone down in history as the greatest of all statesmen. As it is, he looms larger in his magnificent failure than any subsequent politician in the aroma of success.

As for Roosevelt, it is too soon to say. A great statesman in home affairs without question. In foreign affairs probably not. Deciding to prepare the atomic bomb, did he plan to keep it secret from his British and Russian allies? Or is Truman responsible for that? Certainly it was Truman who committed the stupid and criminal mistake of exploding the first atomic bombs on populous towns, instead of in thinly populated areas, that the Japanese enemy might get and heed the worning. And this despite promises previously given to the scientists that we would not be ruthless. Did he think of Pearl Harbour? But does that really exonerate him? Should we not expect an American president to think and act on a higher plane?

And now what of the future? There are four possible courses events might take. The first is disintegration. It threatened in 1812, when the New England States protested against the war with Britain. It nearly happened in the 1860's, when for some three years it seemed as though the south would win the civil war and secede. There is a tendency to regard the present as the final state of affairs; it persists in most minds even after two world wars (unless you happen to live in a continent like south America, where revolutions are chronic). But disintegration is not impossible, even in a democratic republic. And "black power" is an ugly thing, and unpredictable in its possible effects. When the worm turns we have no right to assume that it will always be gentle. We have trodden on it, and unless it is living on a higher plane than we are (and what right have to to assume that?) it may prove to have become a viper. It may demand territories and a government of its own.

Another alternative is 100% Americanisation—the development of the isolationist or even imperialist nationalism.

That is less unlikely than it would be were the other communist countries as reasonable as Yugoslavia. (As China would have been had the Americans been wise enough to recognise her government when we did). But the very fact that groups of various national origin (British, Irish, French, Italian) still segregate apart should be a sufficient safeguard against both American nationalism and cosmopolitanism.

At the time of our sojourn I would have said that a much graver danger was that of Roman domination. A transfer of a mere fifth of the population to Rome would make this danger imminent, and it seemed then that Rome might soon accomplish the "takeover" by encouraging all her flock to propagate as rapidly as possible. (It has been calculated that at the present rate of increase of Irish Romanists and Scottish protestants in Scotland there will soon be more Irish than Scottish in that country). But the recent outburst against the population explosion among an increasing minority of Romanists might avert the danger.

So we come to the last alternative—that America will remain much what she is now: a mixture of cults and racial and national groups; but that more of her people will give allegiance to the federal union rather than to the individual state, group or sect, also that an increasing number may veer her away from imperialistic experiments in places like Korea, Vietnam and the moon, to

experiments in co-operation, involving not only Russia but China, and so ushering in world federation.

So she might yet save the world. Let us hope and pray for just that.

Americans are much fonder of globes than Britons. There is one in many homes. Is that merely because their country fills so much larger a part of the earth than ours? Or is it prophetic of a growing interest in global harmony?

Despite the friendship we everywhere found, and perhaps in some measure due to the monotony of the New England landscape and the Californian weather (how we longed sometimes for a break in the blue sky!) we would not have chosen to spend the rest of our earthly life there, and were not loth to return to Britain. But it was a great experience, which we would not have been without.

Incidentally the reader will realise that some of the contrasts between U.S.A. and Great Britain are no longer as striking as they were twenty years ago, since supermarkets and speedways are now common place here, and coloured faces no longer as rare as they were!

Before leaving the American chapter a personal touch is relevant. I do not know if it is selfish sometimes to be glad that one has very few personal relations—no brothers or sisters, or sons or daughters, and only a few cousins in remote parts. So often one sees instances where blood ties might well be forgotten, so sparse are the interests in common, yet where constant contact is maintained, presumably out of some sense of duty, even though the result may be friction or boredom.

However that may be, one of the minor attractions about going across to California was the presence there of my sole surviving uncle and his son, my cousin. We had not met since I was a small boy, and my uncle a young man. My Uncle Ben had left London a stricken consumptive, but all trace of the disease had long since disappeared, and he was now ninety years old, having outlived my father, my beloved Uncle Park and all his contemporaries. His only affliction was total deafness, so that the writing pad was essential.

He had never returned to the old country, which lived in his mind just as it had been at the turn of the century. Yes, we really had electric light and electric trains and motor cars and radios and telly, we told him, but to him it still seemed strange. The old country so like America! But Hyde Park and St. James' Park—they were still there, beautiful as ever.

My cousin and his wife were the sort of folk we would gladly see much more of, quite apart from relationship. He was happily employed in helping the underprivileged, the invalid and unemployed, where the need was greater than here, official assistance being so much less. We have the happiest recollections of their bungalow in Los Angeles, where some of these chapters were written swinging in a hammock, with the sun and the humming birds for company—and many a pleasant tour we also made to the neighbouring countryside and to the Swedenborgian church—views of hills and the sea from its glass walls.

Chapter 13

ITALIAN VENTURE

IT was after our return from America that I tightened up on vegetarianism (I had been somewhat slack on holidays ever since a hydropath gave me eggs pickled in vinegar for every meal —they were quite uneatable) and it was at the same time that I became a convinced antivivisectionist. My conversion had been delayed some thirty years by the folly of some good Unitarians who had denounced all vivisectionists and doctors who approved them as sadists. I had gone to that meeting ready to be converted, but came out unconvinced and disappointed.

The States whetted our appetite for other lands, and so it came about that two years afterwards our second spell in Swansea was enriched by an Italian holiday. Italian Switzerland we had visited before, and once during that vacation ventured beyond the border into "Regnum Italiana", decorated in those days by portraits of an aggresive Mussolini. We had felt guilty venturing even as far over the border as Bellagio. What right had a democrat to spend even a day in territory misgoverned by a dictator? But now Mussolini had gone to render his account, Italy was a free republic, and there were other attractions.

A few months before I had bought a small Italian grammar and dictionary hoping that a slight knowledge of the language might increase my enjoyment of the now numerous discs of Italian operas we had collected. This effort was largely abortive. Verse is not the easiest introduction to any language, owing to the presence of inverted grammatical phrases and obsolete words.

But about the same time, in view of our forthcoming tour, I borrowed a book from the library about modern Italy, and there I read of the existence of the *Associazione Mazziniana Italiana*, republican and theistic in outlook. Now for many years Mazzini had been one of my heroes. His independent formulation of a

purely theistic faith had impressed me even more than his work for the liberation of Italy from foreign yolk, from the Roman church and from the monarchy. My Italian was long elementary and fragmentary, but that did not prevent me from struggling with the simpler articles in *Oggi*.

I wrote a short letter to the editor of *Oggi*, enclosing another to the secretary of the A.M.I. (for the book gave no address) asking the former if he would please put me in touch with the latter. This he did, and I appreciate his courtesy the more that he was a Romanist. Within a fortnight I had a friendly letter from Terenzio Grandi, then editor of *Il Pensiero Mazziniano*. That was the first of my Italian contacts, leading to my membership of the A.M.I., and afterwards of the Italian Non-Violent movement and the Italian antivivisection society.

During our Italian tour one soon discovered how much harder talking was than reading, and listening than talking! I have already enlarged on the poverty of my linguistic potentialities. But it was all good fun; not so tedious now that a motive was there. Furthermore I would now admit that it is worth while to have an alternative means of expression: not to be dependent on one set of artificial signs to express one's thoughts and emotions. But I am still staggered by the accomplished linguist with his command of half a dozen tongues. Nor would the third language come more easily than the second to me. For I found an obstacle to my Italian in the emergence from my subconscious of several French words which I would have expected to have been completely eliminated from memory long ago. From time to time a French word would pop out instead of the Italian one for which I was searching; and this not always when there was a similarity between them.

Fortunately for me Italian is a comparatively easy language; as phonetic as possible with an inadequate alphabet: no unpronounced final consonents as in French; no nasal noises! But the printing press came too early for it; as for English: fixing many stupid verbal irregularities; even in the auxiliaries to be and to have (again as in English). What a pity that by the time Caxton invented his press the whole country had not followed the wisdom of Wessex, with its I be, he be, we be, you be, they be! In Italian too is the stupidity, as in French, of all inanimate things being either masculine or feminine. Yet what an improvement on Latin, as English on Anglo-Saxon. But for the deficiencies mentioned above Italian might well have fulfilled the function of Esperanto; which itself preserves some needless declensions, so

averse mankind seems to an entirely reasonable speech, either evolved or manufactured.

Incidentally of course Italian does not present the English scholar with a completely new set of signs, mentioned above as perhaps philosophically desirable to liberate one from the dominance of one arbitrary tongue. The common inheritance from Latin is so large that one language is not entirely foreign to the other. In the small needs of daily life it is. Hardly a single simple noun, verb or adjective is similar. But the further you move from the concrete to the abstract, from simple needs or thoughts or emotions to profounder ones, from monosyllables to polysyllables, the closer they approximate.

My first meeting with one of my Italian correspondents came about by chance. I was going by train to Oxford to hear Danilo Dolci lecture on his work for the peasants in Sicily, and his campaign against the Mafia. I heard some Italians talking in the next compartment and moving there, hoping they might be on the same errand as myself, I asked if they were going to hear the great man. A large man in the corner, the only one not looking the least bit Latin, rose up and held out his hand, exclaiming " Io sono Dolci ". Beside him was his tiny wife.

About the same time I met another of my Italian correspondents, in the Natural History Museum at Kensington. He was Beppino Dissertori, of whom more later.

A third correspondent was Pietro Pinna, one of the first of Italians to be given exemption from military service on conscientious grounds, but not before he had suffered a good deal of imprisonment under a " cat and mouse " persecution. Pinna was for some time assisting Dolci in Sicily; later on he joined forces with Capitini (again more later) whose work he still continues.

Now let me anticipate my second visit to Italy, though made after we had left Swansea for Sussex. Actually we had left Lewes also, and taken up residence at Worthing.

On this second tour travel agencies were bypassed, and the objective was not, as hitherto, to see cities and landscapes, but to visit people. And because my wife had not mastered the language, I was alone. Nor did I venture beyond Perugia, halfway down the peninsula; since nearly all my Italian correspondents were northerners.

My headquarters were at Milano. Luigo Rignano, author of several interesting little books, where he expounds his own very distinctive religious beliefs in which a priori convicton of survival

takes precedence of theism, met me at the station, and introduced me to my hostess, an American lady married to an Italian. Like most of their compatriots the Gigliolis reside in a large flat, several floors above street level.

The day after my arrival, being Sunday, I was taken to a Waldensian church, where the worship was of the puritanical variety, and the sermon delivered so rapidly that I could make very little of it.

Later on Rignano took me to see Giovanni Pioli, the doyen of the Italian heretics; Unitarian, pacifist and vegetarian; author of the standard study of Fausto Socino and of *La Religione di Gesu e la Chiesa Romana*, each of which should be translated into English, and the latter read and studied by every Romanist in Britain and America.

In one of his letters to me Pioli had enclosed a coloured photo of himself. I was impressed by the nobility of his bearded face, and imagined a correspondingly noble figure. The shock on meeting his was painful. A tiny man, his poor face badly knocked about, his jaw twisted to one side, and his speech hardly intelligible. Was this due to maltreatment by the Fascists? (Like most of my Italian friends he had suffered in their hands). No—it was a recent street accident. Nevertheless the result was that we, who had so often corresponded, had but little conversation, and there was so much I wanted to talk about. He described his faith as weak. "Faintly I cling to the larger hope" he had written in one of his letters. And now he complained that he, who had long been interested in psychical research, never once had had a message from his sister, or any other who had passed over. "Perche di no, se fossero là veramente" he demanded, lapsing as usual into Italian before the end.

But now he was very old, over ninety, and very unwell; and my only consolation is that now he has died his faint faith has become sure knowledge, in all the joy of scarcely anticipated reunion.

Surprisingly in his young days Piolli had been a student for the priesthood, and, still more surprising, one of his fellow students later on became Pope Pius the eleventh. And but for the intervention of that same Pope (the reactionary who signed the Concordat with Mussolini) Pioli would have suffered more severely under the Fascist tyranny. Strange to reflect on the relation between the two. There must have been some bond between them.

Then I took the train to Bologna, to visit Dr. Gennaro Ciaburri, editor of *Scienza e Cossienza*, the periodical of the Italian Antivivisection movement, and author of *La Speremenfazione sugli Animale*—perhaps the most searching attack on vivisection ever written.

Again I found an old bachelor living in a small flat—and this time no English. And the dear old fellow, a qualified medical man, told me exactly what he thought of the folly of organ transplantation in general and heart transplantation in particular. "Why don't we doctors tell people how to live so that their organs remain healthy instead of hastening their breakdown with gluttony and drugs?"

Then he insisted on showing me some of the churches of Bologna, though it was already dusk. After awhile he bethought himself of finding me a hotel, but the first was full, and the second, and he was already getting tired. So I suggested sleeping in his flat. "But I have only two bedrooms and two single beds, one for my housekeeper and one for me". "But I was thinking of the floor. I shall sleep like a top", I replied, suddenly realising, as I said it, how silly it must sound in foreign ears. "No, no" he insisted, and fortunately the third hotel on the list had a spare room for me.

What a grand old town Bologna is, especially when viewed from any of the surrounding hills. And how pretty its little park, with a cafe on an island in its tiny lake.

Then on to Perugia to meet Aldo Capitini, surely to be remembered in more enlightened times as one of the greatest Italians of his age. Founder of the Italian pacifist movement, editor of *Azione Non-Violenta*, author of *Religione Aperta* (Open Religion) and many other books—what could we have to argue about? Well, the professor had no place in his philosophy for psychical research. There was no need for any such thing. There must be some sort of being after death—it was assured by the mere fact of purpose in the mind of God. For him, as for Mazzini and Martineau. For me too; but what of the millions whose belief in the bare possibility of any sort of survival has been shaken by medical science, by misunderstanding about the function of the brain, by inability to understand Bergson; and whose faith in God as well as in survival is only regained through the discoveries of the parapsychologists and spiritualists? It must be added, too, that Capitini's idea of afterlife is somewhat vague: individuality appears to be transcended; though even a cat will have some share in the life beyond.

Incidentally Capitini suffered from an almost morbid dislike of the Roman church. He could not forgive them for still regarding him as a Romanist, albeit a renegade, since he was baptised into that communion. (It is a curious twist of Roman dogma thus to discriminate between the born heretic and the one-time member; even if the membership was confirmed only by baptism in babyhood!) One of Capitini's best books is called *Baptised, but no Believer*.

On the walls of Perugina you look across the vine-clad undulating countryside to the twin hill city of Assisi where lived the saint whose modern disciple Capitini might well be deemed.

But since I wrote these words Capitini has died prematurely, to the sad loss of both liberal religion and radical politics in his country.

Near the end of my vacation came a visit to Trento, under the Alps, with its imaginative statue of Dante by the pond in a little shady park. And here I met Beppino Disertori for the second time (We had met previously at the Natural History museum in London). Disertori is a professor of neurology, and a keen parapsychologist. He is the author of *Libro della Vita*, in which he declares for vitalism, and *De Anima* (of the soul) in which he traces the history of the theories of the relationship of mind and body from the ancient Greeks to the modern Indians, and declares his own conviction that a minority of the psychic phenomena can be explained only along spiritualistic lines. And he too, believes in the survival of the higher animals.

Disertori is a man of distinction twice over. Not only is he a scientist, but also an intrepid traveller—and this though badly crippled by an accident suffered in infancy. Every time he goes off on a voyage one can be assured of a first class new book. No mere journal of travels either; for there will be many fertile reflections on the hstory and the present culture of the land visited. So we have fascinating studies of India, of the Central American Republics, of native Africa.

Though a pure theist, Disertori does not share Capitini's hopelessness about Rome. He scents a wind of change there, even in northern Italy. His books, he told me, were not unfavourably reviewed by some Romanists. I then told him how at the turn of the century Voisey had been excommunicated by the Anglican church for teaching pure theism, whereas today no one for a moment thinks Robinson will be turned out, though his theism seems of the slender variety. The dogmas of Anglicanism might be left on the shelf, but not denied. "Well something like that

may one day be true of Rome—in a hundred years perhaps," commented Disertori, "Tyrrel and Loisy were excommunicated by the Vatican at the turn of the century, and I fancy such would be again; but today in your country at least, and in Holland, doctors who oppose the Vatican on contraceptives only have their knuckles rapped. Once they would have been excommunicated, but not now."

Incidentally it is Disertori who has written an interesting and helpful introduction to the Italian edition of my *Animal Kingdom—Why? Whence? Whither?* under the much better title of *Gli Animale—Chi Sono*. (The Animals—Who are they?) In this introduction he also outlines my drama *Dusk and Dawn* (on the early decline and belated resurgence of simple Christian doctrine).

Another Italian friend also gave me great help in the translation and publication of *Gli Animale*: Elema Quarelli, doctor of literature, a gracious lady of Torino, and author of a kindred book, *Socrates and the Animals*, since translated into English. Most pleasant was the visit to her and her family, husband and two young sons; and since none of them knew English, the conversation, though rather slow paced, was as helpful as enjoyable.

The last of my correspondents to see was Mario Turoni, author of *Gesu e Paolo Identificati nella Storia Profana*, a work which had aroused my keen interest just before my voyage.

I had long been puzzled by the contradictions in the gospel story, and I cannot lightly throw Turoni's theory aside. Neither the liberal Christian explanation nor that of Albert Schweitzer seem to me adequate. There are too many contradictions for either theory to hold. Sometimes in the synoptics too many claims come from the lips of Jesus for the liberal Christian explanation, that he was misunderstood and misreported by his followers. Sometimes there is too much humility in speech and conduct for the theory of Schweitzer—that he was convinced of supernormal powers, and of his own almost imminent return as terrible judge. Nor does the intermediate position, maintained by Voisey, seem any more convincing than pleasant—that a change came over him in mid career, turning him from something like a pure theist millenia before his time to a fanatical believer in his own superhumanity. Turoni's theory, which he claims to have proved from little known contemporary documents, is that there were two distinct persons at work, one, Jesus of Anana, a simple pacific theist; the other a violent though cultured nationalistic Jew (none other, in fact, than Judas of Galilee), and that

subsequently their lives and teachings became almost inextricably intertwined in the gospel records, the two being thought of as one, under the impersonal name of Jesus Christ.

Turoni assured me of the deep hostility of Rome, and of pressure brought to bear on booksellers against the sale of his book (Pioli had made a similar accusation). " But," he added, " I have now even more evidence in favour of my view, and will send a copy of my revised edition when it appears ".

It is curious that Turoni, who appends a long list of earlier books on the problem, ignores Schweitzer completely; curious also that he is ignored by all save Pioli and one French reviewer. Incidentally not long after my return from Italy a correspondence about Christian origins arose in *The Observer*, and I sent a letter summarising Turoni's book. Its importance was acknowledged by the editor, but the letter never appeared!

It occurs to me that Turoni has chosen a rather unfortunately ambiguous title for his book. *Jesus and Paul Identified in Secular History* suggests that Jesus and Paul are one and the same person, and so gives a completely false impression. But incidentally it should be added that if Turoni is right it was Judas of Judea who was crucified. Jesus son of Anano was tried (on another later occasion) whipped and liberated. Though subsequently he was stoned to death for his pacifism during the seige of Jerusalem.

Before closing this chapter a brief reference to Umberto Pegnotta would not be out of place. Alone among my Italian contacts he calls himself a Unitarian Christian, and he has founded a Unitarian church (the others seem content with meditation and silent worship). But he complained that since the wind of change his work becomes harder, since many who might otherwise join him are now content to call themselves liberal Catholics. At one time he collaborated with Capitini as author, but a disagreement about pacifism led to the end of their collaboration.

Chesterton says somewhere that Britons have always felt a deeper affinity with Italians than with either the French or the Germans, and instances the Brownings, Shelley and Keats (all Protestants) in evidence. From my limited experience with Italians alone I can neither agree nor disagree—but can only say how happy I have been with all my contacts, adding however that since most of them were heretical they can hardly be regarded as typical. But I would stress how encouraging it was to find that so often in Italy the secular heresies go together—as practical outcomes of an heretical liberal religious faith. At home how often we find the vegetarian who is not a pacifist, the socialist who

is indifferent to vivisection, the Unitarian who is a mere Unitarian, the war-resister who is an atheist. In Italy one more often finds the all-round heretic; maybe a woman of the stamp of Frances Power Cobbe; a man of the stamp of Francis William Newman, sarcastically and stupidly described by one biographer of his brother the cardinal as " the man with the rag bag mind "—the man whose pure theism and utter sincerity led him to back every cause from feminism to food-reform, every cause inspired by kindness to man or animal!

But should I be right in admitting that my contacts were not typically Italian? Pioli, Capitini, Turoni, Disertori, Dolci, might all be described as Mazzinians; and surely Mazzini was the typical Italian of the last century? Now most of the greatest of our Victorians--the Brownings, Ruskin, Carlyle, Mill, Dickens, Mrs Gaskell were in revolt, openly or overtly, against Victorianism. Even so my Italians are in revolt against both Fascism and the Vatican. Yet members of the former group have all since come to be regarded as typical Victorian Englishmen and Englishwomen. Will my Italians subsequently be regarded as typical of their age, their culture, their country? One wonders.

Chapter 14

SEMI-RETIREMENT IN SUSSEX

NOW we must go back a decade to tell how at last we exchanged Swansea for Sussex. Came one day an appeal from the South-east—" You can leave Swansea in a healthy condition—why not come and see what you can do for two little churches in the Sussex countryside ? " And came the sunny day when we first saw the pretty village of Ditchling nestling between its beacon (one of the highest points in the South Downs) and its own little hill to the north, giving background to the green with its large pond, flanked by the Anglican church. Lewes we had seen before, but without realising how unspoiled it was : a genuine country town on the flanks of the downs, bisected by the Ouse valley—its roots in the eighteenth century.

This time the nomadic impulse was strong enough to prevent reaction. Grief of course as we left Swansea as residents for the last time : a handful of folk, free from their work, to see us off.

It reminded us of a similar farewell, nearly thirty years before, from Kendal ; but then it was winter, with the first snow already on the montain summits ; and then we were going back to London, therefore a much more dubious occasion. This time we would still be in the country—in a town small enough to walk out of easily in any direction : no longer than Kendal, and in some ways similar ; each town with its own river valley ; each town creeping up its own familiar hills ; and far enough from its nearest larger neighbour to possess its own local cultural activities.

In this connection a word should be added about the excellence of the Lewes public library, or rather about the willingness and ability of its librarian. Any librarian will take trouble to borrow from some other library a requested book which does not happen to be on its shelves. But how many would go as far as

she did ? I wanted to read Radiciotti's study of Soccini, untranslated. Miss Clark would get it for me. She tried the Westminster library. No copy. The Westminster music library ? No. Oxford ? No ! Cambridge ? No ! " Please take no more trouble " I said, " There's evidently no copy anywhere in the country." I forgot about it all, till one day several weeks later she said " Here's your Radiciotti " ! I looked to see where it had come from. ROME. I don't know what surprised me more, the devotion and determination of our local librarian, or the generosity of the Rome library, sending so large and valuable a book across the seas.

The two churches presented an interesting contrast, intriguing to the newcomer to our movement. Each dated from the seventeenth century. But Ditchling had been a Baptist chapel (the architecture suggested it) which became Arian or Socinian during the course of the eighteenth, though adult baptism by immersion was practised till early in the nineteenth. Lewes on the other hand had been founded by two of the Anglican priests ejected in 1662 for rejecting the prayer book ; but again the church did not become Unitarian till the next century.

The difference in origin left mark on both architecture and services. Lewes with its stained glass and its lofty roof has a suggestion of the parish church, and is in striking contrast to Ditchling, with its plain glass windows, yielding pleasant glimpses of cottages and trees. Lewes boasts an effective organ, and its own liturgy of twelve services, compiled by Connell, a previous minister ; whilst Ditchling, true to Nonconformist tradition, prefers the open service and a grand piano.

Going to a new town the Unitarian minister never knows how the orthodox fraternity will receive him. In Lewes I was at first ignored. I was told unofficially that when my name was proposed by Kenneth Rawlings the good Anglican vicar of the church just across the road (successor to one of the two evicted ones who founded our church) a certain nonconformist reverend remarked " if he come in this door I go out of that one." And that was the end of the matter. But the Southdown rural fraternal, mostly Anglican, not only welcomed me, but invited me to open two discussions, one on theism and one on spiritualism.

When the ecumenical movement reached Lewes we and the Quakers were invited, but only as observers. Along we went, but to our surprise one minister said, " But why only as observers ? " and another seconded him. It looked as though full membership would be ours when a dear old dame exclaimed,

" But are we doing the right thing ? These people deny the deity of our Lord." Murmurs of approval from some of the other ministers and most of the laity sealed our fate. And the very next day came a letter from the tolerant two, apologising for the way the meeting went !

It is only fair to add that things are better now. The Methodists sold their chapel and rent the use of ours, and there have been a few pulpit interchanges.

Also it was at Lewes that Father O'Donnell, the Roman priest, came to one of our interdenominational brains trusts, and to another at St Matthews, where Kenneth Rawlings, though high in ritual, was broad in dogma, and " left " in politics. We teased our Romanist with two questions. " How can you reconcile belief in a merciful God with belief in hell ? " and " Can a Catholic believe in evolution ? " With humour and a ready wit he replied " Hell is there. But we can all of us hope it's empty ; that nobody is bad enough to go there ", and " Evolution ? It may be true. But we must still believe that Adam and Eve were real persons ! "

Grand fellows, Rawlings and O'Donnell. We shall not forget them. Nor Charles Hill, a Swedenborgian minister in retirement at Worthing, author of books that would have gone much further had the sale not been limited to so small a denomination.

Long an admirer of these works I wrote the author as soon as I knew he was a near neighbour, and amazed I was, on our first meeting, to see him chopping the branches off a fir tree fallen in his garden. For he was over ninety.

Never have I met one not only so sure of survival, but, feeling so near to both worlds, so ready to go. His life was prolonged a few weeks by prostate operation when he was nearing a hundred, and this seemed to him needless and irritating. How right he was ! Apart from the fact that pumpkin or sunflower seed would have prevented prostate enlargement.

Now to a few personal considerations. One of our essayists wrote that on his fiftieth birthday he felt no older than he had done on his thirtieth, and that therefore he now expected to feel no older on his seventieth. Yet when he was thirty he had regarded fifty as definitely elderly—it had seemed so distant and remote. Now, at fifty, so great was his surprise that he began to ask himself if old age were a mere legend. One lives, or should live, healthily and actively to the last day of one's life, and then die—preferably in one's sleep.

Well, my eightieth year is here, and so far I do not feel old. Though I no longer go upstairs two at a time. I limp sometimes going down (I never could go down two at a time), and the urge to go out and climb a hill when the wind surges is no longer clamant.

Neither does my life in retrospect fall into those ready phases so clearly marked out by my old tutor Lionel Tayler—novity, individuancy, veterancy. I hope I have escaped dotage, but have I attained to veternacy ? I am presumably insufficiently aware of age to claim as much. There is no sensation of being on a summit, only on a gently ascending slope. But a long slope looking back, and remarkably clear.

Not for a moment that I would question that the passing years do bring change, spell growth, both of mind and character. Definitely I would affirm that in the seventies and doubtless in the eighties and nineties, should one live through them, one may still enlarge in mind, in interests, and, even more important, in understanding, sympathy, pity and humility, if character is not to stagnate in self-satisfaction.

We deem the old age of Verdi, of Shaw, of Alfred Russell Wallace (with his newly aroused interest in astronomy and spiritualism) unusual. But these men were quite normal. It is the others, those who fade in age, who should surprise us ; till we realise the ravages made on good men by petty personal habits like smoking and imbibing, by physical inactivity and overmuch worry.

So much for the mind. What then of the body ? Failure surely must come here—except in instances of sudden collapse : perhaps the normal way to go. Oliver Wendell Holmes has a little poem about a carriage that one moment was gaily wheeling along the street yet the very next moment it had become a mere heap of dust. Miraculous ? No—it had been so perfectly made that no part outlasted the others : wheels, axles, joints and seats all literally perished together.

An amusing little skit, with a very deep meaning. But for me brother body is still a good carriage. One still walks a few miles a day, takes an odd mountain in one's course. One feels no pain except an occasional twitching of the left-foot—is it a touch of inherited gout ? One is still unconscious of the heart one felt so sorry for in early childhood. It's been beating now the best part of eight decades without giving its owner the slightest anxiety. Toothache ? Twice in the distant past ; though white sugar and white flour, the evils of which the present writer was unaware

for some fifty years (despite his vegetarianism) are probably responsible for the breaking off of tiny bits of tooth here and there, and so for a lower denture. Headache ? Perhaps an odd half hour once or twice a year in middle age—a dull ache, but enough to enable one to feel sorry for the chronic sufferer. Eyes ? A reading glass is now needful for small print in all but brilliant light.

And this good health, combined, incidentally, with muscular strength well below that of the average male, is surely largely owing to the three abstentions—meat, alcohol and tobacco. Yet no credit is due when the only flesh that ever tempted was kipper, and the very smell of beer or brandy offended. In those far-off days of occasional communion services the taste of a mere sip of wine in the mouth lingered unpleasantly, till washed out by a draught of water.

Chapter 15

THE WORLD CHANGES: FOR BETTER OR WORSE

NOW for a few words on the changes seen in the course of a single lifetime. Changes perhaps more thickly crowding one on another than in any previous period, at least as regards physical environment and invention. It surprises me sometimes to recollect that there are grown men and women in the world today to whom aeroplanes were familiar in childhood. My generation remembers the days when the bare possibility of flight seemed an incredible dream (unless you counted the balloon). I remember being completely convinced by a book written by Ballantyne (author of the *Coral Island*) the theme of which was the sheer absurdity of heavier than air flight !

Furthermore in my childhood the musical box was the standard form of mechanical music—the discs of the polyphon, so readily stackable, having replaced the cylinders of the older box. There were also two sorts of street organs, one imitative of the piano, one of the harmonium, both operating by means of slotted rolls or discs, turned by hand. There were vague rumours of things called phonographs and gramophones coming from America—things that actually sang words—the former, with cylindrical records, for long holding their own against the more convenient discs because for some inexplicable reason the instruments sounded more natural thereon : but neither at first satisfactory enough to prevent the appearance of that aristocratic cousin of the street piano—the pianola, which however, when improved discs arrived, proved a mere flash in the pan.

About the same time came the early kinema. Pictures actually moved ! What a marvel that was ! Yet though the gramophone was there too, for years we never dreamed of pictures that would both move and talk.

Incidentally it is a curious fact that the phonograph was nearly invented some fifty years earlier. A nib was made to trace the shape of sound waves on a revolving cylinder (you can see the thing at South Kensington) but no one took the obvious step of replacing the paper by wax and playing back!

Looking back it also seems curious that railway trains and steamers should so long have anticipated trams and buses and carriages that moved by themselves. Yet I well remember how one took express trains for granted; but marvelled at a car, a bus, going along by itself; no horse to pull it, no rails to guide.

It is curious how one tends to take it for granted that, though the whole of history has been a continuous process of change, we have now arrived at the full stop; and that after two world wars, each of which changed the political map drastically. If suddenly taken back a couple of centuries one would find the world a strange place indeed, but for having read about bygone times. But let us imagine ourselves suddenly projected onward for two hundred years, and we imagine things much as they are now—a little worse if we are pessimists, with non-nuclear wars still going on—a little better if we are optimistic, with the United Nations at last showing some semblance of World Federation—but in either event giving us an environment not unlike that of today, though all the faces would be new.

We have seen a succession of inventions, one often displacing another: trains, steamers, motors, planes, musical boxes, pianolas, gramophones, radio, television: we have survived the disappearance of the British and French empires: the nightmare emergence and apocalyptic disintegration of Fascist Italy, Germany and Japan; the more enigmatic development of Communist Russia and China: the liberation and internecine conflicts of India and Africa (the brown and black races afflicted by all the nationalistic and sectarian stupidities of which Europe), the realisation of many of the visions of Herbert George Wells—to say nothing of the bad genetic dreams of Aldous Huxley—and still one assumes the continuity of the present.

Or is this only characteristic of relatively stable countries like Britain?

Yet one has but to look back from age to youth to realise how rapid the change has been, both in physical environment and mental and social outlook. And even when you are unaffected by age, even when you feel yourself contemporary with contemporary youth (at least with that section of it indifferent to "pop") you

are sometimes brought up by a surprising realisation of the gulf that separates those who have lived through three quarters of a century from those who have only been here for a quarter—by their surprise when they, born into a world of planes and "tele", realise that you were born into a world where railways were still the last word in travel, and the horse bus still in the city streets.

Yet who knows? Come another century, and the car and the trunk road with which we are now so expensively and foolishly replacing many of the railways will seem as archaic as those same railways, and everyone will have his little flying machine attached to his body! It is here already.

If the changes in mental atmosphere are less spectacular they are more profound. Less felt, maybe, by Unitarians than by most others, since our movement has always been in advance of the age. For the strange thing is that the pure theistic faith, being grounded on essentials, and not dependent, like trinitarianism, on unique claims made on behalf of one period, one book, one person, has changed less than the outlook of the "common man" (We shall still find that abstraction helpful in the present connection). For seventy years ago the common man was a Christian. Now, unless he is completely indifferent to religion, he is probably an agnostic, or even more likely, and probably unwittingly, a philosophical (and practical) materialist.

Even in the orthodox churches, even in the Romanist church in Protestant lands, there is sometimes more doubt than in Unitarianism, and this though Unitarianism is not by any means unaffected by the current scepticism of the day.

Apart from the spiritualistic and theosophical movements it is only in the Fundamentalist sects that you will find freedom from nagging doubts (which probably accounts for their popularity).

And if there has been this change in the theological atmosphere, with its effects apparent almost everywhere, there has surely been far more sinister change in the political atmosphere: and here again all parties and groups are affected.

To return in memory to the first twenty years of my life, to the late units and early teens of the present century. A happy young man, despite that detested office work, I lived in my spare time for three things—Unitarianism, socialism (pacifism and a peaceful democratic revolution an essential ingredient thereof) and vegetarianism. The last of these causes, in the years of early enthusiasm, played perhaps a disproportionate part. For Unitaianism and socialism called for no difference in mode of life between myself and my associates, whereas food reform did. It

was an acid test. Can you do without meat as you can without beer and baccy? There were far more teetotalers in those days (the need for a virile anti-alcohol movement is much more urgent today) but a fleshless diet (no fish even) did carry with it a suggestion of real merit—though even then I realised it was no credit to me as I never liked the stuff.

In those far off days we read Edward Carpenter's *Towards Democracy* and sang his "England Arise". Many of us realised the need for the marriage of free religion and left-wing politics. The free faith would keep the politics sweet and non-violent. The politics would give the faith a practical hold on secular affairs, national and international, and prevent it from sinking into a mere morass of sentimentality.

Of course many of us think just the same today. But then the goal seemed near. The next decade would witness a socialist government at home, and old age might well see a socialist world! But what the next decade did bring was the first world war. And now the goal seems so much further off then ever it did then that one is sometimes tempted to wonder if the commonwealth of man will ever replace the big and petty sovereign states that bedevil everything good. And though that does not condone the least slackening of the effort, it does make the task so much the heavier.

In those earlier days, even though arms were increasing, even though at times the bad dream of a war with Germany might have troubled us; few of us would have imagined that war bursting out into a worldwide conflict; to be followed, after the "long weekend" by another even more horrible. Nor could we have imagined the amazing resurrection of protestant fundamentalism in so many guises; nor the invention of nuclear weapons (Theodora Wilson's "last weapon" discovered and used) nor the potentiality of germ and poison warfare: nor the emergence of juvenile and teenage delinquency on an unprecedented scale: nor the increase in illegitimate births; nor the acceptance of premarital sexual promiscuity by people else apparently sane and normal.

Yet there have been surprises the other way too. In my young days the memory of the excommunication of Father Tyrrel and Father Loisy, from the Roman church was still fresh: also that of Voisey from the Anglican. Whereas I have lived to see a modern churchman, surely Unitarian in all but name, made bishop of Birmingham. I have lived to hear Pope John describe Protestants as "separated brethren" (what a gulf between that and the traditional description of us as orthodox and the heretic). If only

he had been wiser in his suggestion of a successor or if only he had lived a few years longer. . . It is only too evident that the humanitarian insight which he showed so signally is lacking in Pope Paul, with his insistence on the celibacy of the priesthood, and his assumption that the passionate Latin working man has the same control over the sexual impulse as the natural ascetic (how else account for his opposition to contraception?) Had he walked in the path of his precursor a real reform from inside might have occurred, with theological liberalism and Christian reunion to follow. Though it should not be forgotten that Pope John's theology was not liberal, despite his tolerance to heretics.

Not that I would welcome literal reunion. The tendency to uniformity would thus be encouraged, and even a monolithic liberal Christendom would be ominous. It would lead to a widening gulf between itself and the Islamic and Buddhistic realms. More joint services, more interchange of pulpits certainly. More "all-faith" gatherings for discussion and for worship; but this is a different path. More co-operation, too, between all sects and faiths in the championship of all good causes, from the abolition of blood sports and factory farms to the demolition of all armies, navies and air forces: each council of churches in each nation calling on its own government to lead the way, and not to wait for the others to start.

I believe that the liberalising process will continue, even in the Roman church, very much as it has in the Anglican. Would Tyrrel and Loisy be excommunicated now? Despite Disertori I doubt it. I believe it will be possible, perhaps in the near future, for Roman priests to interpret the dogmas symbolically, in ways which would shock beyond measure those who framed them; ways that they would have anathematised as downrightly dishonest. Whether this change of atmosphere will happen in a decade or a century I know not, but it will happen.

Chapter 16

UNITARIAN CRISIS

MEANWHILE what is happening in our own little Unitarian realm? We are undoubtedly passing through a crisis of our own; the second great crisis of our history. And I am most unhappily apprehensive about the issue.

The first crisis came when the influence of Socinus, Lindsey, Priestley and Channing yielded to that of Martineau, Emerson, Parker, Francis Newman and Frances Cobbe. So we emerged from scriptural Christocentric Unitarianism to theistic Universalism. Yet that change was not as fundamental as at first sight seemed. Those early scriptural Unitarians were not as bound to the Bible as appeared. In controversy with the orthodox they rebutted text by text, and some of them sincerely believed in the special inspiration of at least certain chapters. But it is clear that were they to sense a collision between scripture on the one hand and reason or conscience on the other it is the scripture that would be set aside; or, perhaps more likely, reinterpreted—or misinterpreted!

This second crisis is much more serious. Unitarians have always stressed the necessity for freedom; but till now this has always been regarded as the means to the discovery of a surer faith. Membership has never depended on the acceptance of a detailed creed; but here note the adjective rather than the noun. A simple creed has always been assumed, though a superstitious fear of the word creed has led to the substitution of the term "statement of faith". Now even that is suspect.

"Unitarians believe in God," wrote Alfred Hall in his *Beliefs of a Unitarian*. In a subsequent edition, revised by others, we now read, "Most Unitarians believe in God." What a concession to those Unitarians to whom freedom itself is the end, whether it lead to a deeper faith in God or to no faith at all. But this is not Unitarianism. This is no church. It is not even a movement.

A movement must have an aim and a statement of faith—a creed. The humanist movement has one. It believes in the good life: that kindness is good and cruelty evil. To this it adds some dogmas too—e.g., racial equity.

But a faith, a church, is more than a movement. It is inspired by belief in a supreme ideal; in the eternal varieties of truth, beauty and goodness; unchanging, though our vision of them may change and clarify. And for the Unitarian those verities find at once their source and exemplar in God, a real Being, most real of all Beings. And in worship God and man (individually and collectively) enter into communion with each other; a communion not intellectual but emotional and spiritual.

In the twenties I took part in many open air meetings, using the Unitarian Van, and thriving on questions, now from orthodoxy, now from atheism.

In those days there was no more confusion between the Unitarian church and the Ethical Society than between the Unitarian and the Roman or Fundamentalist Churches. There would be no question about the theism of the minister. Were he troubled by doubts he would keep his agnosticism to himself, hoping that it would prove but a passing phase. Nowadays, maybe, he would parade his scepticism. To protest about this does not mean intolerance. It is surely no more intolerant than it would be to protest if a socialist member of parliament advocated private monopoly. The Labour Party exists for the propagation of Public Ownership, the Unitarian church for the worship of God. It is as simple as that. One has not the slightest quarrel with agnostic or atheist, not the least assumption of superiority. Merely the recognition of a difference in outlook between a purely humanistic and a theistic society. Continued co-operation in all humanitarian aims undoubtedly, and a welcome to any doubter desiring to worship with us. But between one to whom God, the living conscious creative mind, is the supreme reality, and one to whom God is a mere speculation or personification, there can be no deep communion in worship, whether public or private, whether in the temple or the wood.

Whence the weakness that has filtered into our movement, first in America and now here? Partly perhaps that we are too divisive. Most movements, religious and secular, make too much of their leaders. Do we make enough of ours? To Christian Scientists Mary Eddy's *Science and Health* ranks with the Bible, and even to the more erudite New Church Swedenborg is almost infallible. This is absurd, and each of these movements is

crippled by the undue adulation of its founder. But we have a far greater than Mary Eddy, a greater even than Swedenborg, in Martineau. And we do not even republish a masterwork like *The Study of Religion*—not even in an abridged edition, which would be better. For here I am reminded, and am glad of the reminder, that the most fashionable modern sceptics, Bonhoeffer and others, who talk of pluralism and existentialism, are in no sense innovators. Martineau has much to say about one Josiah Royce, to whom the universe is a " heap of powers," and rebuts him at great length. But that part of the study needs no reprinting, for who bothers about Royce now? Or, incidentally, about Compte and his humanism?

I am also reminded of the wise things Gilbert Chesterton has to say about Unitarians in his preface to the reprint of some of the writings of Stopford Brooke. The burden of his complaint (I paraphrase, because I cannot now find the actual words) is that there were two sorts of Unitarians; those who drop one dogma after another as they mount the peak till they reach the summit with only God and the immortal soul left, and have wit enough to stop there; and those who, chucking out God and the soul, plunge over the abyss into nescience, still singing " onward and upward for ever ".

Obviously, again, the distinction between those who stress the freedom most, and those who stress the faith.

It is true that there is the apparently intermediate position of the " atheistic " Buddhists (and perhaps the Platonists) who equate God with the eternal verities of truth, love and beauty; assuring Nirvana, or absorption into the beatific vision, to those who live in accord with them, and exacting, retributive reincarnation from those who ignore them. But there is a deep gulf between this view and that of the materialistic humanist. For to the Buddhist morality is not a mere freak of humanity, but is implicit in the universal order. But to some of us belief in the verities implies belief in God who creates us, no mere parts of himself, but real beings, seeking to share the life eternal with us.

Yet affinities are sometimes curious. Thus one feels more community of spirit with trinitarians like Father Huddleston or atheists like Bertrand Russell, aflame with anger against the militarists and millionaires and full of pity for the oppressed, than with Unitarians who accept current ideas about patriotism and capitalism. And for all one's pacifism one has understanding and sympathy for Lenin, who had a genuine love of great music yet felt he should forego the joy of it since it clouded his conviction of the need to " crack the skulls " of tyrants and oppressors. Beethoven made him feel more like stroking their heads gently. What tragedy was there. How different and how much better the subsequent history of Russia and of the world might have been had Lenin read less of Marx and more of Tolstoi, whom he despised and never properly understood.

How tragic too that one so full of the passion of righteousness for the downtrodden as Lenin, one who shames so many of his imitators and successors in Russia and elsewhere by living always as a poor working man, should be so sure that God is a myth—no one there—and immortality an idle dream. How glorious the experience for one such as he to wake in the beyond—to discover that he is still alive, the dream a reality, and the " no one " the supreme mind, inspirer of all those visions, still unrealised on earth.

I cannot agree with those pacifists who say that no good has ever come from any war, though I believe there would always have been a better way. If Wilson had triumphed at Versailles instead of Clemenceau the first world war might really have been the last! or again the defeat of Pakistan and the liberation of Bangladesh was good, but if Mrs Gandhi had offered Kashmir (chiefly Islamic) to Pakistan in exchange for Bangladesh she might surely have achieved the same good without the bloodshed.

For centuries it has been taken for granted that Europe is a Christian continent, ours a Christian country. Therefore it is difficult to realise that this is no longer true; that most people are no longer Christians, and no longer believe in a real God, a God who make a difference, who cares about individuals. In some sort of supreme power yes, in a supreme being perhaps, but in one with whom all intimacy is unthinkable; neither the God of Jesus, nor the God of the theist. And this because medical science has made belief in personal survival also seen unthinkable. The mind is so inextricably linked with the brain, dependent on the brain (even if not originated by it) that the death of the brain surely implies the extinction of the person. The very memories, according to still prevailing theories, are impressed on the grey matter of the cerebrum much as tunes on the gramophone disc. Therefore death is the end of memory. Even were some sort of consciousnesss to persist, which is most unlikely, the personality would no more be there. For if a memory were suddenly cut off, and a new one start to build up in the same body, it would be an altogether different person, though probably very similar. Incidentally sometimes this very thing does happen;

but then a third memory may emerge, embracing both the previous ones; and this doubtless happens after death.

Now loss of belief in personal survival naturally means loss of belief in a God who cares, and no other God is of any interest to the normal human.

This loss of faith in a life beyond death goes far to account for the unbalance in the life of humanity today; a dangerous and morbid balance, with its emphasis on purely materialistic science, and on the purely practical side of that. So we have more and more marvellous inventions, madder and madder concentration on mere speed; millions wasted on lunar landings, and supersonic planes, when millions are still starving and racial and religious animosities still mounting. (Arabs and Jews lived in peace and mutual understanding in mediaeval Moorish Spain, and look at them now in the "holy" land!)

We also have modern materialistic medicine, with its false aim of ostentatiously keeping alive badly injured or diseased bodies by means of kidney machines, mechanical lungs and heart transplants, even when the minds imprisoned in such bodies show little evidence of being there at all!

Why all this unbalance? Surely because mankind has lost its faith in survival but is still horrified by the mere thought of annihilation. So let us do all we can to keep alive the mere vestige, the mere caricature, of a human.

This folly has reached its peak in the new desire of a few wealthy Americans (and doubtless it will spread elsewhere) for hibernation. When death approaches let us be put into cold storage for a few decades. So we may push death further off—perhaps quite a long way further off. Thus resurrection is assured! Oh no—not the real thing. Not to the everlasting life beyond. Only a second little life on earth—only a handful of years at most. But in the thought of that second life on earth let us forget all about the second death, beyond which annihilation yawns.

It is all wrong, and all ghastly, and may in effect be positively disastrous; preventing for a weary while the escape to a new body in the beyond; not only normal again, but more richly endowed as a medium of expression.

If faith in survival returned, unaccompanied by visions of hell fires or endless psalm singings, the true balance would be restored; cruel, clever surgical operations would cease; speed record breakers and other professional sportsmen for whom the mind is a mere accessory to an abnormally developed body would

no longer be the heroes of the people, and practical and theorectical materialism would be rejected as the silly things they really are. So at last Robert Browning's prayer would be answered.

Make no more giants, God; but elevate the race.

But how restore this lost faith, which of all things is most to be desired today? Bergson has an answer, but he is hard reading and will never be popular. The thought of a finer indestructible body and brain, already present in the physical body, and itself impressed with indestructible memory, traces maybe of help to those who cannot conceive of memory lasting without some substantial record of it. And indeed who can conceive of life beyond without some sort of bodies by means of which minds recognise each other and converse with each other. Etherial, astral—call them what you will—philosophically they are still material, though maybe composed of some substance not in any way akin to matter as we know it here.

Bergson's thought is that memories abide in the immaterial mind, that the brain is a device for forgetting rather than remembering; or, to speak more precisely, of selecting, letting only those recollections relevant to the present situation emerge from subconscious levels. In reverie or in dreams there is a detension of the brain, and then sundry memories may break through. In death they may all be uncovered in experience sometimes anticipated in prospect of death, as often in the instances of drowning.

If Bergson is right, then after death the astral brain too must act as a screen—preventing and selecting like the earth brain did, once acting developing life is resumed.

So it would appear that there is no escape from the substantial, earthly or heavenly: mind needs body; visual beauty needs form and colour; musical patterns need sound waves. But always it is the spiritual which uses the material, and always there remains the miracle of the emergence of qualitative difference from quantitative—the miracle of the solar spectrum, of the tonal scale.

But to return to our main line of argument. There is evidence of survival. There is good reason to believe that the gulf has been bridged from time to time. The spiritualistic explanation of the post-crucifixion appearance of Jesus would seem to give the most plausible account of the change of heart and will in the disciples. Only now it must be stressed that these events were not unique.

There is even reason to believe that Swedenborg was right when he taught that the one great change induced by death, the raison d'etre of death, is that the spiritual body reveals the in-dwelling soul faithfully and completely. There is no longer any contradiction between inward being and outward seeming. The beautiful face is no deception: the brutal soul looks repulsive. The depraved may still deceive the depraved; elsewhere all hypocrisy becomes impossible. The wicked will no longer be able to hoodwink the innocent. (What revolution is there!) Also reason to believe that Swedenborg really did live from time to time in the next world—how else account for his disclosing facts only known to certain dead folk, but afterwards verified. But here again we are not confronted by the unique. Others also have had out of the body experiences.

All this apart from automatic writing or trance speech, the hand or mouth of the medium being used by a discarnate mind. Verily spiritualism might yet prove the salvation of the world from materialism, could it but break from its obsession for persistent superficial contacts with the other side, and divest itself from nonsense like astrology, and from too strenuous efforts to predict the future.

Though it must be admitted that there seems reason to believe that events in the physical order are sometimes predicted as warnings against danger of possible accidents. But were moral decisions predictable free will and personal.

Were after life reaffirmed it would take its proper place in our thought; perspective would be righted; this would would be seen as the first class in the realms of being: still the most important place for us here and now; yet all decisions taken here seen against the background of eternity.

The competitive rat race would end: co-operation would become the keynote of human relationships; personal, national and international. Anxiety about the future would become as unimportant, as meaningless, as despair over the past, and a contented day by day life in the present would be the norm.

Chapter 17

ON THE COLLECTING HOBBY

AT Lewes we had the pleasantest house and garden we have ever had—a corner house with a garden round three sides including a little pond near the front (handy for chats with neighbours) and a greenhouse (our first) adjoining the house.

Yet after eight years there came another move, this time to Worthing, lured by a thriving Unitarian group meeting in the Quakers' room, between which and the other two churches we now divided our attention.

A great contrast, from the little hill town to flat—the resort resembling a London suburb by the sea and from the two storied house to a large old house with a tiny garden (though still with greenhouse and pool).

Yet we were happy at Worthing, and it had its points—a repertory theatre, and one of the few remaining orchestras outside the big cities. Also a few small but pretty parks, one high on the downs.

The garden being surrounded by brick walls, we bought two terrapins (larger species than those we had at Southgate). To our amazement one of them climbed the bare walls, and found his way round the corner to the shops. On another occasion he discovered a pond in a school playground, and for all we know he is still there.

At Worthing we had a visit from the Rev. Fritchman and his wife. I had preached at his church in California, where he was leader of the left wing Unitarians alike in theology and politics.

So passed another three years and more—then another move—from the flats of Worthing, with its hinterland of smooth chalk downs, to the sandstone hills and vales of Hastings, with its undulating tree-clad countryside. A change brought about partly by proximity of relations; a change welcome to me because of a

preference alike for town and surroundings—welcome to my wife because now, for the first time in our lives, we dwell in a house without stairs. Yes, it is a bungalow this time, and on the flat, with a fair-sized garden, a small greenhouse to permit a continuation of my services to them.

Yet one feels a certain nostalgia for the much too large old Worthing house, with its tiny but pretty garden, and for the town itself with its sea bordered parks. One always does feel nostalgic on moving—another present now become another past—past irrevocably, however vivid the memory.

And will this be the last move? Yes—we have said that three times already. We said it when we moved into our house at Swansea, "with the scenery of the north west and the climate of the south east" we told ourselves. And it was largely true. We said it when we settled into our house at Lewes in the Downs, with its garden all round it—front, side and back—the best we had ever had. And we said it again when we went to Worthing—all the money we had made in moving from a new house to an old one gone by making the old one more comfortable. Most assuredly we never contemplated making another move then.

But Hastings, where we have spent many a happy holiday through the years—here we shall surely stay through the rest of our earthly lives.

Here we have the best of the many good neighbours we have had—a retired congregational minister and his wife. He seems to be acquainted with as many of our ministers as of his own, and to be most sympathetic to them. He is as disconcerted by the growth of neo-fundamentalism in his movement as we are by the growth of more humanism in ours.

Here too soon after we had settled down came other visitors from California—my cousin and his wife. Good it was to show them some of the natural and historical beauties of Sussex—the nearby park and woods, and the Norman castle at Bodiam, islanded by its moat.

It was a beautiful autumn morning when this epilogue was sketched. The occasion? A rare gift handed to us by the postman—a disc of Raff's *Forest* symphony. So the one serious gap in our record library was filled. (We bought *Lenore* two years before).

Collecting things may well become an obsession, leading one to lay undue stress on personal possessions, especially if the things have no real value in themselves, like postage stamps or

coins. Or even more if they have aesthetic value dependent on their being unique, like pictures. Though I understand that perfect photographic reproductions of these are now possible. But to collect books is surely permissible (provided again that one has no mania for first elitions). And surely also records. Though again free access in a small community should suffice—"ours", in such an instance, being a better word than "mine".

But to return to our present theme. It is now thirty-four years since we acquired our first record of *Norma*. Our knowledge of the opera was limited to the overture, and in those days the B.B.C. showed a most marked pro-French anti-Italian bias. So the appearance of Bellini in the gramophone catalogue broke down our long held determination to go without a machine and rely solely on the radio. Though at the time we had no machine to play them on, we bought them to make sure of having them, and heard them soon afterwards on a clockwork gramophone bought at a second-hand shop.

Gradually our collection grew: standard classics; but with a preference to hitherto neglected works seldom heard even on the "third". How one rejoiced in the revival of the seventeenth century masterworks from Monteverdi to Alessandro Scarlatti, and of eighteenth century masters like Cimarosa, Cherubini and Boccerini, to say nothing, coming to the romantic period, of Spontini and the serious Auber and Rossini. It all seemed too good to be true.

But all this accentuated the absence from the catalogue of gifted minor romanticists like Gade and MacCunn; and especially of one who in my judgment is no minor master, the German Swiss Raff.

It is some sixty years since, listening to the London County orchestra in the Embankment gardens and other parks, I first grew familiar with his symphonies. And it is over thirty years since I last heard a Raff symphony, the *Forest*, curiously enough on the Italian "third". Since then I have wondered and angered at the neglect of his masterpieces; predicting however, even as of Bellini, the invitability of a rediscovery; but fearing that it might be delayed till the centenary of his death in my ninetieth year—probably too late to be aware of it on this side! Yet now, some thirty years after the Bellini revival, it comes.

And even as we take for granted the beauty of scenery or the wonder of human affection—so we already take for granted the marvel of the gramophone disc with its faithful reproduction at

our fireside of all the great operas, oratorios, symphonies, and chamber sonatas.

Whilst these unexpected revivals, this surprising new interest in so many works long misunderstood, condemned and forgotten, more than compensates for the decadance and morbidity of so much contemporary work.

Now each night let us close our eyes and offer a little prayer for all the needy—for the anxious, the bored, the doubtful, the unhappy, the mistaken. Then let sleep come, either the sleep of the unconscious or the sleep full of pleasant dreams. Then let us open our eyes as the sun floods the world with light and, be the sky blue or cloudy, let us thank God for a whole new day!

Chapter 18

EPILOGUE

THREE years ago Louie had a slight stroke—the second. It meant a push-chair. But for the last three years she was quietly happy. A slackening of mental powers, but no trace of insanity. No arthritis, no rheumatism, no pain. But a lack of balance, and a certain constriction of tongue and lip motions implying very slow eating and tardy speech. Yet a surprising ability to walk uphill, though a speed of a mile an hour on the level, and almost total dependence on the chair going downhill. We still went out nearly every day, walking together uphill through the woods to Bohemia or Silverhill. After lunch she would have a nap on the bed whilst I would put on the disc of a symphony or operatic act, the second half of which she would usually come in to listen to. Then another little walk, with tea in the park in summer. Then perhaps a nature film on the telly, or a good drama if there was one.

Sunday she always came where I preached, glad to meet the people.

The first of those three years came a coaching tour of the Highlands; the second another of Cornwall and another again to Swansea, where I preached in my old pulpit; and the last a vegetarian conference at Torquay (the first ever for us) as the first part of our last holiday together on earth.

How we enjoyed that holiday, and she seemed quite a bit better. We took the chair, but did not use it so much. Walks through the Ilsham woods and along the Ilsham valley and coast. Walks to Cockington, and round its park (as beautiful as ours but no better). A sea trip with the "veges" to Dartmouth—on our one wet rough day—and she insisted on coming, and pluckily clambered from pier to dock, aided by many hands. A day when she decided not to take the lift to Babbacombe beach,

but to walk down as well as up since the road curved so " very gradually " downwards.

Back home one day the tyre of the chair cracked open at Silverhill and she walked down again, without a murmur or grumble and seemed none the worse. Was she really getting better ?

But on the following Sunday evening, after supper, she complained of pain in the stomach. So next day, first time for three years, off to the doctor. " Probably only a bout of constipation," he said, and the day after a nurse soon cleared that up. So that Tuesday we were quite exalted. Up through the woods again. But that same Tuesday evening the clouds gathered.

I should explain here that supper never took as long to eat as breakfast or lunch, and that speech was a bit easier in bed. But this time supper took longer. Still the doctor said : " Don't worry ; I'll prescribe something to relax the oesophagus ". So we didn't worry not even when we discovered that no solid was going down and only half a cup of coffee in half an hour. For there was still no pain, and still we went through the woods.

Came the doctor with the prescription. But five minutes after he left came the fatal stroke. She tried to get up and collapsed. Two days in hospital, and she had gone. A bolt from the blue for both of us. We had taken for granted two or three more years on earth together. But she had gone first, as she wished. And grateful I am for that holiday, for the brevity of her illness, and for faith in survival and reunion.

I must add that I have now made contact with my beloved by means of simple seances with use of glass and alphabet : Rev. G. and Rev. F. Whitby in charge : no entranced medium present.

I know this method is often abused, but on these occasions evidence of her presence was shown in many little traits and reminiscences, leaving me in complete assurance that she was really there. The discerning reader will spot other evidential signs.

At the first short sitting (at which I was not present) she gave her names, and added " Go to him. Tell him I am near all the time. Day by day I wish he could see me."

The second sitting filled nearly an hour. I quote some of the dialogue. *L.* Now it is my turn to help you. All these years you have kept me with you, you took me everywhere, you never left me behind. Now I'm with you always. You're never alone . . . *B.* Were you at Lewes and Ditchling when I used your sermons ?

L. Yes. *B.* Many said they liked them, and meant it. *L.* But I could do better ones now . . . *B.* You remember Mrs X ? She wheels out her old mother, aged 93. But there are steep steps. I'd like to have a slope made for her instead. *L.* Do so. Tell her it's a present from beyond ! . . . *B.* Your mother and father ; and mine ; have you met them ? *L.* Yes. They were all here when I woke. I felt so peculiar at first. But now I look more like I did at Swansea. (She was there from forty to sixty years of age). *B.* So Swedenborg was right ? *L.* Yes. We all look younger. Our parents might be our children. (Over there longer). *B.* Are you happy there ? *L.* As happy as I can be until you come.

There followed a third sitting of extreme interest, again nearly an hour, again Louie showing a full recovery of her mature personality.

She was ill two days in hospital. I had hoped she was unconscious all the time, and the nurse agreed. But her sisters feared she was suffering owing to random movements of limbs and mouth. We were all wrong. *L.* I was fully conscious. I knew and saw everything. My body was lying there on the bed, but I was in the chair. I was not suffering a scrap. But I couldn't make you see me. Then I couldn't get back into my body. (This was the point of physical death). Then I went to sleep, and awoke to see the family around me. Then I knew where I was.

She then assured me that in some of my dreams I had got out of my body and met her on the other side. " But I can't remember " I complained. " You will " she asserted.

I then asked if she had met other friends over there. *L.* Yes. Several (and she named a few). *B.* There was an old lady at Ditchling whose name I forget, she was a lay preacher. *L.* Helen Watts (correct), she's here now . . .

L. I weep tears of gratitude that we lived our lives together and are never to know separation again. I shall be with you daily, never fear, like a burr. Now sleep gently my dear. We are of the blessed.

It is possible, dear reader, that you will think the author was a bit daft when he wrote this epilogue. But I am sure that in time you will come to realise that it is the most important part of the book.

BASIL VINEY

The author of this unusual autobiography, now aged eighty, is a Unitarian Minister who has served churches in London, in Sussex, in the Lake District, and in Wales. He has spent time in America and in Italy, and, everywhere that he has gone, has turned an observant eye on the places and the people. His views of many subjects have been strikingly different from those of the man in the street. But, however much his ideas may differ from those of the majority, he has never hidden them or tried to tone them down. As the Rev. John Rowland says in his foreword: "This book reflects him and his ideas honestly and whole-heartedly." It will be read by many people as a frank and straightforward picture of a dissenting minister.

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